

Glory and Infamy: Making the Memory of Duke Alessandro de' Medici in Renaissance Florence

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
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Abstract

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Duke Alessandro de' Medici (1512-1537, r. 1531-1537) was the victim of a previously unknown and far-reaching conspiracy to condemn him in posthumous histories and erase him from the archives of Florence. This cultural manipulation cast Duke Alessandro for the past 500 years as a tyrant, murderer, and rapist of nuns. The case study of how later dukes, historians, and archivists defamed Alessandro de' Medici illustrates the ways people made and destroyed memory in sixteenth-century Florence. The first chapter outlines the negative statements made about Duke Alessandro in the major histories that discuss his reign. The second chapter explores the political affiliations of the contemporary authors who wrote the histories used in the first chapter. I show that the historians' opposition to Alessandro's rule during his lifetime influenced what they eventually wrote about the Duke in their histories—a fact overlooked by scholars, who tend to almost wholly rely on the histories. The third chapter outlines the neglected concept and practice of *damnatio memoriae*, or condemnation of memory, in the Renaissance. Using poems, paintings, and rumors, I demonstrate how unknown Florentines secretly marginalized the memory of Duke Alessandro using objects intended to commemorate him. The fourth chapter explores how Alessandro's successor, Duke Cosimo I de' Medici (1519-1574, r. 1537-1574), feuded with Alessandro during his life, and constructed the Florentine archives in such a way that Alessandro's reign is excluded from both the Medici family archives and Medici ducal

archives. No corpus of archival documents exists that could correct the slander spread by the official historians. Anonymous citizens, politically-active historians, and later Medici Grand Dukes effectively obliterated all good memory of Duke Alessandro de' Medici within 100 years of his assassination.

Preface



Figure 0.1: Maria Salviati de' Medici with Giulia d'Alessandro de' Medici, now uncovered. Jacopo Pontormo. The Walters Art Museum. Baltimore, MD.

In 2003, I read about a little girl once painted out of a sixteenth-century portrait (Fig. 0.1).¹ The child was Giulia de' Medici (ca. 1535-1588), daughter of Alessandro de' Medici, the first Duke of Florence. In the original painting by Pontormo, Giulia was depicted with Maria Salviati de' Medici, her caretaker following Alessandro's assassination in 1537. Sometime in the second half of the sixteenth century or early seventeenth century, her image was covered by black paint, only to be revealed by x-ray analysis about one hundred years ago.

I could not—and still cannot—articulate in scholarly terms what bothered me about

¹ Darryl Fears, "An Overlooked Color in a Medici Portrait: Girl's History Raises Questions about Art Studies," *Washington Post*, Sunday, November 25, 2001, D10.

Giulia's concealment behind a layer of black paint. Yet I needed to understand the process and motivation for painting people like Giulia out of portraits. In order to study this, I found a significant target for memory erasure and manipulation: Duke Alessandro himself.

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I thank the members of my dissertation committee—Clare Carroll, Helena Rosenblatt, David G. Troyansky, and Sarah Covington—for their incredibly kind and constructive comments on improving the manuscript. In particular, I thank my advisor, Margaret L. King, for not only supervising every bit of the dissertation, but for supporting me and my work over the past seven years. I would have never reached this point without Professor King’s ability to notice even mis-angled accents, incredibly fast e-mail responses, and superhuman patience.

For financial support I thank the Graduate Center for the Chancellors Fellowship and Writing Fellowship I received; the Renaissance Studies Certificate Program for funding my research in Italy; the Doctoral Student Research Grant Program for twice awarding me research grants; the History Program for arranging a number of fellowships; and the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

I thank my friends and colleagues at the Graduate Center and around the world for their encouragement, love, and humor. I thank Robin Roberts for solving the riddle that allowed all the ideas in this manuscript to flow forth.

I thank my parents for rolling soccer balls to me for hours to practice my goalkeeping; playing puzzle games with me; not getting too mad when I tried to do things on my own and made messes; and insisting that I play well, or better, with others. Yes, you can call me Dr. School Mouse now.

Finally, I thank Анто́на Мастерового and Isabella de’ Medici (cat edition): 사랑해!

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Introduction

Duke Alessandro de' Medici (1512-1537, r. 1531-1537) was the victim of a previously unknown and far-reaching conspiracy to condemn him in posthumous histories and marginalize him in the archives of Florence. This cultural manipulation cast Duke Alessandro for the past 500 years as a tyrant, murderer, and rapist of nuns. Anonymous citizens, politically-active historians, and later Medici Grand Dukes effectively obliterated all good memory of Duke Alessandro de' Medici within 100 years of his assassination. The case study of how later dukes, historians, and archivists defamed Alessandro de' Medici's memory illustrates the ways people made and destroyed memory in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Florence.

CONTEXT AND LITERATURE

The following sections review the history and literature of the relationship between Florence and the Medici, as well as the republican government before Alessandro's rule. It concludes with an outline of the works concerning Duke Alessandro's life and rule, and a discussion of how they relate to social and cultural scholarship on sixteenth-century Florence. These sections demonstrate that the wealth of research on politics, society, and culture Renaissance Florence does not extend into the first third of the sixteenth century.

The Medici before Duke Alessandro

In the century before Alessandro's rule, the Medici family attempted to control Florentine

government and politics with varying levels of force.¹ The pro-Medici leaders of Florence invited Cosimo de' Medici back to the city in 1434 after a brief exile engineered by the anti-Medici faction, led by the Strozzi and Albizzi families, the year before. Upon his return, Cosimo acted not as a tyrant or prince, but more like a modern city "boss," who was respected and supported for providing the stability and secrecy that the old constitution could not have ensured if it were strictly enforced. The system of Medici control worked, argues Nicolai Rubenstein, because the Medici were sensitive to public opinion, rich, smart, and usually right.² Following the death of Cosimo in 1464 and the passing of his son, the unremarkable Piero "the Gouty," Florence welcomed Lorenzo de' Medici, grandson of Cosimo, as its leader in 1469.

Under Lorenzo, the Medici bank declined significantly, but the direct power of the Medici in government grew. Some citizens argued that Lorenzo's behind-the-scenes rule had become too heavy-handed, leading to an assassination attempt organized by the Pazzi family, with the help of Pope Sixtus IV and the Archbishop of Pisa in 1478. Following the attempt on

¹ For information about the Florentine governments prior to the ascendancy of Cosimo de' Medici see Marvin B. Becker, "Florentine Popular Government (1343-1348)," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 106, no. 4 (1962): 360-382; Marvin B. Becker, "Church and State in Florence on the Eve of the Renaissance (1343-1382)," *Speculum* 37, no. 4 (1962): 509-527; Daniela De Rosa, *Alle origini della Repubblica fiorentina: dai consoli al "primo popolo" (1172-1260)* (Florence: Arnaud, 1995); Gaetano Salvemini, *Magnati e popolani in Firenze dal 1280 al 1295* (Florence: G. Carnesecchi, 1899; Turin: Einaudi, 1960); John M. Najemy, *Corporatism and Consensus in Florentine Electoral Politics, 1280-1400* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Gene A. Brucker, *Florentine Politics and Society, 1343-1378* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962); Anthony Molho, "Politics and the Ruling Class in Early Renaissance Florence," *Nuova rivista storica* 52 (1968): 401-420; Ronald G. Witt, "Florentine Politics and the Ruling Class, 1382-1407," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 6 (1976): 243-267; Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966); Gene A. Brucker, "The Medici in the Fourteenth Century," *Speculum* 32 (1957): 1-26; Anthony Molho, "The Florentine Oligarchy and the *Balie* of the Late Trecento," *Speculum* 43 (1968): 23-51.

² For information about the rule of Cosimo de' Medici in the fifteenth century see Dale Kent, *The Rise of the Medici: Faction in Florence, 1426-1434* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Nicolai Rubenstein, *The Government of Florence Under the Medici, 1434-1494* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966); Nicolai Rubenstein, "Florentine Constitutionalism and Medici Ascendancy in the Fifteenth Century," in *Florentine Studies: Politics and Society in Renaissance Florence*, ed. Nicolai Rubenstein (London: Faber, 1968), 442-462; Anthony Molho, "Cosimo de' Medici: *Pater Patriae* or *Padrino*?" *Stanford Italian Review* 1 (1979): 5-33; *Cosimo "il Vecchio" de' Medici 1389-1464*, ed. Francis Ames-Lewis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Kurt Sigmar Gutkind, *Cosimo de' Medici, pater patriae, 1389-1464* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938); Allison Brown, "Piero's Infirmary and Political Power," in *Piero de' Medici "il Gottoso" (1416-1469)*, ed. Andreas Beyer, Bruce Boucher, and Francis Ames-Lewis (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), 9-19.

his life, Lorenzo and his supporters systematically destroyed his enemies by taking their lives, wealth, and citizenship, thereby removing all pretenses that Lorenzo was less than a *de facto* prince.³ The death of Lorenzo in 1492 and feeble leadership of young Piero de' Medici allowed for the rise of Dominican priest and accomplished preacher Girolamo Savonarola in 1494.

The Reign of Savonarola

The advancing army seemed a sign that Savonarola's apocalyptic vision of the Last Days, popular with people of all social levels including Lorenzo before his death, was becoming reality. Piero, terrified of Charles's famous guns, readily accepted all of the King of France's demands on Florence, thereby inciting the Florentines to rebellion against their long-time overlords, forcing the Medici to flee the city, and paving the way for a democratic republic with Savonarola as both secular leader and priest at its head. Giving rise to a movement that would be influential long into the sixteenth century, Savonarola drastically reshaped Florence to reflect his hatred of moral laxity, particularly clamping down on sodomy, which he made a capital offense. Savonarola drew great crowds to his sermons in the cathedral of Florence until his rejection of worldliness drew the ire of the decidedly worldly Pope Alexander VI, who excommunicated him in 1497 and had him executed the following year,⁴ at which time the historiography on

³ For information about the life and rule of Lorenzo de' Medici see Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, 12 vols., ed. Riccardo Fubini, Nicolai Rubinstein, Michael Mallett, Humfrey Butters, Melissa Meriam Bullard, and Marco Pellegrini (Florence: Giunti Barbèra for the Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1977–2007); Alison Brown, *The Medici in Florence: The Exercise and Language of Power* (Florence: Olschki, 1992); Melissa Meriam Bullard, *Lorenzo il Magnifico: Image and Anxiety, Politics and Finance* (Florence: Olschki, 1994); *Lorenzo de' Medici: Studi*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini (Florence: Olschki, 1992); *Lorenzo il Magnifico e il suo tempo*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini (Florence: Olschki, 1992); *Lorenzo il Magnifico e il suo mondo*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini (Florence: Olschki, 1994); Judith Hook, *Lorenzo de' Medici: An Historical Biography* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984); Francis William Kent, *Lorenzo de' Medici and the Art of Magnificence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); *Lorenzo the Magnificent: Culture and Politics*, eds. Michael Mallett and Nicholas Mann (London: Warburg Institute, 1996); Lauro Martines, *April Blood: Florence and the Plot against the Medici* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Patrizia Salvadori, *Dominio e patronato: Lorenzo dei Medici e la Toscana nel Quattrocento* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2000).

⁴ For information about the life, rule, and death of Savonarola see *Studi savonaroliani: verso il V centenario*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini (Florence: SISMELE Edizioni del Galluzzo, 1996); Lauro Martines, *Fire in the City: Savonarola and the Struggle for the Soul of Renaissance Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Roberto Ridolfi, *The Life of Girolamo Savonarola* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1976); Umberto Mazzone and

Renaissance Florence grows thinner.⁵

The Forgotten Years in Florence

While the history of Renaissance Florence is a highly developed field, one period in the political history of the republic has been insufficiently studied. This period stretches from the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent (1492), the expulsion of the Medici (1494), and execution of Savonarola (1498), to the accession of Cosimo de' Medici, later known as the authoritarian Grand Duke Cosimo I, after Alessandro's assassination in 1537. Many works mention events such as the 1512 Medici restoration in passing and note that there was a duke installed in 1532, but fail to so much as mention his name or anything pertinent about his reign.

Although several political histories review the period between 1498 and 1537, they do not answer the questions posed by this project. John Najemy, author of *A History of Florence* (2006), mined both primary and secondary histories of the city on the Arno to construct a detailed political narrative; yet in the small section on the imposition of the dukedom, he depicts Alessandro as a bit player in a drama that Duke Alessandro seems to have at least partially directed.⁶ Even the works of historians who exclusively cover the waning years of the republic such as John N. Stephens, who studies the years between 1512 and 1530, and Humphrey C.

Domenico Cecchi, *El buon governo: un progetto di riforma generale nella Firenze savonaroliana* (Florence: Olschki, 1978); Lorenzo Polizzotto, *The Elect Nation: The Savonarolan Movement in Florence, 1494–1545* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Lorenzo Polizzotto, "Lorenzo il Magnifico, Savonarola, and Medicean Dynasticism," in *Lorenzo de' Medici: New Perspectives*, ed. Bernard Toscani (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 331-355; Stefano Dall'Aglio, *Savonarola and Savonarolism*, trans. John Gagné (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2010); Donald Weinstein, *Savonarola and Florence: Prophecy and Patriotism in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970); Donald Weinstein, *Savonarola: The Rise and Fall of a Renaissance Prophet* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

⁵ For information about the period following Savonarola's execution and the return of the Medici in 1512 see Nicolai Rubinstein, "Politics and Constitution in Florence at the End of the Fifteenth Century," in *Italian Renaissance Studies*, ed. E. F. Jacob (London: Faber and Faber, 1960), 148-183; Roslyn Pesman Cooper, "The Florentine Ruling Group Under the 'Governo Popolare,' 1494-1512," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 7 (1985): 69-181; Roslyn Pesman Cooper, "Political Survival in Early Sixteenth-Century Florence: The Case of Niccolò Valori," in *Florence and Italy*, ed. Peter Denley and Caroline Elam (London: Committee for Medieval Studies, Westfield College, 1988), 73-90; Roslyn Pesman, "Machiavelli, Soderini, and the Republic of 1494-1512," in *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*, ed. John M. Najemy (New York: Cambridge, 2010), 48-63.

⁶ John Najemy, *A History of Florence* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 461-468.

Butters, who studies the years between 1502 and 1519, successfully avoid the first ducal regime.⁷

Linked to the historiographical neglect of the political concerns between 1498 and 1537 is the tendency of social and cultural history to trail off during this period and be contained in an epilogue or an introduction to the later Renaissance. Excellent works that would otherwise be helpful, such as Michael Rocke's *Forbidden Friendships* (1996) covers the first half of the sixteenth century in just a few pages of epilogue and Eric Cochrane's *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries* (1973) opens with a brief mention of Duke Alessandro before moving on to cover the later Grand Dukes.⁸ These works are suggestive; Rocke mentions the growing rigidity of the political and social hierarchy and the emerging political force of the *giovani* or youth and how this tension between the two groups led to wild shifts in policy toward sodomy based on who held control. Yet lacking an extended narrative of how Florentine government and politics changed due to the unprecedented installation of a duke seriously limits the impact and conclusions of social and cultural scholarship.

The Republican Government in Florence before the Medici Principate

The republican constitution of Florence prior to Alessandro's rule appeared to be a functioning system that would prevent against the usurpation of power by internal and external forces. The constitution was designed to spread political power among a large group of responsible male citizens in order to prevent political parties, domination by one family, and especially one man. Terms of office were brief, lasting between two and six months and chosen by lot. In order to qualify to serve, a man had to be over 30; enrolled in one of the major guilds

⁷ H. C. Butters, *Governors and Government in Early-Sixteenth Century Florence, 1502-1519* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); J. N. Stephens, *The Fall of the Florentine Republic, 1512-1530* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

⁸ Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 227-236; Eric Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries: A History of Florence and the Florentines in the Age of the Grand Dukes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 10, 14-15.

of the city; not be bankrupt or owe back taxes; not have served in the government in the last three years; and not be related to an official elected within the last year. The most important governing body was the *Signoria*, which met daily. It was formed by nine members, eight of whom served as priors of the key guilds in the city, and one of whom was the *gonfaloniere* of justice. The *gonfaloniere*, or “standard-bearer” of justice, served as the chairman of the group, but was equal to each of the other eight members. The *Signoria* and two other councils formed the *tre maggiori*, a triumvirate of Florentine governmental power. These two other groups, the Twelve Good Men and the Sixteen Standard-Bearers, had to be canvassed by the *Signoria* and give their consent to any proposed legislation. Two additional larger councils—whose members were elected by the *Signoria*—voted on legislation. Laws passed with a two-thirds majority in both the Council of the People, which had three hundred members, and the Council of the Commune, which admitted two hundred. While these councils were responsible for voting on legislation, they could not initiate it; only the *tre maggiori* could draw up potential laws.⁹

Problems existed within the Florentine government and political system, contributing to its collapse. Class conflict and family rivalry dominated the political landscape of sixteenth-century Florence. Power was divided among the *Ottimati*, or “The Best,” the wealthier citizens from illustrious families, who usually had a monopoly on government offices; the *Popolani*, a larger, less wealthy group of citizens; the *Piagnoni*, or Savonarolans, who focused on divine forgiveness; and the *Arrabbiati*, or anti-Savonarolans.¹⁰ Outside of these groups were the four-

⁹ J. R. Hale, *Florence and the Medici: The Pattern of Control* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1977; London: Hambledon Press, 1983), 15-17, 116. For more information about the Florentine republican political system see Romolo Cagese, Giuliano Pinto, Francesco Salvestrini, and Andrea Zorzi, *Statuti della Repubblica fiorentina* (Florence: Olschki, 1999); Marvin B. Becker, *Florence in Transition*, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967–1968); Antonio Anzilotti, *La crisi costituzionale della Repubblica fiorentina* (Rome: Multigrafica, 1969); Giorgio Cadoni, *Provvisoni concernenti l'ordinamento della Repubblica fiorentina, 1494-1512* (Rome: Istituto Palazzo Borromini, 1994).

¹⁰ For information on sixteenth-century political parties in Florence see Giuseppe Revere, *I piagnoni e gli arrabbiati al tempo di fra Girolamo Savonarola* (Milan: Tip. di Vincenzo Guglielmini, 1843); Francis William Kent, “Ottimati

fifths of Florentine residents who were not politically represented, and thus feared by the other groups due to the possibility of a bloody rebellion such as that of the enfranchisement-seeking *Ciompi*, which occurred in 1378. Additionally, the Florentine constitution was remarkably unstable; it underwent ten major revisions in the years between 1378 and 1512.

The Italian Wars, Young Alessandro, and the Siege of Florence

Lasting from 1494 to 1559, the Italian Wars made Florence into a subject state of the Holy Roman Emperor. The onslaught began when King Charles VIII of France invaded the Italian peninsula at the behest of Ludovico Sforza of Milan, who hoped to press his claim to Naples. The 1494 invasion effectively marked the end of self-determining city-states in Italy. Armies allied under the banners of the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, and the later King of France, Francis I, fought the main battles. Popes often participated in the intrigue and alliance; Medici Pope Clement VII's decision to align against the Holy Roman Emperor led directly to the Sack of Rome in 1527. As the formerly independent cities of northern Italy fell to the superior military power of foreign rulers, they had to consider not only how to rebuild their walls, but also their societies.

Alessandro, future Duke of the Florentine Republic, was born in the midst of the Italian Wars of the early fifteenth century while the Medici family remained in exile from Florence following their expulsion in 1494. Alessandro's date of birth and parentage were unclear to even his contemporaries, due in part to his being born before the Medici family returned to power in Florence in 1512.¹¹ Alessandro's name does not appear in the Florentine baptismal registries

families in Florentine politics and society, 1427-1530: the Rucellai, Capponi, and Ginori," (Ph.D. Diss., University of London, 1971); Lorenzo Polizzotto, "'Dell'arte del ben morire:' the Piagnone way of death, 1494 – 1545," *I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance* 3 (1989), 27-87; Dall'Aglio, *Savonarola and Savonarolism*; Polizzotto, *The Elect Nation*.

¹¹ For information on the 1512 revolt that returned the Medici to power see J. N. Stephens, "Machiavelli's *The Prince* and the Florentine Revolution of 1512," *Italian Studies* 41 (1986): 45-61.

between the years 1510 and 1512, the dates proposed for his birth.¹² Several records state that Alessandro was born in 1512.¹³ Alessandro, by all accounts, was born outside of wedlock, yet raised as a Medici scion. Duke Lorenzo de' Medici of Urbino (1492-1519) served as Alessandro's official father.¹⁴ In a letter to Caterina de' Medici, legitimate daughter of Duke Lorenzo, Alessandro himself calls Caterina his sister, suggesting that he at least officially maintained that Lorenzo was his father.¹⁵ Alessandro's thoughts on the matter are important because rumors suggested that Giulio de' Medici, the future Pope Clement VII (1478-1535, r. 1523-1534), instead fathered Alessandro.¹⁶ The identity of Alessandro's mother also remains unclear, though she has been the subject of recent scholarly interest. Historian John K. Brackett suggested in an article and book chapter that she may have been a black African slave.¹⁷ A remarkable letter transcribed in nineteenth-century sources that has since disappeared from the Florentine archive supports claims that Alessandro's mother was at least very poor and of low status. In 1529, a woman named Simunetta, who claimed to be Alessandro's mother, begged

¹² Archivio dell'Opera di Santi Maria del Fiore, Registri Battesimali 7 & 8.

¹³ "Origine e discendenza della casa de' Medici," Syracuse University, Ranke Manuscript 74, 189r. This date makes sense, given Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici's explosive anger about Alessandro being selected as duke, despite Ippolito being older. Ippolito is thought to have been born in 1511.

¹⁴ "Origine e discendenza," 189r. Machiavelli, of course, eventually dedicated *The Prince* to Lorenzo following the death of Giuliano de' Medici (1479-1516). For information on Lorenzo's political life, see Rosemary Devonshire Jones, "Lorenzo de' Medici, Duca d'Urbino, 'Signore' of Florence?" in *Studies on Machiavelli*, ed. Myron P. Gilmore (Florence: Sansoni, 1972), 297-315; Adolfo Verdi, *Gli ultimi anni di Lorenzo de' Medici, duca d'Urbino (1515-1519)* (Este: Pietrogrande, 1888); Duke Lorenzo's music patronage has been noted, see Richard Sherr, "Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, as a Patron of Music," in *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Craig Hugh Smyth*, ed. Piero Morselli et. al. (Florence: Giunti Barbèra, 1985), 1:628-638. Given the debilitating gout-like illnesses suffered by a number of Medici family members and the fact that Lorenzo is widely believed to have died of syphilis, he is mentioned in several studies by medical professionals, see Andrea Corsini, *Malattia e morte di Lorenzo de' Medici, duca d'Urbino. Studio critico di medicina storica* (Florence: s.n., 1913); George M. Weisz, Marco Matucci-Cerinic, William R. Albury, and Donatella Lippi, "The Medici Syndrome: A Medico-Historical Puzzle," *International Journal of Rheumatic Diseases* 13, no. 2 (2010): 125-131.

¹⁵ ASF, Mediceo del Principato (MdP) 181, 26r-26v.

¹⁶ "Origine e discendenza," 189r.

¹⁷ John K. Brackett, "Race and Rulership: Alessandro de' Medici, First Medici Duke of Florence, 1529-1537," in *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, ed. K. J. P. Lowe and T. F. Earle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 303-325; John K. Brackett, "Le Duc Alexandre de Médicis et sa mère, Simonetta, 1510-1537," in *Les Africains et leurs descendants en Europe avant le XX^e siècle*, ed. Dieudonné Gnamankou and Yao Modzinou (Toulouse: MAT Éditions, 2008), 133-148. Manuscript sources support the identification of Alessandro's mother as a slave but not necessarily a black African slave; see "Origine e discendenza," 189r.

him to send money because his little brothers and sisters were starving.¹⁸ The explosive rumors concerning Duke Alessandro's birth and parentage are discussed in greater detail in chapter one.

In Florence, the 1520s were particularly turbulent and deadly. By the time Clement ascended to the papacy in 1523, the Medici controlled the elections of the most important legislative bodies in the city, but wisely maintained the façade of the republican constitution.¹⁹ Those less-than-enthusiastic about the hold of the Medici on the city were encouraged by a body of armed guards inside and outside the city, as well as patronage and client networks to keep their complaints quiet. From 1525, the teenaged Alessandro and his slightly older cousin Ippolito served as the nominal chiefs of the ruling Medici faction in Florence while Pope Clement continued to serve as the family's actual leader from Rome.²⁰ When the Sack of Rome in May of 1527 drastically weakened Clement's power, revolutionaries established a Medici-free republican government in Florence. The new government banished Alessandro, Ippolito, and

¹⁸ Letter from Simunetta to Alessandro de' Medici on February 7, 1529 in Luigi A. Ferrai, *Lorenzino de' Medici e la società cortigiana del cinquecento* (Milan: Hoepli, 1891), 449. The letter was originally held in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF) in Mediceo avanti il Principato (MaP) 126, but has disappeared since from the archive.

¹⁹ For information on the rule of Pope Clement VII in Florence and his diplomatic relationship with Charles V see *Carlo V e Clemente VII dal carteggio diplomatico*, ed. Giovannangelo di Meglio (Milan: Martello, 1970); *The Pontificate of Clement VII: History, Politics, Culture*, eds. Kenneth Gouwens and Sheryl E. Reiss (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); Herbert M. Vaughan, *The Medici Popes (Leo X and Clement VII)* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1908, rpt. 1971); Maurizio Gattoni da Camogli, *Clemente VII e la geo-politica dello Stato Pontificio, 1523-1534* (Vatican City: Archivio segreto vaticano, 2002); Rocco R. Vanasco, *The role of Clement VII in Guicciardini's works* (Strasburg, Mo.: E.B. Greene, 1969); Pietro Balan, *Clemente VII e l'Italia de' suoi tempi. Studio storico* (Milan: s.n., 1887). For information on the rule of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and his involvement with Italy see *Carlos V y la quiebra del Humanismo político en Europa (1530-1558)*, 4 vols., ed. J. Martínez Millán (Madrid: Sociedad estatal para la conmemoración de los centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V, 2001); Karl Brandi, *Carlo V* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1937; Turin: Einaudi, 2001); Giuseppe de Leva, *Storia documentata di Carlo V in correlazione all'Italia*, 4 vols. (Venice-Padua: Naratovich-Sacchetto, 1863-1881); Giuseppe Galasso, *Carlo V e Spagna imperial. Studi e ricerche* (Rome: Edizione di Storia e Letteratura, 2006); Alfred Kohler, *Carlo V* (Munich: Beck, 1999; Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2005).

²⁰ "Origine e discendenza," 189v. For scholarship on Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici see Guido Rebecchini, *Un altro Lorenzo: Ippolito de' Medici tra Firenze e Roma (1511-1535)* (Venice: Marsilio, 2010), 19-54; Lothar Sickel, "Ippolito de' Medici und das Problem seiner Geburt in Urbino," *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 88 (2008): 310-333; Luigi Fumi, "La legazione del cardinal Ippolito de' Medici nell'Umbria sopra documenti vaticani nuovamente rinvenuti," *Bollettino della regia Deputazione di storia patria per l'Umbria* 5 (1899): 477-587; Giuseppe E. Moretti, "Il cardinal Ippolito de' Medici dal tratto di Barcellona alla morte (1529-1535)," *Archivio storico italiano* 98 (1940): 137-178; Rossana Sodana, "La morte di Ippolito de' Medici: nuovi documenti dall'Archivio Gonzaga," *Lo straccifoglio* 1 (2000): 29-35.

Clement's deputy Cardinal Silvio Passerini from Florence. Alessandro and Ippolito lived in exile for the next three years.²¹

Savonarolans dominated the Florentine republic of 1527-1530, electing Christ the King of Florence.²² At the same time that the so-called Last Republic resurrected Savonarolan policies, Pope Clement VII and Holy Roman Emperor Charles V signed an agreement, The Treaty of Barcelona, on June 29, 1529. Clement promised to acknowledge the supremacy of the Habsburgs in Italy in return for Charles forcibly reinstating Medici rule in Florence. In addition, Clement and Charles promised to marry Alessandro to Charles' illegitimate daughter, Margherita, in order to solidify their political union.²³ Following the agreement, Charles' troops besieged Florence from October 1529 until the city's surrender on August 12, 1530. One-third of the Florentine population perished due to disease, famine, and casualties during the siege. Those negotiating the surrender of the city with Imperial commander Ferdinando da Gonzaga stipulated that "the city's liberty [should] be maintained." The negotiators believed that they were paving the way to a self-determining republic without a hereditary leader.²⁴ In particular, none of the republic's leaders wished to feel the wrath of a reinstated Medici dynasty.²⁵

²¹ While in exile, the boys even resorted to begging adult family members for money in order to maintain their household. *Lorenzino de' Medici*, 444-445; Ferrai, *Lorenzino de' Medici*, 445.

²² For information on the Florentine Republic of 1527-1530 see Hale, *Florence and the Medici*, 116—120; Cecil Roth, *The Last Florentine Republic* (London: Methuen & Co., 1925).

²³ Agreement between Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and Pope Clement VII concerning the marriage of Alessandro de' Medici and Margherita of Austria, ratified by Charles V on June 23, 1529, ASF, MaP 159, 167r. - 167IIIv. "Scritta Matrimoniale fra Margherita d'Austria, e il Duca Alessandro de' Medici," in Modesto Rastrelli, *Storia d'Alessandro de' Medici primo duca di Firenze* (Florence: Antonio Benucci, 1781), 2:208-220.

²⁴ ASF, Miscellanea medicea (MM) 457, 2a, 1r-6r; Capitolo sopra l'assedio di Firenze del 1529 in Rastrelli, *Storia d'Alessandro de' Medici*, 1:190-200. Arriving before Alessandro was the Pope's new deputy, Nicolaus von Schomberg, Archbishop of Capua, who entered the city in January 29, 1531. At the same time, Francesco and Luigi Guicciardini became involved in Florentine affairs. The influence of both would grow over time, particularly after the death of Pope Clement in 1534. For early examples of their engagement with Florentine politics following the siege see "Discorso di M. Francesco Guicciardini circa alla riforma di Firenze fatto a Papa Clemente dopo l'assedio" in Rastrelli, *Storia d'Alessandro de' Medici*, 1:261-269; "Parere di Luigi di Piero Guicciardini al Duca Alessandro de' Medici, sopra il fermare il governo di Firenze dopo l'assedio" in Rastrelli, *Storia d'Alessandro de' Medici*, 1:205-216.

²⁵ Despite these hopes, those who fought most fiercely against the rule of the Medici were banished, imprisoned, or executed following the capitulation. The harsh recommencement of Medici rule in 1530 seems to have laid the

The Installation, Rule, and Assassination of Duke Alessandro

Alessandro triumphantly reentered the city on July 5, 1531 bearing a declaration signed by Charles V declaring him *capo*, or head, of the government.²⁶ As head of the republic, Alessandro was allowed to sit on all legislative bodies, despite the fact that he was well under thirty, the age required of men before they could take office in the city.²⁷ Months after Alessandro's entry, Pope Clement orchestrated a drastic change in the Florentine constitution that made Alessandro hereditary Duke of Florence. On April 27, 1532, the constitution-controlling *Balia*, which was, in turn, controlled by Clement, wrote the Medici into the constitution as the city's hereditary rulers.²⁸ The *Dodici Riformati* officially conceded supreme power to Alessandro, thereby ending the last pretense of republican rule in Florence.²⁹ The *Signoria* was abolished, along with the post of *gonfaloniere*, and was replaced with four councilors who were responsible to a 48-man Senate. Alessandro was named the perpetual Chairman of the councilors, and was to be called the Duke of the Florentine Republic. Upon confirmation of this change, Alessandro acted decisively and removed the great bell from the

groundwork for many complaints about the tyranny of Duke Alessandro's rule. For a list of those exiled and imprisoned in 1530 see "Nota di Banditi, e confinati dopo la Guerra del 1530," in Rastrelli, *Storia d'Alessandro de' Medici*, 1:221-231.

²⁶ Charles V signed the investiture of Alessandro de' Medici as *capo* in October 28, 1530. Copies in MM 363, 12; MM 457, 9a; Carte strozziane, serie I, 312, cc. 326-368. Charles's investiture of Alessandro was not promulgated in Florence until July 1531. Alessandro was recognized by the *Balia* of Florence—which was not directly controlled by Charles V—on February 17, 1531; see Rastrelli, *Storia d'Alessandro de' Medici*, 1:205-216. Although Ippolito de' Medici had once served as co-ruler with Alessandro, Clement arranged for Alessandro alone to rule as *capo* of Florence. Cardinal Ippolito reportedly expressed fury at Clement's decision, which would eventually lead to political maneuvering by Ippolito, especially after Clement's death. Rebecchini, *Un altro Lorenzo*, 55-88.

²⁷ Hale, *Florence and the Medici*, 113, 119. Alessandro was not the first underage Medici allowed to take office; Lorenzo il Magnifico and Ippolito de' Medici were given similar rights.

²⁸ "Riforma di Firenze nel 1532, April 27, 1532," in Rastrelli, *Storia d'Alessandro de' Medici*, 1:304-328; Giuseppe Pansini, "Le 'Ordinazioni' del 27 aprile 1532 e l'assetto politico del principato mediceo," in *Studi in memoria di Giovanni Cassandro*, ed. Renato Grispo (Rome: Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali—Ufficio centrale per i beni archivistici, 1991), 761-785.

²⁹ ASF, MM 457, 5.

tower of the *Signoria*, which previous partisans had sounded to signal a regime change or uprising. In addition, Alessandro ordered every citizen stripped of his weaponry.³⁰

Documents written by or in the name of Duke Alessandro illustrate the day-to-day work of the new ducal government, notable for its normalcy since several accounts discussed in the first chapter paint Alessandro's rule as overwhelmingly tyrannical and sadistic. Among the documents written by Alessandro in the *Archivio di Stato di Firenze* are letters between Duke Alessandro and his cousin—and future assassin—Lorenzino de' Medici. While Lorenzino lived in Rome before 1535, Alessandro requested his help in lobbying for the installation of an allied bishop to an open post.³¹ Letters demonstrate that Alessandro intervened in other church affairs, for example, recommending a replacement for the deceased organist at the Cathedral of Pisa³² and requesting additional funds to support an impoverished convent.³³ Duke Alessandro interceded on behalf of his subjects, writing to Andrea Doria to request the return of clothing and other goods taken from a Florentine citizen in a pirate attack.³⁴ Alessandro thanked a number of individuals and communities for their gifts of food,³⁵ but he was politically savvy enough to reprimand Giuliano Salviati for having his gift of pheasants delivered by a banished man.³⁶

Alessandro's letters demonstrate not only a typical aristocratic interest in hunting, but also a remarkable early interest in the official conservation of trees and animals. In 1533,

³⁰ Hale, *Florence and the Medici*, 120-1.

³¹ ASF, MM 301, ins. 1, 10r., 12r.

³² ASF, Mediceo del Principato (MdP) 181, 4r.

³³ ASF, MdP 181, 95r.-95v.

³⁴ ASF, MdP 181, 28r.

³⁵ Alessandro thanked Iacopo V Appiani, Prince of Piombino for his gift of fish on July 23, 1535 in ASF, MdP 181, 207r; Alessandro thanked the community of San Gimignano for their customary gift of 80 flasks of Greco wine on June 25, 1535 in ASF, MdP 181, 207v; Alessandro thanked the community of Poggibonsi for their gift of peaches on September 1, 1535 in ASF, MdP 181, 241r.

³⁶ ASF, MdP 181, 66r. "E' fagianj che m'haj mandati mi son stati gratissimi e tene ringrazio assai. Ma com' haj tu hauto si poca discrezione a mandarmi quello tuo inanzi sendo come egli è bandito. Non pensi tu che'io non harei potuto ne potrei mancar di non lasciar seguir l'ordine que ne fussi venuto caso contrargli. Queste son cose da pensargli che sai questo importino. Ten' ho voluto avvertir et mostrarli ch' io t' ho hauto riguardo un'altra volta sij piu cauto sendo dorrati dite stesso..."

Alessandro wrote to the President of Romagna and requested that his falconer's father be absolved of misdemeanors committed in the territory.³⁷ Duke Alessandro certainly enjoyed the princely sport of hunting, but he also appears to have used his position to establish environmental protections for the stated intention of conservation. Writing to the Commissar of Arezzo, Podestà of Castiglione, Captain of Cortona, Captain of Montepulciano, and Podestà of Foiano on April 25, 1535, Alessandro sought to conserve [*conservino*] a species of heron by banning their mistreatment and killing, as well as damage to their nests.³⁸ Alessandro's interest in the conservation of the heron should not be taken lightly; he wrote to the very men upon whom he depended most for keeping peace within his territory to publicize his ban. Duke Alessandro's interest in environmental conservation was not limited to protection of animals. In a letter sent to Andrea Doria in 1534, Alessandro forcefully lobbied on behalf of the citizens of Pietrasanta after Doria's forces harmed their woodland by gathering timber. He argued that Doria's soldiers had "damaged a certain forest conserved [*conservata*] by them with the greatest diligence." Alessandro wrote that the citizens preserved the forest less for timber, but more for "the benefit that the earth from it receives in respect to the air."³⁹

Duke Alessandro's letters relating to politics demonstrate that the majority of his efforts were directed at preserving the new Medici duchy, particularly after the death of Pope Clement VIII. In the early years of Alessandro's reign, he passed legislation against *sporgenti*, or

³⁷ ASF, MdP 181, 8r.

³⁸ ASF, MdP 181, 193r.-193v. "Desiderando io si conservino à quel paese certa sorte di uccelli nuncupati aieronj, per posserne qui n' occorressi transferirmi in quelle bande prendermi piacer per fare volare, mi sarà grato alla receputa V.S. provegga per pubblici bandi della iurisdizione amministra che alchuno presumma ammazzar', perseguitar', pigliar', ne guastar' nidi o dar alchun'altro impedimento alli decti uccelli per privarli del paese sotto quella pena et preiudicio occorrerà..."

³⁹ ASF, MdP 181, 35r. "Quelli pover huomini di Pietrasanta sono stati qui à me dolendosi come passando di là le galere di V. Ex. alli 23 del presente havevono posto in terra in quelle spiagge molti huomini, parte soldati, parte tagliatori di legnami, et dannificando grandemente una certa selva conservata da loro con grandissima diligentia et molto riguardata non tanto per la utilità del legname quanto per il beneficio che quella terra ne riceve rispetto all'aere, tenendo per certo che tale selva non fusse, sarebbe necessario d'abbandonar quel sito..."

additions to buildings that projected over the base dimensions of the structure.⁴⁰ Yet only two and a half years after Alessandro became Duke of the Florentine Republic, the illness and subsequent death of Clement placed the nascent dukedom in jeopardy. Alessandro letters display anxiety about the stability of his state as Clement's health declined in 1534. Alessandro wrote to foreign rulers such as Francesco Maria Sforza to reaffirm their bonds,⁴¹ updated his deputies in cities throughout Tuscany on the health of Clement,⁴² and notified his allies when Pope Clement died on September 26, 1534.⁴³ As Clement was dying on September 4th, Alessandro reprimanded Capitano Giuliano de' Medici for treating a political prisoner too liberally.⁴⁴ The letter is notable because it contains evidence of Alessandro's attitude toward the punishment of prisoners; critics such as Lorenzino de' Medici claimed after Alessandro's death that he was exceptionally cruel. In the wake of Clement's death, Alessandro continued building the Fortezza di Firenze, also known as the Fortezza da Basso, a bastion intended to house the Emperor's troops and to keep the Duke, his advisors, and eventual wife safe in the event of an uprising of Florentine citizens.⁴⁵ Bishops, soldiers, and Duke Alessandro celebrated the completion of the fortress on September 5, 1535 with a Mass and orations.⁴⁶

The death of Clement VII inspired a number of Florentine *fuorusciti*, or exiles, to demand that Charles V remove Alessandro from power on the grounds of his tyrannical rule and replace

⁴⁰ ASF, MM 39, fasc. 4, cc. 1-4.

⁴¹ Alessandro de' Medici to Francesco Maria Sforza, December 1, 1534 in Ferrai, *Lorenzino de' Medici*, 456; Alessandro de' Medici to Francesco Maria Sforza, December 14, 1534 in Ferrai, *Lorenzino de' Medici*, 456.

⁴² ASF, MdP 181, 103r.-103v.

⁴³ ASF, MdP 181, 112r.

⁴⁴ ASF, MdP 181, 95r. "Questi mag.ci Otto di Balia si sono molto risentiti meco di te. Dicendo haver confinato nel fondo della torre di quella fortezza Vinc.o Martelli et mandatovelo che tu contro l' honor di quel mag.to permetti che da ciaschuno li sia parlato et che li scriva liberamente et facci quello che li pare senza tener cura alchuna d'esso..."

⁴⁵ J. R. Hale, "The End of Florentine Liberty: The Fortezza da Basso," in *Florentine Studies: Politics and Society in Renaissance Florence*, ed. Nicolai Rubinstein (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 501-532; Hale, *Florence and the Medici*, 120-1. Alessandro summoned the architect Antonio da Sangallo the Younger to Florence on March 10, 1534, presumably to discuss building the fortress. ASF, MdP 181, 11v. Another copy of Alessandro's letter to Sangallo exists in ASF, CS, I, 95, 21v.

⁴⁶ ASF, MdP 181, 283r.-285v.

him with his cousin, Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici.⁴⁷ Ippolito, still furious about Alessandro gaining power in Florence, fully participated in the efforts to depose Alessandro—until his sudden death in 1535 just before the exiles were to speak to Charles V.⁴⁸ The exiles' spokesman, the future historian Jacopo Nardi, delivered an oration before the Emperor in Naples in 1535.⁴⁹ Although the *fuorusciti* brought forth damning charges of personal cruelty and lascivious behavior with protected women such as consecrated virgins and well-born daughters,⁵⁰ Charles refused to act on the word of the exiles.⁵¹ Instead of removing him from power, Charles V instead carried out his earlier promise to marry his illegitimate daughter Margherita to

⁴⁷ Galeotto Giugno wrote a narration of the activities of the *fuorusciti* that serves as the definitive primary source concerning their efforts; see ASF, CS, I, 95, 73v.-98v. For information on the Florentine exiles during and after Duke Alessandro's rule see Lucie De Los Santos, "Iacopo Nardi et les exilés florentins (1534-1537): élaboration d'un nouveau discours républicain," *Laboratoire italien. Politique et société* 3 (2002): 51-78; Guido Rebecchini, "Fonti mantovane sul conflitto fra Alessandro de' Medici e i fuoriusciti fiorentini durante la visita a Napoli di Carlo V nel 1536," *Archivio storico italiano* 156, no. 3 (1998): 517-528; Paolo Simoncelli, *Fuoriuscitismo repubblicano fiorentino, 1530-54* (Milan: F. Angeli, 2006); Paolo Simoncelli, "The Turbulent Life of the Florentine Community in Venice," in *Heresy, Culture, and Religion in Early Modern Italy: Contexts and Contestations*, eds. Ronald K. Delph, Michelle M. Fontaine, and John Jeffries Martin (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2006), 113-133; Carlo Capasso, *Firenze, Filippo Strozzi, i fuorusciti, e la corte pontificia* (Camerino: Savini, 1901); Paola Cosentino and Lucie De Los Santos, "Un nuovo documento sul fuoriuscitismo fiorentino: undici lettere inedite di Luigi Alamanni a Filippo Strozzi (aprile 1536-febbraio 1537)," *Laboratoire italien. Politique e société* 1 (2001): 141-167; Théa Picquet, "Un républicain florentin à Venise: Breve discorso di Jacopo Nardi fatto in Venezia dopo la morte di Papa Clemente settimo l'anno 1534," *Rinascimento* 44 (2004): 117-137; Lucie De Los Santos, "Florence et les exilés républicains. Le tournant de 1534-1537," in *Les années trente du XVI^e siècle italien*, ed. Danielle Boillet and Michel Plaisance (Paris: Centre Interuniversitaire de Recherche sur la Renaissance Italienne, 2007).

⁴⁸ "Istruzione del Cardinale Ippolito de' Medici ad un suo Agente appresso all'Imperadore Carlo V, persuadendolo a levare lo stato di Firenze al Duca Alessandro, e darlo al ditto Cardinale," in Rastrelli, *Storia d'Alessandro de' Medici*, 2:221-240. For information on the death of Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici see Rebecchini, *Un altro Lorenzo*, 117-130; Moretti, "Il cardinal Ippolito de' Medici," 137-178; Sodana, "La morte di Ippolito de' Medici," 29-35.

⁴⁹ Multiple copies of the exiles' oration exist in the Florentine archive. ASF, MM 39, fasc. 25, pp. 58-78; ASF, MM 457, 4; ASF, CS, I, 98, cc. 4-13.

⁵⁰ The veracity of the claims against Duke Alessandro are very much open for debate. One archival source details the fight between Filippo Strozzi, leader of the *fuorusciti*, and Duke Alessandro following an unspecified insult directed at Filippo's daughter, Luisa Strozzi, who died shortly thereafter under suspicious circumstances. See ASF, MM 457, ins. 7, cc. 28. Nicholas Scott Baker compared the sexual reputations of Dukes Alessandro and Cosimo in a recent article, finding that Duke Alessandro earned his reputation as a tyrant not due to his political policies, but for his sexual transgressions. Nicholas Scott Baker, "Power and Passion in Sixteenth-Century Florence: The Sexual and Political Reputations of Alessandro and Cosimo I de' Medici," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 19, no. 3 (2010), 432-457. The first chapter discusses the debates concerning Duke Alessandro's sexuality in greater depth.

⁵¹ A copy of the Emperor's response can be found in ASF, MM 39, fasc. 25, pp. 81-83. A copy of the exiles' response to Charles' response can be found in ASF, MM 39, fasc. 25, pp. 84-85. Charles' final response may be found in ASF, CS, I, 98, cc. 169-171.

Alessandro.⁵² Following the February 1536 nuptials, Charles paid a ceremonial visit to the city in the same spring, further signaling his support of Alessandro.⁵³

As Duke Alessandro attempted to fend off the *fuorusciti* he gained a new friend and ally, his cousin Lorenzino de' Medici, who would eventually assassinate him. Lorenzino had lived in Rome in the early 1530s, but was forced to leave the city by Clement VII after he decapitated statues on the Arch of Constantine in 1534.⁵⁴ Lorenzino returned to Florence and joined Alessandro's court, becoming a close confidant of Alessandro, as well as his alleged procurer of sexual partners. At the same time that Lorenzino was becoming Duke Alessandro's most trusted associate, he allegedly made contact with the *fuorusciti* and their leader, Filippo Strozzi.⁵⁵ Lorenzino planned the assassination knowing that Duke Alessandro was exceptionally cautious to avoid attacks by employing bodyguards, wearing armor at almost all times, and even owning an antidote to poison.⁵⁶ Lorenzino supposedly lured Alessandro to his doom by promising the Duke a sexual encounter with the assassin's beautiful aunt.⁵⁷ Once Alessandro was locked in Lorenzino's room without his armor and bodyguards, Lorenzino and his servant Scoronconcolo entered to carry out the assassination.

Six years after his installation as Duke of the Florentine Republic, on the night of January 6, 1537, Duke Alessandro lay dead on the floor of his cousin Lorenzino's house on the Via

⁵² An incomplete copy of the financial settlement Alessandro made with Charles V in Naples in February of 1536 in order to marry Margherita may be found in ASF, MaP 159, 232r-232v; an incomplete copy of the agreements between Charles V and Duke Alessandro on February 28, 1536 concerning the marriage of Alessandro and Margherita may be found in ASF, MaP 159, 233r.-237v.

⁵³ Descriptions of the visit may be found in ASF, MM 364, 4 and Giovanbattista di Gherardo Incontri, "Diary notes, 1536-1572," Getty Research Center, 1r-4v.

⁵⁴ "Vita di Lorenzino de Medici e morte del Duca Alessandro e del medesimo Lorenzino," Newberry Library, VAULT Case MS DG738.14 .A1 V5, 353r-v. The attack on the Arch of Constantine earned Lorenzino the hatred of many Roman citizens, including Francesco Maria Molza, who gave an oration against him. See Francesco Maria Molza, "Orazione contro Lorenzino de' Medici," in *Lorenzino de' Medici: Scritti e documenti ora per la prima volta raccolti* (Milan: Daelli, 1862), 135-149; "Vita di Lorenzino," 354r.; Stefano Dall'Aglio, *L'Assassino del duca: Esilio e morte di Lorenzino de' Medici* (Florence: Olschki, 2011), 2.

⁵⁵ "Vita di Lorenzino," 354r., 355r.

⁵⁶ ASF, MdP 3101a, 882.

⁵⁷ "Vita di Lorenzino," 355r.-360v.

Larga.⁵⁸ Reports about the events inside the assassination chamber vary; it seems that Lorenzino and his servant stabbed Alessandro with a dagger several times while the Duke fought back to the point that he bit off a significant portion of one of Lorenzino's fingers. Eventually, Alessandro succumbed to his wounds and Lorenzino and Scoronconcolo fled from the palace—after locking the door to the chamber to prevent their crime from being discovered too quickly.⁵⁹ The irony that Alessandro, "feared and hated by everyone," was "murdered by Lorenzo de' Medici, his favorite," was lost on no one.⁶⁰ A contemporary account poignantly sums up the betrayal: Alessandro "had been killed by the one whom he loved more than himself, who if asked to divide Florence, to Lorenzo it would have been granted by Alessandro."⁶¹ Lorenzino later claimed that his crime was laudable despite the Duke's trust and affection for him, because his "aim was to liberate Florence; and killing Alessandro was the means to this end."⁶² Yet Lorenzino immediately fled the city instead of sounding an alarm to signal revolt, using the excuse of needing to visit his sick brother in order to receive permission to exit Florence in the middle of the night.⁶³

The discovery of Alessandro's assassination provoked a crisis among the Medici faction in Florence, who lost not only the ruling duke, but also his heir when Lorenzino fled the city. On the morning of January 7th, Alessandro's servants and advisors quietly searching for the missing

⁵⁸ Benedetto Varchi, *Storia fiorentina* (Colonia: Pietro Martello, 1721), 593; "Vita di Lorenzino," 366v. Superstitious people noted the recurrence of the number six in Alessandro's assassination: he died of six knife wounds, in the sixth year of his rule, in 1536 (according to the Florentine calendar), at the sixth hour of the night, on the sixth day of the month, and at age 26.

⁵⁹ "Vita di Lorenzino," 355r.-360v.; Dall'Aglio, *L'Assassino del duca*, 3-7.

⁶⁰ Jacopo Pitti, *Istoria fiorentina* (Naples: Liguori, 2007), 1:196. "Nel quinto anno, dipoi, temuto e odiato da tutti quanti, è da Lorenzo de' Medici, suo favorito, scannato."

⁶¹ "Cronica dopo la morte del Duca Alessandro de' Medici, fino al 1555," University of Pennsylvania (UPenn), Rare Books and Manuscript Library (RBML), Ms. Codex 564, 1r. "Et amazzò quello che più di se stesso amava, che se avessi chiesto di dividere Firenze, gli sarebbe da Alessandro stata concessa."

⁶² Lorenzino de' Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, trans. Andrew Brown (London: Hesperus, 2004), 12; Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), Miscellanea Medicea (MM), filza 457, inserto 8, Lorenzino de' Medici, "Apologia," 7v. "Dico dunque che il fine mi era di liberar Firenze, e l'ammazzare Alessandro, era il mezzo..."

⁶³ "Vita di Lorenzino," 361r.-361v.

Duke realized that Lorenzino's chambers, located in the same palace complex on the Via Larga as Alessandro's home, were locked. After locating a key and discovering Alessandro's corpse, they conspired to secretly move his body to the Sagrestia Vecchia in the Church of San Lorenzo in order to prevent news of the assassination provoking an uprising in the city.⁶⁴ One Florentine diarist reported that Alessandro's tomb turned "dirty and black because of his body," presumably because terrible sins were thought to produce posthumous distortion and blackening of the corpse.⁶⁵ Trusted advisors gathered to secure Alessandro's belongings and family members in the Fortezza da Basso in case of a revolt while sending news of Alessandro's death to foreign leaders, including Charles V.⁶⁶ The Otto di Guardia and Balìa condemned Lorenzino's actions days after the assassination, then reaffirmed their stance in a much longer statement several months later.⁶⁷ With the death of Alessandro, the Medici family had lost the last male descendant of the elder branch of the family, provoking spirited discussions about the succession of the newly-created duchy.

The leaders of Florence ultimately selected seventeen-year-old Cosimo de' Medici, son of Giovanni delle Bande Nere and Maria Salviati de' Medici, as the new Duke of the Florentine

⁶⁴ "Vita di Lorenzino," 367v.

⁶⁵ Agostino Lapini, *Diario fiorentino* (Florence: G.C. Sansoni, 1900), 101.

⁶⁶ ASF, MM 513, 17r.-18v.; Dall'Aglio, *L'Assassino del duca*, 322-324; Rastrelli, *Storia d'Alessandro de' Medici*, 2:267-269.

⁶⁷ Stefano Dall'Aglio, *L'Assassino del duca*, 326-327, 328-330. The reasons for Lorenzino's assassination of Duke Alessandro have been debated since the moment the duke's body was discovered. Even contemporary accounts list the possible reasons for the assassination without providing a definitive opinion on the primary reason. Some people thought that Lorenzino assassinated Alessandro because he had a bad nature and bad *animo*; others believed he did it to cancel the shame of the Arch of Constantine affair and the oration against him by Molza; yet others thought he performed the act in order to do something that would make him immortal; still others were convinced that he, although born a Medici, wanted to be a member of the *popolani*. "Vita di Lorenzino," 364r.-364v. Lorenzino wrote in his *Apologia* that the confusion over his motives provoked him to write the tract, although his stated reasons of wishing to restore the republican government and rid Florence of a tyrant are at odds with his behavior, particularly rushing out of Florence before raising the alarm and performing the assassination without an army of *fuorusciti* waiting outside the gates. Several copies of Lorenzino's *Apologia* exist in the Florentine archive, among the copies are ASF, MM 457, 5 and ASF, MM scat. 39, fasc. 25, 30-50.

Republic.⁶⁸ Although Cosimo was a Medici, he descended not from the line emanating from Cosimo il Vecchio de' Medici (1389-1464), but from the so-called lesser or *popolano* branch of the family than began with Cosimo's brother, Lorenzo de' Medici (1390-1440). Cosimo il Vecchio's line included Lorenzo il Magnifico, Popes Leo X and Clement VII, and Duke Alessandro. Conversely, the *popolano* branch wielded far less power, sometimes opposed Lorenzo il Magnifico openly, and was relegated to second-class status within the family after the 1470s. Symbolic of the division in the family is the fact that the *popolano* archival documents were maintained by Cosimo's grandmother, Caterina Sforza Riario, separate from those of the main branch until her death.⁶⁹ Selecting a new duke from the *popolano* branch inspired significant debate, yet Alessandro's advisors and the Senate of Florence had few options and limited time if they hoped to maintain stability in the city. The only other contender for rule was Giulio, the infant, illegitimate son of Duke Alessandro. Considering that the child was the product of a long-standing relationship between Duke Alessandro and a widow from a key advisor's family, Giulio was seriously considered, yet his age and illegitimacy ultimately prevented his selection.⁷⁰ Upon his accession, Cosimo declared Lorenzino a traitor and put a bounty on his head.⁷¹ Despite the official condemnation of Lorenzino, the assassin lived in Constantinople, then Venice for over a decade before his assassination in 1548.⁷² For the next 37 years, Cosimo I de' Medici stabilized and expanded the Tuscan state, creating a *popolano*

⁶⁸ "Vita di Lorenzino," 367v.

⁶⁹ For information on the division of the Medici family and its impact see Alison Brown, "Pierfrancesco de' Medici, 1430–1476: A Radical Alternative to Elder Medicean Supremacy?" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 42 (1979): 81–103; Vanna Arrighi and Francesca Klein, "Strategie familiari e competizione politica alle origini dell'Archivio mediceo," in *I Medici in rete* (Florence: Olschki, 2003), 83–113, see page 88 for information on Caterina maintaining the archive of Cosimo's ancestors; Brown, *The Medici in Florence*, 73.

⁷⁰ ASF, MM 22, fasc. 8, cc. 1–4.

⁷¹ "Vita di Lorenzino," 368r.

⁷² "Vita di Lorenzino," 368v., 369v.–370r. Recent scholarship has proven that Lorenzino's assassins did not act on the orders of Duke Cosimo I, as has been believed for nearly 500 years. Instead, it seems that Charles V, furious that his son-in-law had been murdered, served as the quiet hand behind the assassination of Lorenzino. Dall'Aglio, *L'Assassino del duca*, 147–256.

dynasty that would last into the eighteenth century.

The Scholarship on Alessandro de' Medici

Comparing the attention paid to Duke Alessandro by modern historians to that given to his assassin demonstrates a number of significant lapses in the scholarship on the first Duke of the Florentine Republic that cannot be attributed to a general gap in the historiography on late Renaissance Florence. Duke Alessandro's life and reign have not been the subjects of a scholarly monograph since the eighteenth century.⁷³ This dissertation serves as the first book-length project related to Alessandro de' Medici since Modesto Rastrelli's *Storia d'Alessandro de' Medici primo duca di Firenze*, published in Italian in 1781.⁷⁴ Rastrelli's two-volume account mainly serves as a vehicle conveying transcribed documents to a larger audience; the brief narrative is interspersed with large blocks of primary source quotations and is followed by disproportionately long document appendices in each of the volumes. A practitioner of political history, Rastrelli focused on the workings of the Florentine government and the relationship between the Medici and Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. In contrast to the absence of modern historical book-length scholarship on Alessandro, two academic monographs on the life and *Apologia* of Alessandro's assassin, Lorenzino de' Medici, were published in 2011 alone.⁷⁵ Scholarship on Lorenzino de' Medici continuously flourished in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,⁷⁶ resulting in these two recent books contributing new knowledge on the relatively

⁷³ Alessandro's marriage and wife Margherita were the subject of a history in the first half of the twentieth century. See Giovanni de Caesaris, *Alessandro de' Medici e Margherita d'Austria, duchi di Penne, 1522-1586* (Penne: Presso l'autore, 1931).

⁷⁴ Rastrelli, *Storia d'Alessandro de' Medici*.

⁷⁵ Dall'Aglio, *L'Assassino del duca*; Stephanie H. Jed, *Wings of Our Courage: Gender, Erudition, and Republican Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

⁷⁶ G. O. Corazzini, "Il chiasso del traditore et la casa di Lorenzino de' Medici," *Miscellanea fiorentina di erudizione e storia* 1, no. 12 (1886): 177-183; Ferrai, *Lorenzino de' Medici*; E. Baldoni, *Lorenzino de' Medici a l'Apologia* (Ancona: Atima, 1950); Vincenzo Fronza, *Lorenzino de' Medici, l'uomo, gli amori, i tempi: saggio storico* (Milan: Gastoldi, 1958); Marina Marietti, "Lorenzino de' Medici, Disciple de Machiavel," *Revue des Etudes Italiennes* 16, no. 4 (1970): 331-364; Ferruccio Martini, *Lorenzino de' Medici e il tirannicidio nel Rinascimento* (Rome: Multigrafica, 1972); Stephanie H. Jed, "Tyrannicide's Imago: Lorenzino de' Medici and the Imprint of Human

peripheral topics of Lorenzino's life after Alessandro's assassination and the discussion of gender, the body, and politics in Lorenzino's *Apologia*. Lorenzino and his most famous work certainly merit attention, but so too does the founder of the Medici ducal dynasty.

While historians have not published a major monograph on Alessandro de' Medici since the eighteenth century, fiction writers, art historians, and literary critics have continually used him as a subject and muse. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Alessandro, Lorenzino, and the assassination were the subject of several popular plays and fictional works in England⁷⁷ and France.⁷⁸ In recent years, art historians, who study the duke as the subject and patron of paintings and architecture, have produced a number of articles on Alessandro de' Medici.⁷⁹ The

Action," (PhD Diss., Yale University, 1982); Emmanuel Bourassin, "Lorenzaccio, Le plus raté des Médicis," *Historama* (March 1985): 86-91; Manfredi Piccolomini, *The Brutus Revival: Parricide and Tyrannicide During the Renaissance* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991); Stefano Dall'Aglio, "Nota sulla redazione e sulla datazione dell'*Apologia* di Lorenzino de' Medici," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* LXXI, no. 2 (2009): 233-241; Stefano Dall'Aglio, "Il presunto colpevole: Giovan Francesco Lottini e l'assassinio di Lorenzino de' Medici," *Rivista storica italiana* 121 (2009) 840-856.

⁷⁷ *The Revenger's Tragedy*, published anonymously in English in 1607 or 1608, was usually attributed to Cyril Tourneur, but scholars now believe it to have been written by Thomas Middleton. See Cyril Tourneur, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, ed. R. A. Foakes (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1966). James Shirley's *The Traitor* was first published in 1635. See James Shirley, *The Traitor*, ed. John Stewart Carter (Lincoln, NE: The University of Nebraska Press, 1965). For scholarship relating to these fictional accounts see N. W. Bawcutt, "The Revenger's Tragedy and the Medici Family," *Notes and Queries* 202 (1957): 192-3; N. W. Bawcutt, "The Assassination of Alessandro de' Medici in Early Seventeenth-Century English Drama," *The Review of English Studies* 56, no. 225 (2005): 412-423. Marguerite of Navarre's *Heptameron* novella 12 is typically regarded as a key source for these early English dramas, which were published while the major histories of Florence in the sixteenth century remained in manuscript form. Marguerite de Navarre, *The Heptameron*, ed. and trans. Paul A. Chilton (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 158-163.

⁷⁸ Musset's nineteenth-century French play *Lorenzaccio* has garnered the most attention from recent scholars. See Alfred de Musset, "Lorenzaccio," in *Historical dramas of Alfred de Musset*, trans. David Sices (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), 47-158. Alexandre Dumas wrote a novel about Alessandro's Florence. Alexandre Dumas, *Une nuit à Florence sous Alexandre de Médicis* (Paris, M. Lévy frères, 1861). For scholarship relating to these fictional accounts see Paul Dimoff, *La genèse de Lorenzaccio* (Paris: E. Droz, 1936); Joyce G. Bromfield, *De Lorenzino de Médicis à Lorenzaccio*. Paris: M. Didier, 1972. Later, for a Hollywood motion picture, Frank Morgan, the future Wizard of Oz, was nominated for an Academy Award for his role as Duke Alessandro in *The Affairs of Cellini* (1934).

⁷⁹ Carl B. Strehlke and Elizabeth Cropper, *Pontormo, Bronzino, and the Medici: The Transformation of the Renaissance Portrait in Florence* (Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2004); Carl B. Strehlke, "Alessandro de' Medici and the Palazzo Pazzi," *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin* 81, no. 348 (1985): 3-15; Vanessa Walker-Oakes, "Representing the Perfect Prince: Pontormo's *Alessandro de' Medici*," *Comitatus* 32 (2001): 127-146; L. Steinberg, "Pontormo's Alessandro de' Medici, or, I Only Have Eyes For You," *Art in America* 63 (1975): 62-65; Ken Sutherland, Beth A. Price, Irma Passeri, and Mark Tucker, "A Study of the Materials of Pontormo's 'Portrait of Alessandro de' Medici,'" *MRS Proceedings* 852 (2004), OO2.2 doi:10.1557/PROC-852-OO2.2.

lasting importance of Duke Alessandro outside of the field of history suggests that the reasons for the dearth of scholarship by historians may not be due to disinterest. It is possible that the depiction of Alessandro as a rapacious dictator in drama and published primary sources scared historians away from studying him. Yet the stacks of secondary works on Hitler, Stalin, and Mao suggest that historians are anything but put off by the study of rulers with terrible reputations. Instead, the imbalance in interest in Duke Alessandro may stem from the relative lack of archival sources from Alessandro's reign, which would be less problematic for those working in art history, literature, and drama.

A broad historical reassessment of Duke Alessandro's life and reign remains to be published; in the meantime, scholars have either avoided discussing his rule in depth or repeat the negative depiction of him drawn from published histories by Benedetto Varchi, Jacopo Nardi, and Bernardo Segni—discussed in chapters one and two. Duke Alessandro has not been entirely ignored by historians, yet his rule often forms a prologue or epilogue to the actual work. For example, in Eric Cochrane's *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries: A History of Florence and the Florentines in the Age of the Grand Dukes*, the rule of Duke Alessandro is mentioned on just a few pages in the opening chapter, despite his role as the founder of the Medici dukedom.⁸⁰ The Medici Granducal years were once forgotten relative to the Florentine republican era, yet the reign of Alessandro remains forgotten as work on the Medici Grand Dukes has flourished.

When Duke Alessandro is the subject of a chapter or article, he is often used to demonstrate sixteenth-century attitudes toward sexuality or race while the general depiction of him remains unquestioned. The possibility that Duke Alessandro was born to a black African slave has inspired the most scholarly interest in the last ten years. Art historian Gabrielle Langdon suggested that Duke Alessandro's mother may have been of African lineage, and John

⁸⁰ Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries*, 10, 14-15.

Brackett identified Alessandro de' Medici as “a black man,” according to modern American racial categories.⁸¹ Massimo Firpo and Salvatore Lo Re compared depictions of Duke Alessandro and found that the representation of his skin and eye color varied wildly, apparently based on the artist and desires of the patron.⁸² Concerning Alessandro's sexuality, Nicholas Scott Baker recently demonstrated that Alessandro was characterized as a tyrant due to his sexual behavior, and not due to his governance.⁸³ Each of these findings have contributed greatly to our understanding of late Renaissance Florentine attitudes concerning race and sexuality, yet the authors sometimes briefly express doubts about the primary sources' claims the Duke Alessandro was a lecherous tyrant—although the lack of archival evidence and few favorable published accounts prevent them from doing more than speculating.

The most innovative work on the sixteenth-century Medici comes from historians closely studying not only new archival documents, but also publishing patterns and lapses in the Florentine archives that point to systematic memory manipulation by the Medici Grand Dukes, perpetrated on their own family members. Guido Rebecchini and Stefano Dall'Aglio have looked outside of Florence for new archival sources on Alessandro and Lorenzino, respectively.⁸⁴ Rebecchini's recent monograph on Ippolito de' Medici demonstrates that Duke Cosimo I systematically destroyed archival traces of the important cardinal.⁸⁵ Dall'Aglio discovered that Lorenzino was himself assassinated not on Cosimo I's orders, as always believed, but secretly by Emperor Charles V himself.⁸⁶ The allegations of archival manipulation by the Medici Grand Dukes are supported by Caroline Callard, who studied Florentine historical

⁸¹ Brackett, “Race and Rulership,” 303-325; Brackett, “Le Duc Alexandre de Médicis,” 133-148.

⁸² Massimo Firpo and Salvatore Lo Re, “Gli occhi azzurri di Alessandro de' Medici: note su una copia di un celebre ritratto di Iacopo Pontormo,” *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* XLIX, no. 3 (2005), 413-426.

⁸³ Baker, “Power and Passion,” 432-457.

⁸⁴ Rebecchini, “Fonti mantovane,” 517-528; Dall'Aglio, *L'Assassino del duca*.

⁸⁵ Guido Rebecchini, *Un altro Lorenzo: Ippolito de' Medici tra Firenze e Roma (1511-1535)* (Venice: Marsilio, 2010), 263-274.

⁸⁶ Dall'Aglio, *L'Assassino del duca*, 147-257.

ensorship carried out under the Medici Grand Dukes.⁸⁷ In his article on Duke Alessandro's sexual reputation, Nicholas Scott Baker briefly wrote about the fact that sources depicting Alessandro in a favorable light were not published in Florence, but elsewhere in Italy, as if they had been banned by Cosimo I.⁸⁸ Vanni Bramanti, one of the foremost historians of Renaissance archives and documents, similarly studied the curious absence of Florentine editions of pro-Alessandro works.⁸⁹ The mounting evidence of a systematic Medici conspiracy to suppress favorable memory of Duke Alessandro demonstrates that historians' knowledge of Alessandro and his rule will be limited until we fully understand how and why his posthumous memory was destroyed, which is what this dissertation accomplishes.

METHODOLOGY

The central methodological problem of this dissertation was finding how to study the rule of Duke Alessandro and the destruction of his posthumous memory when relatively few sources from his reign remain in the Florentine archive, the primary repository of information about the Medici family. To make full use of the evidence, this dissertation draws on the fields of source criticism and archival studies. All historians practice source criticism,⁹⁰ yet in cases where documents are few or obviously altered, making the sources, their production, and preservation

⁸⁷ Caroline Callard, *Le prince et la république: histoire, pouvoir, et société dans la Florence des Médicis au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2007), 127-142.

⁸⁸ Baker, "Power and Passion," 456.

⁸⁹ Vanni Bramanti, "Il 'cartolaio' Ceccherelli e la fortuna del duca Alessandro de' Medici," *Lettere italiane* 44, no. 2 (1992): 169-188.

⁹⁰ Modern source criticism derives from the ideas from Petrarch, Leonardo Bruni, Lorenzo Valla, Jean Bodin, and Leopold von Ranke, among many others. See Anthony Grafton, "Renaissance Readers and Ancient Texts: Comments on Some Commentaries," *Renaissance Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (1985): 615-649; Gary Ianziti, "Bruni on Writing History," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (1998): 367-391; J. D. Braw, "Vision as Revision: Ranke and the Beginning of Modern History," *History and Theory* 46 (2007): 45-60. American scholars typically associate source criticism with study of the Bible, Torah, and Talmud. For example, see Alan Levenson, *The Making of the Modern Jewish Bible: How Scholars in Germany, Israel, and America Transformed an Ancient Text* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011); Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and The Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSan Francisco, 1996). Scandinavian, German, and Russian researchers more commonly practice source criticism and study. See Jeppe Nevers, "The Magic of Source-Criticism: Understanding a Key Concept in Danish Academic History," *Storia della storiografia* 53 (2008): 97-110; Lynne Viola, "Preface: Introductory Notes for Researchers," in *A Researcher's Guide to Sources on Soviet Social History in the 1930s*, eds. Sheila Fitzpatrick and Lynne Viola (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1990), vii-viii.

the object of explicit study allows researchers to find new information from limited evidence. The silences, erasures, and alterations in texts that discuss Duke Alessandro reveal nearly as much as documents we believe to be fair and truthful records of the past. Historians analyze documents critically, yet we rarely study the archives upon which we rely. Scholars in the field of archival studies have convincingly argued that archives serve rhetorical purposes.⁹¹ Studying the Florentine archives as sources and researching their histories and structures aids in the understanding of the documents they hold—and especially in understanding why some documents concerning Duke Alessandro are not found there. The critical analysis of documents and the Florentine archives allows a new picture of not only the destruction of Duke Alessandro’s memory to emerge, but also an alternate portrait of the condemned Duke himself.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Alessandro de’ Medici’s enemies slandered him in his lifetime and defamed him in their literary works. Anonymous Florentines defaced favorable commemorations of him. His successor contributed to the suppression of Alessandro’s reputation while glorifying his own. The obliteration of Duke Alessandro’s memory occurred in a series of stages set out in the chapters of this dissertation.

The first chapter outlines the negative statements made about Duke Alessandro in the major sources that discuss his reign. This chapter draws heavily on printed histories of Florence written by Alessandro’s contemporaries. These substantial works are supplemented by his the

⁹¹ Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, “Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory,” *Archival Science* 2 (2002): 1-19. The authors utterly demolish the notion that “[a]rchives...are...passive storehouses of old stuff,” and instead demonstrate that “the past is controlled” through archives. For other examples see Richard Harvey Brown and Beth Davis-Brown, “The Making of Memory: The Politics of Archives, Libraries and Museums in the Construction of National Consciousness,” *History of the Human Sciences* 11, no. 4 (1998): 17-32; James M. O’Toole, “The Symbolic Significance of Archives,” *American Archivist* 56, no. 2 (1993): 234-255; Terry Cook, “The Archive(s) is the Foreign Country: Historians, Archivists, and the Changing Archival Landscape,” *American Archivist* 74, no. 2 (2011): 600-632.

famous *Apologia*, or defense of Alessandro's murder, by the assassin Lorenzaccio, as well as manuscript and printed versions of widely-distributed orations and letters written to damn the Duke during his lifetime. The claims made against Duke Alessandro demonstrate that disgust concerning Alessandro's illegitimate birth and illicit sexual conduct garnered far more outrage than did claims that he was a tyrant. In fact, Duke Alessandro's assassin Lorenzino argued that bad conduct could make even the most legitimately installed ruler a tyrant—a departure from earlier definitions of tyranny, which looked solely at how one attained and wielded political power.

The second chapter explores the lasting anti-Alessandro political affiliations and sentiments of the contemporary historians who wrote the main histories of Alessandro's reign used in the first chapter. I use Jacopo Nardi's and Benedetto Varchi's political biographies and new archival sources to demonstrate that their political opposition to Alessandro's rule during his lifetime influenced what they eventually wrote about the Duke in their histories—a fact overlooked or discounted by other scholars. Here I use an otherwise-neglected volume of documents from the Florentine archive that contains Varchi's angry Latin epigrams against Alessandro and a conspiratory letter from Nardi to Varchi that suggests concealing unflattering information about Alessandro's enemies. Despite a professed commitment to telling the truth in their works, the anti-Alessandro political involvement of these two historians led Nardi to request that his friend and colleague alter details in his historical account in order to shape better memories of his own actions and further defame Duke Alessandro.

The third chapter demonstrates that unknown Florentines covertly condemned the memory of Duke Alessandro in a process known as *damnatio memoriae*. In the first section of the chapter I lay out Renaissance ideas about memory, and its believed ability to confer eternal

life on those favorably memorialized in sources. Another section consists of my explanation of the concept of *damnatio memoriae* in the Renaissance, a relatively common ritual involving the destruction of primary sources. I then analyze how Alessandro de' Medici's blackened tomb, a privately altered epitaph, and a portrait of the Duke show that some individuals wanted to covertly condemn Alessandro's memory even after his assassination in hopes of preventing him from attaining earthly immortality.

The fourth chapter examines how Alessandro's successor, Duke Cosimo I de' Medici (1519-1574, r. 1537-1574), feuded with Alessandro during his life, and after his death marginalized memory of Duke Alessandro in the Florentine archives. To support my claims, I use letters discussing how Duke Cosimo and his successors organized the Florentine archives of the dukedom in order to glorify Duke Cosimo I's own, separate branch of the Medici family. As a result of the archival suppression and erasure, the few papers relating to Duke Alessandro that remain in the whole Florentine archive are scattered haphazardly among various sub-archives. No corpus of documents exists that could correct the slander spread by Alessandro's historian-enemies. I use the archive itself as a primary source by showing how and when the sub-archives were created, the structure of the various archives, and the placement of the few documents relating to Alessandro in these archives. The chapter concludes with a close examination of an otherwise unstudied chronicle from the University of Pennsylvania that served as a draft for a better-known version kept in Florence. The analysis demonstrates that someone—possibly a seventeenth-century Medici princess—altered key words in the text in order to protect the memory of Duke Cosimo I. I argue that by artificially aggrandizing the memory of Cosimo I, Duke Alessandro's unprotected memory fell by the wayside, prey to slander and forgetting.

CONCLUSION

The dukes, historians, anonymous Florentines, and archivists who erased and manipulated Duke Alessandro's good memory, intent either on punishing him after his death or on aggrandizing their own reputations, have succeeded. The story recovered here is not one about Duke Alessandro, but of Renaissance Florence transitioning from a republic to a nascent dukedom to Medici autocracy. The fight for memory both served as a fuel for the transformation of the government and the ultimate prize of governmental control. In accepting the loss of the actual Duke Alessandro to the machinations of his contemporaries, we see more clearly the ideas that inspired the destruction of his memory and the processes that rendered him and many others villains in Renaissance Italy.

Chapter One: The Illegitimate Tyrant

Critics of Duke Alessandro de' Medici of Florence characterized him as a lecherous, blood-thirsty tyrant during his lifetime. Following Alessandro's assassination, the same charges served as the weapon used by many of the same men to erase and obscure favorable memory of the Duke. The critics' charges against Alessandro de' Medici may be divided into two categories: governmental and personal. The first section details claims about the legitimacy of Alessandro's power and his misrule of Florence. The second section pertains to complaints about the qualities of Duke Alessandro that reflected dishonor on the people he ruled. Alessandro's enemies claimed that he was illegitimate (of this there was no question); born to a mother of low status who he had murdered to conceal her identity; had fought with and murdered his cousin, Cardinal Ippolito; and engaged in sexual improprieties with protected women in Florence. A recent article argued that critics labeled Alessandro a tyrant due to his unrestrained sexuality rather than due to his new title or use of power.¹ This chapter supports the argument that critics considered Alessandro a tyrant due to his sexual conduct, yet adds that his illegitimate birth was considered at least equally as important. To Duke Alessandro's patrician enemies, being ruled by a young man produced outside of wedlock by a destitute slave or servant mother and Medici father of questionable identity constituted tyranny. The case of Duke Alessandro suggests that the concept of tyranny, previously focused on the attainment and use of

¹ Baker, "Power and Passion," 457. "Alessandro de' Medici earned disapprobation and an enduring title as a hated tyrant not so much from the nature of his government as from his behavior in the bedroom. His excessive heteroerotic passion, his undiscerning and ill-disciplined pursuit of women regardless of their state or status, demonstrated his unsuitability to rule." In contrast to Duke Alessandro, Duke Cosimo I carefully cultivated his image as a faithful husband and legitimate son of honorable parents.

governmental power, expanded in the sixteenth century to also describe the dishonor inflicted on citizens by their ruler.

THE RENAISSANCE CONCEPT OF TYRANNY

Critics of Duke Alessandro's rule drew on a number of discussions about tyranny produced earlier in the Renaissance. As fourteenth-century governments rejected the rule of *Signori*, the works of Bartolo da Sassoferrato and Coluccio Salutati condemned tyranny on legal and moral grounds. Both thinkers drew on Pope Gregory I's definition of a tyrant and operated under the Aristotelian assumption that a good life for citizens involves public peace.²

Discussions about tyranny were complicated by the generally held view that republics could not maintain peace and a strong monarch would be necessary to accomplish the goal of unifying Italy as a single kingdom. The fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth debates concerning the legality of Brutus' assassination of Julius Caesar drew artists and literary figures into the discussion concerning tyranny and tyrannicide. Machiavelli's sixteenth-century *Discourses on Livy*—published as Alessandro assumed power in Florence—associates tyranny with the dishonor a dissolute ruler casts upon his subjects.

Bartolo da Sassoferrato (1313-1357), professor of law at Perugia and *Consiliarius* to Emperor Charles IV, emphasizes the tyrant's pride [*superbus*] and oppression [*angustia*] in his *De tyrannia* (ca. 1350s).³ Tyrants could be those rulers who “lack a sound title, being chosen unlawfully” or he who “is crowned without being elected and afterward condemned by a

² Hella Mandt, “Tyrannis, Despotie,” in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1972-1997), 663-664. For a brief overview of tyrannicides and thought on tyrannicide in Renaissance Italy see Oscar Jászi and John D. Lewis, *Against the Tyrant: The Tradition and Theory of Tyrannicide* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1957), 35-41.

³ For historical interpretations of Bartolo's *De tyrannia* see Mario Turchetti, *Tyrannie et tyrannicide de l'Antiquité à nos jours* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001), 294-298; Maria Antonietta Falchi Pellegrini, *Legittimità, legittimazione e resistenza nella teoria politica medioevale: Bartolo da Sassoferrato e Coluccio Salutati* (Genoa: ECIG, 1981); Leticia Dias Schirm, “Bartolus da Sassoferrato e Coluccio Salutati: De Tyranno,” *Revista Chrônidas* 3, no. 8 (2010): 118-131; Diego Quaglioni, *Politica e diritto nel Trecento italiano: il "De tyranno" di Bartolo da Sassoferrato (1314-1357)* (Florence: Olschki, 1983); Julius Kirshner, “Bartolo of Sassoferrato's *De tyranno* and Sallustio Buonguglielmi's *Consilium* on Niccolò Fortebracci's Tyranny in Città di Castello,” *Mediaeval Studies* 68 (2006): 303-332.

judgment.”⁴ Bartolo quotes Gregory’s definition of tyrant, calling him “one who governs a commonwealth arbitrarily (*non jure*),” but also noting that “everyone of a proud spirit (*superbus*) practices tyranny after his own fashion.”⁵ Bartolo acknowledges the neutral Greek origins of the word “tyrant” before it came to be applied to “the worst of kings who exercised a cruel and wicked rule over their peoples, that is oppression (*angustia*), because they oppress (*angustiant*) their subjects.”⁶ Bartolo emphasizes oppression again later in the treatise, defining a tyrant as one “who impoverishes and brings suffering upon his own people.”⁷ Even in the event that a tyrant received his title on legal grounds, “actions...not directed toward the common good but to his own advantage” marked a ruler as a tyrant.⁸ Among the ways a tyrant could oppress citizens included using foreign troops to take the city by assault, bringing charges irregularly against citizens, driving citizens into exile at the time of elections, ruining powerful and distinguished men so that they could not oppose his rule, and murdering kin to preserve his power.⁹ According to Bartolo, a ruler could be called a tyrant due to receiving his title unlawfully, governing arbitrarily according to his pride, or by oppressing his citizens. Depending on the type of tyranny practiced, Bartolo argued that he should either be deposed, deported, or “perhaps...liable to the penalty of death.”¹⁰

The Florentine Chancellor Coluccio Salutati’s (1331-1406) treatise *De tyranno* (1400) draws on similar sources and assumptions as Bartolo’s *De tyrannia* did, yet Salutati’s humanist approach and style allows him to better distinguish between tyrannical and royal forms of

⁴ Bartolo da Sassoferrato, “Tractus de tyrannia,” in *Humanism and Tyranny: Studies in the Italian Trecento*, ed. and trans. Ephraim Emerton (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1964), 126.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Sassoferrato, “De tyrannia,” 129.

⁸ Sassoferrato, “De tyrannia,” 140.

⁹ Sassoferrato, “De tyrannia,” 133, 134, 141.

¹⁰ Sassoferrato, “De tyrannia,” 146.

autocratic rule.¹¹ Salutati defines a tyrant as “one who usurps a government, having no legal title for his rule, or one who governs *superbe* or rules unjustly or does not observe law or equity” or, “speaking more broadly, may pay no attention to the principles of right.”¹² The Florentine Chancellor’s definition of a tyrant mirrors that of Bartolo, yet he outlines the distinctions between tyrannical and royal rule more completely than did his predecessor. Salutati acknowledged the legitimacy of royal rule, or governing “according to the standards of his own prudence and the dictates of his own will, freely and without laws or limitations of any statutes or of any man, solely for the good of his subjects.”¹³ The Florentine Chancellor also recognizes despotic rule of the sort “which is exercised over slaves and beasts, of which the aim is the preservation of property and the welfare of its owner.”¹⁴ A ruler, master, or father can rule royally or despotically and not be a tyrant, according to Salutati. It is only when a ruler “destroy[s] laws, . . . carr[ies] himself haughtily toward his subjects and . . . consider[s] his own welfare rather than theirs” that a royal or despotic ruler lapses into tyranny.¹⁵ Salutati’s sharpened definition of tyranny allows him to forcefully argue that tyrants should be killed,¹⁶ a conclusion at odds with Bartolo “perhaps” supporting the death of a tyrant.

The assassination of Julius Caesar by Marcus Brutus served as a vehicle for discussing tyranny and tyrannicide throughout the Renaissance.¹⁷ Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) condemned

¹¹ For historical interpretations of Salutati’s *De tyranno* see Piccolomini, *The Brutus Revival*, 50-56; Turchetti, *Tyrannie et tyrannicide*, 299-304; Falchi Pellegrini, *Legittimità, legittimazione e resistenza nella teoria politica medioevale*; Dias Schirm, “Bartolus da Sassoferrato e Coluccio Salutati: *De Tyranno*,” 118-131; R. G. Witt, “The *De Tyranno* and Coluccio Salutati’s View of Politics and Roman History,” *Nuova Rivista Storica* 53 (1969): 434-474.

¹² Coluccio Salutati, “De tyranno,” in *Humanism and Tyranny*, 78.

¹³ Salutati, “De tyranno,” 77.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Salutati, “De tyranno,” 85.

¹⁷ For a general overview of the Renaissance debates about Brutus see Francesca Russo, *Bruto a Firenze: mito, immagine e personaggio tra Umanesimo e Rinascimento* (Naples: Editoriale scientifica, 2008).

Brutus in the *Inferno* for betraying Caesar and for upending God's plan for humanity.¹⁸ As Dante and Virgil enter the center of Hell, where traitors to their lords suffer the worst punishments of all the dead, they see, "[i]n each of his three mouths [Lucifer] crunched a sinner." Brutus and Cassius dangle from the mouths of Lucifer and squirm "in silent desperation" next to Judas Iscariot (Canto XXXIV, 55-69).¹⁹ One hundred years later, the republican humanist Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444) dismissed Dante's treatment of Brutus in his *Dialogues to Pier Paolo Vergerio* (ca. 1401-1405). In Bruni's dialogue, Niccolò Niccoli, collector of classical manuscripts, defends Brutus against Dante's "supreme condemnation," claiming that the assassin instead "plucked from robbers' jaws the liberty of the Roman people."²⁰ When other participants in the dialogue have the opportunity to dispute Niccoli, they refuse, leaving Niccoli to retract his earlier comments and argue from the perspective that Dante's work was allegorical. Niccoli reasons that The Poet could not say "just the same punishment is inflicted on him who killed the Savior of the world," Judas, "as on Him who killed its troubler," Brutus.²¹ Following Lorenzino de' Medici's assassination of Duke Alessandro, Michelangelo celebrated the murder by reviving the Roman bust style with his "Brutus" (1539-1540) (fig. 1.1).²²

¹⁸ Piccolomini, *The Brutus Revival*, 3.

¹⁹ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy, Volume 1: Inferno*, trans. Mark Musa (New York: Penguin, 2003), 381.

²⁰ Leonardo Bruni, "Dialogues for Pier Paolo Vergerio," in *The Three Crowns of Florence: Humanist Assessments of Dante, Petrarca, and Boccaccio*, eds. and trans. David Thompson and Alan F. Nagel (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 35. For information on Bruni's dialogue see David Quint, "Humanism and Modernity: A Reconsideration of Bruni's Dialogues," *Renaissance Quarterly* 38 (1985): 423-45.

²¹ Bruni, "Dialogues," 47.

²² For information on Michelangelo's bust of Brutus see Thomas Martin, "Michelangelo's *Brutus* and the Classicizing Portrait Bust in Sixteenth-Century Italy," *Artibus et Historiae* 14, no. 27 (1993): 67-83; Charles Tolnay, "Michelangelo's Bust of *Brutus*," *The Burlington Magazine* 67, no. 388 (1935): 23-29. Michelangelo also appears as a speaker in Donato Giannotti's *Dialogi di Donato Giannotti de' giorni che Dante consume nel cercare l'Inferno e 'l Purgatorio* (ca. 1545), where he first claims that Dante placed Brutus and Cassius in Lucifer's mouth as allegories, then defends Dante by suggesting that the assassins may have actually done more evil than did the tyrant Caesar. Donato Giannotti, *Dialogi di Donato Giannotti de' giorni che Dante consume nel cercare l'Inferno e 'l Purgatorio*, ed. D. Redig de Campos (Florence: Sansoni, 1939). For discussion of Giannotti's dialogue see Piccolomini, *The Brutus Revival*, 89-92; Alois Riklin, *Giannotti, Michelangelo und der Tyrannenmord* (Bern:



Figure 1.1: Michelangelo, “Brutus,” Museo Nazionale, Florence.

Niccolò Machiavelli’s *The Prince* (pub. 1532) and *Discourses on Livy* (pub. 1531) indicate that as more princes ruled in Italy, the question of tyranny came to be judged according to the honor or dishonor a ruler reflected on his subjects. Machiavelli fails to provide a clear-cut definition of tyranny or tyrant in either the *Discourses* and *The Prince*. Giovanni Giorgini argues

Stämpfli, 1996); Donald James Gordon, “Giannotti, Michelangelo and the cult of Brutus,” in *The Renaissance Imagination: Essays and Lectures* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1975), 281-296.

that Machiavelli doesn't label classical tyrants or "morally debatable people" tyrants even if they were cruel usurpers—as long as they were politically effective.²³ Yet in the *Discourses*, Machiavelli imagines tyranny arising from hereditary succession, when later "princes ha[d] nothing to do but surpass others in luxury and lasciviousness and all other forms of licentiousness, so that as the prince came to be hated, then became afraid on account of this hatred," his fear provoked him to commit "harmful acts."²⁴ The fearful prince's tyranny caused "conspiracies and plots against princes, executed...by those who surpassed others in generosity, greatness of soul, wealth, and nobility; such men as these could not endure the dishonorable life of such a prince."²⁵ In most cases, Machiavelli judged rulers on their governance, yet he acknowledges the hatred provoked by luxury, lasciviousness, and licentiousness in princes. The best men of the state "could not endure the dishonorable life of such a prince" demonstrating that in practice, Machiavelli saw tyranny stemming from representation by an unworthy ruler.

Machiavelli's association of tyranny with the dishonor heaped upon subjects by a dishonorable ruler aligns with the Renaissance culture of honor and expectations of princely comportment. In the Renaissance dukedoms, honor extended beyond the individual to form a sense of community honor that was vested in the prince. Social scientists argue that within traditional Mediterranean society, social groups possessed a collective honor in which the members participated.²⁶ In both families and communities, the member at the head of the group

²³ Giovanni Giorgini, "The Place of the Tyrant in Machiavelli's Political Thought and the Literary Genre of the *Prince*," *The History of Political Thought* 29, no. 2 (2008), 231, 242-243.

²⁴ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, ed. and trans. Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella (New York: Oxford, 2003), 24. The modern historian Louis Green casts the descent into tyranny in universal terms: "Tyrants destroyed themselves not because they did wrong, but because they could not resist being carried away by their desires, something that could be an equal temptation and an equal danger to those who were not tyrants." Louis Green, "Historical Interpretations in Fourteenth-Century Florentine Chronicles," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 28, no. 2 (1967), 172.

²⁵ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, 24-25.

²⁶ Julian Pitt-Rivers, "Honor and Social Status," in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. J. G. Péristiany (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965), 35. The loss of family honor is discussed in Guido

symbolized the whole, “whose collective honor is vested in his person.”²⁷ During the Renaissance, the collective honor of the group resided in the *capo* of the family or the *duca* of the territory. As princely rule became the norm in Renaissance Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, advice manuals for dukes²⁸ and courtiers²⁹ expounded on how to maintain honor and decorum in all aspects of life. Manuals even discussed how a ruler could project majesty, and demonstrate the majesty of his office through his dress, speech, and behavior.³⁰ According to Machiavelli’s explanation of how princely states devolved into tyrannies, the prince’s “dishonorable” contribution to the group’s collective honor constituted a form of tyranny likely to inspire action by the most important citizens of the state.

Duke Alessandro’s critics had the opportunity to draw on the legal, humanist, literary, and Machiavellian interpretations of tyranny revived and produced in Renaissance Italy over the previous 250 years to support their claims against him. Medici rule in Florence had been previously labeled tyrannical on the grounds of both usurpation and exercise of power, although by the sixteenth century, authors protested the misuse of power most.³¹ Historians sometimes dismiss contemporary charges of sexual misconduct or illegitimate birth as excuses to remove princes actually hated for their usurpation of power and use of it in the political realm.³² Yet the considerable space given in unfavorable works to Duke Alessandro’s sexual conduct, illegitimacy, and the shame he inflicted on his subjects coincides with Machiavelli’s explanation

Ruggiero, *The Boundaries of Eros: Sex Crime and Sexuality in Renaissance Venice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 17-19.

²⁷ Pitt-Rivers, “Honor and Social Status,” 36.

²⁸ Examples include Platina, *De principe viro* (Frankfort: Egenolphus Emmelius, 1608); Francesco Patrizi, *De regno* (Strasbourg: In officina seu Pergula Petri le Brodeur, 1519).

²⁹ The most famous example would, of course, be Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, ed. and trans. Daniel Javitch (New York: Norton, 2002).

³⁰ Examples include Giuniano Maio, *De maiestate*, ed. Franco Gaeta (Bologna: Commissione per i testi di lingua, 1956); Giovanni Pontano, *De principe*, ed. Guido M. Cappelli (Rome: Salerno, 2003).

³¹ Turchetti, *Tyrannie et tyrannicide*, 343-344.

³² The most pertinent exception would be Baker, “Power and Passion,” 432-457.

of why tyrants are rejected and the growth of the culture of princely honor in the sixteenth century.

DUKE ALESSANDRO'S ILLEGITIMATE POWER

Few critics openly attacked the way Duke Alessandro had been given power. To criticize the creation of the Medici dukedom in Florence would have been tantamount to criticizing Alessandro's benefactor and overlord, Emperor Charles V. After Alessandro's death, Duke Cosimo I occupied the dukedom that Alessandro had established, making it difficult for humanists dependent on his patronage to question the establishment of the duchy. Critics instead turned to the way Duke Alessandro ruled. Historians, politicians, and Duke Alessandro's assassin claimed that Duke Alessandro ruled as an absolute prince; executed, tortured, exiled, and disarmed citizens; and drained the city's coffers and citizens' pockets for his own use.

The assassin Lorenzino de' Medici represented Alessandro's installation as *capo* of the city in 1531 as a dramatic shift in control compared to the earlier periods of Medici domination under Cosimo the Elder and Lorenzo the Magnificent. In an *Apologia* written to defend the Duke's assassination, Lorenzino reminded his readers, "The city of Florence, after all, has from ancient times been in the possession of its people; it thus ensues that all those who rule it without being elected by the people to do so are tyrants."³³ The Florentine constitution was designed to spread political power among a relatively large group of responsible male citizens in order to prevent political parties, domination by one family, and especially one man. Despite constitutional controls, oligarchs increasingly ruled the city in the fifteenth century, among them Alessandro's own ancestors, "the Medici family, which gained control of our city for many years

³³ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 4; ASF, "Apologia," 1v. "...la Città di firenze per antica possessione del suo popolo, ne seguita che tutti quelli che la comandano che non sieno eletti dal populo per comandarla, siano tiranni..."

with the consent and participation of a minority of the people.”³⁴ Although Cosimo the Elder, quasi-princely Lorenzo il Magnifico, and Medici Pope Clement VII wielded considerable power in the republic, no Medici family member assumed the title of Duke before Alessandro did so in 1532. According to Lorenzino, the Medici family “never had more than a limited authority until, after many vicissitudes and changes in the regime, Pope Clement came, with that violence known to everyone, and deprived his own fatherland of liberty,” during the siege of 1529-30, “making Alessandro its master.”³⁵

Lorenzino complained that awarding Florence to a Medici family member violated the terms of surrender negotiated in August of 1530 between Bartolommeo Valori, the captain of the city during the siege, and Ferrando Gonzaga, the general of the imperial army. While Valori accepted Charles V as Florence’s overlord at the conclusion of the siege, the treaty promised that the Emperor could establish a government, provided that he was willing to “[agree] always that [Florence] now keeps [its] freedom.”³⁶ Professing Florence’s republican rights, Lorenzino later argued, “any who might think that Alessandro should not be called a tyrant since he was given power over Florence by the Emperor—who is deemed to have the authority to appoint whatever men he sees fit to rule over any state—are wrong.”³⁷ Citing the treaty, the assassin reminded his readers, “if the Emperor does have such authority, he does not have the authority to act in this way without just cause, and as far as Florence in particular is concerned,” Charles V “had

³⁴ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 4; ASF, “Apologia,” 1v. “...come ha fatto la casa de Medici, la quale già ottenuta la superiorità della nostra Città per molt’Anni con consenso, e partecipazione della minima parte del popolo...”

³⁵ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 4; ASF, “Apologia,” 1v “...ne con tutto questo ebbe ella mai autorità se non limitata insino à tanto che doppo molte alterazioni, e mutazioni di governi venne papa Clemente VII con quella violenza che sà tutto il Mondo per privare di libertà la patria sua ne fece di essa tiranno questo Alessandro...”

³⁶ ASF, MM, filza 457, inserto 2, *Capitolazione* agreement between Bartolommeo Valori and Ferrando Gonzaga, 10 August 1530, 2v-3r. “In primis per la forma del Governo abbia da ordinarsi e stabilirsi dalla Maestà Cesarea fra quattro Messi prossimi à venire, intendendosi sempre, che già conservata la libertà.”

³⁷ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 6; ASF, “Apologia,” 3r. “Però quelli che pensassino che Alessandro non si dovessi chiamare Tiranno per essere stato messo in Firenze dall’Imperatore quale e opinione che abbia autorità d’investire nelli stati chi li pare, s’ingannano...”

absolutely no right to do so, since in the agreement he drew up with the Florentine people at the end of the siege of 1530, it was expressly declared that he could not place that city under the dominion of the Medici family.”³⁸ While documents supporting this claim have not been found, the treaty did promise Florence liberty. The moment Alessandro took power is portrayed as a breach of promise and a break in the history of the Florentine republic—the dividing line between the republican glory of the past and bitter tyranny.

Historian Jacopo Nardi wrote that Alessandro de' Medici was intended to serve as no more than a figurehead, who would preside in name only over the existing mechanisms of government as, purportedly, the fifteenth-century Medici had done. On October 28, 1530, shortly after the conclusion of the siege, the Florentine *Balia* awarded Alessandro the title of *caput*, or head, of the Florentine republic, but not Duke.³⁹ The Florentine *Balia* was the special and temporary authority allowed to change the city's constitution. The *Balia* no doubt acted on the wishes of Pope Clement VII and Emperor Charles V to quickly transfer power to Alessandro, since the young man was not powerful enough to elicit the surrender of the cherished republican government on his own. In 1530, Alessandro would have been less than twenty years old, far from the age of 30 normally required to even sit in government. Nardi recalled that only a few months later, "when Alessandro de' Medici...returned from Flanders...on the 6th of July [in 1531] he was created and called duke (*dux*) of the Florentine republic."⁴⁰ But in this case, according to Nardi, the title "duke" did not confer absolute power, as "the word according to its true meaning

³⁸ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 6; ASF, "Apologia," 3r. "...perche quando l'Imperatore habbia questa autorità non l'ha da fare senza giusta causa nel particular di Firenze non lo poteva fare in alcun modo essendosi ne Capitoli che fece il populo Fiorentino alla fine dell'assedio nel espressamente dichiarato che non potessi rimettere quella Città sotto la servitù de Medici..."

³⁹ Najemy, *A History of Florence*, 461.

⁴⁰ Jacopo Nardi, *Istorie della città di Firenze*, ed. Agenore Gelli (Florence: F. Le Monnier, 1858), 223. "...quando Alessandro de' Medici...era tornato di Fiandra... a di 6 di luglio fu creato e chiamato duca della repubblica fiorentina."

does not mean 'Lord' (*Signore*), but solely head and leader."⁴¹ This supposed limited authority came "with a small salary for his wages, and aid allowing [for] sustaining [himself] beautifully and magnificently, worthy of the highest degree," which Nardi implied reinforced the limited power Charles V conferred.⁴² But this was not Charles' intention: he would not have changed the title at all if he intended Alessandro to lead in the same manner as before.

Alessandro's control over Florence grew in the course of a few months and he bore the criticism of his perceived usurpation of power. Despite the presumed limits on Alessandro's power, his cousin Lorenzino, who lived in Rome at the time, claimed, "Alessandro, on arrival in Florence, took steps to ensure there could be no doubt that he was indeed a tyrant, by sweeping away all public virtue, and every relic of republican life, even the very name 'republic.'"⁴³

Lorenzino probably referred to the rewriting of the Florentine constitution in 1532. Shortly after Alessandro was named duke by Charles V in July 1531 and officially entered the city, the Florentine *Ottimati*, or "The Best" older and wealthier citizens who usually had a monopoly on government offices and were aligned with Pope Clement, agreed to a new constitution after pressure from the Pope and Emperor.⁴⁴ On April 27, 1532, the *Balia* wrote the Medici into the constitution as the city's hereditary rulers. In the new constitution the *Signoria* was abolished: the heart of the republican government, the *Signoria* body had met every day and was composed of nine members, including the eight priors of the key guilds in the city, and the *gonfaloniere* of

⁴¹ Nardi, *Istorie della città di Firenze*, 223. "...la qual parola secondo la sua vera significazione non significa signore, ma solamente capo e guida..."

⁴² Nardi, *Istorie della città di Firenze*, 223. "...con uno stipendio limitato per suo salario, e aiuto a poter sostenere magnificamente e onoratamente la dignità di quel sommo grado."

⁴³ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 4; ASF, "Apologia," 1v. "...Alessandro, il quale giunto che fù in Firenze perche non s'avesse à dubitare se era Tiranno, levata via ogni civiltà, et ogni reliquie e nome di Repubblica..."

⁴⁴ The other parties that vied for seats in government at the time were the *Popolani*, a larger, less wealthy group of citizens, the *Piagnoni*, or Savonarolans, who focused on divine forgiveness, and the *Arrabbiati*, or anti-Savonarolans. Outside of these groups were the four-fifths of Florentine residents who were not politically represented, and were feared by the other groups due to the possibility of a rebellion on the scale of the revolt of the *Ciompi*, the wool-workers who had demanded (and briefly obtained) access to political power in 1378.

justice, the chairman of the group. The *Signoria* and its *gonfaloniere* were replaced with four councilors who were responsible to a 48-man Senate. Alessandro was named the perpetual Chairman of the councilors, and was to be called the Duke of the Florentine Republic, a hereditary title.⁴⁵ The name "republic" remained and those allied with the powerful could still be elected and cultivate their honor and *virtù*, or the qualities necessary for great men to possess, while the old councils disappeared and the insignia of sovereignty was handed over to Alessandro by the last Prior on May 1, 1532.⁴⁶

Duke Alessandro's political enemies identified him as an absolute prince, despite the attempts made to disguise that reality at the outset. Bernardo Segni, author of the *Storie fiorentine* and relative of Niccolò Capponi, last *gonfaloniere* of the previous Florentine republic (1527-1530), called Alessandro *un Principe assoluto*, an absolute Prince.⁴⁷ Segni remembered the early years of the reign: "Having conducted Alessandro de' Medici in Florence to the government of that state...although he had not yet the name of absolute prince, as he had soon afterwards, he had nevertheless the power and strength of Prince," and upon being named Duke, "all things big and small they administered with his will and his command by all the Magistrates."⁴⁸ Allowing Duke Alessandro or his lieutenants to head all magistracies gave him an impressive amount of control, and his occupation of these important symbolic and administrative leadership positions robbed other citizens of their opportunities to represent their neighborhoods, families, and social groups in the government. This elimination of seats on the councils devastated even the less wealthy Florentines, who lost their representatives in politics,

⁴⁵ Hale, *Florence and the Medici*, 120-1.

⁴⁶ Najemy, *A History of Florence*, 464.

⁴⁷ Bernardo Segni, *Storie fiorentine* (Milan: Società tipografica de' Classici italiani, 1805), 1:342.

⁴⁸ Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 1:335. "Essendosi condotto Alessandro de' Medici in Firenze al governo di quello Stato...perchè sebbene ei non aveva ancora il nome d'assoluto Principe, come egli ebbe poco di poi, aveva nondimeno la virtù e forza di Principe...tutte le cose e piccole e grandi s'amministravano con sua volontà e con suo comandamento da tutti i Magistrati."

according to the historian Benedetto Varchi. In his *Storia fiorentina*, Varchi recalled, after he was "[c]reated Duke Alessandro...absolute lord of Florence, there was in everyone a silent sadness and discontentment. The *Plebe*," the common people, "and the majority of the *Popolo minuto*," the craftsmen and laborers, "and the artisans, who live hand to mouth...they being all the most beloved *grasce* [magistrates], they were all incredibly sad and pained."⁴⁹

Even if Alessandro had been a legitimate ruler of the Florentine republic, his enemies claimed his reprehensible personal conduct coupled with absolute power would have still made him a tyrant. Lorenzino de' Medici argued in his *Apologia*, "it is their way of life that leads rulers to become tyrants, in spite of all the investitures, all the justifications and all the rights of succession in the world," suggesting that Alessandro could have made himself a tyrant through his conduct alone.⁵⁰ According to Lorenzino, after Alessandro's investiture by Charles V, "even if the Emperor indeed had the authority to act in this way, and had done so with every reason and justification in the world, so that Alessandro's legitimacy as ruler" had been "greater than that of the King of France, his dissolute life, his avarice and his cruelty would have made him a tyrant."⁵¹ Lorenzino's contention that Alessandro's behavior was as much at fault for the perception of him as a tyrant as was his created title reveals how tyranny in the sixteenth century could mean more than illegitimately seized rule, as the ancients argued. Instead, qualities Alessandro's enemies claimed he possessed such as cruelty, illegitimate birth, the low status of his mother, and rumored sexual transgressions could, on their own, make him a tyrant according

⁴⁹ Benedetto Varchi, *Storia fiorentina* (Colonia: Pietro Martello, 1721), 484. "Creato il Duca Alessandro nel modo che s'è detto, Signore assoluto di Firenze, era in tutto l'universale una tacita mestizia, e scontentezza. La Plebe, e la maggior parte del Popolo minuto, e degli Artigiani, i quali vivono delle braccia,...ed essendo tutte le grasce carissime, stavano incredibilmente tristi, e dolenti tutti."

⁵⁰ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 6; ASF, "Apologia," 3v. "...si che i costumi sono quelli che fanno diventare i principi Tiranni contro tutte l'investiture, tutte le ragioni, e successioni del mondo..."

⁵¹ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 6; ASF, "Apologia," 3r. "...oltre à che quando bene l'Imperatore avessi auto autorità di farlo, e l'havesse fatto con tutte le ragioni del mondo, tal che fusse stato più legittimo Principe che non è il Rè di Francia la sua vita dissoluta, la sua avarizia la sua crudeltà l'haverebbono fatto Tiranno..."

to some critics, no matter how he had received his title.

Duke Alessandro, it was reported, relished cruelty and inflicting pain on those who contested his rule. According to Jacopo Nardi, Alessandro ruled as an "absolute tyrant and most cruel," who "delighted in his grandeur and reputation."⁵² In a 1535 oration intended to convince Charles V to oust Alessandro from his dukedom, Nardi trumpeted the Duke's cruelty and perverse delight in punishing his enemies. He and the other exiles claimed, "Alessandro turned his fierce mind to a most cruel and barbaric and totally inhumane purpose: to make us die a violent death, promising great rewards by public notices to anyone that would kill any of us by stabbing or with poison."⁵³ Nardi and his compatriots complained of "the persecution that we exiles and our city with us together have suffered" as a result of the Emperor's "memory of Pope Clement," who died in 1534.⁵⁴ The exiles claimed that Clement's memory unnecessarily bound Charles to honoring the treaties that kept Alessandro in power as his cruelty increased and republican liberty evaporated, a state of affairs set by Clement and "tolerated by Alexander the tyrant," the man whose reputation and rule was now the subject of the complaints.⁵⁵

Duke Alessandro's advisors appointed by Clement VII similarly bore criticism for their reprisals against anti-Medici faction and families, allegedly done at the Duke's behest. Lorenzino de' Medici hinted at these associates in the course of his self-defense. In his mind, "there is no one who does not doubt that Duke Alessandro...was a tyrant of our fatherland, apart from those who, by flattering him and supporting his party, grew rich; and even these could not

⁵² Nardi, *Istorie della città di Firenze*, 281. "... tiranno assoluto e crudelissimo..." "... si godeva nella sua grandezza e reputazione..."

⁵³ Jacopo Nardi, "Orazione fatta in Napoli dalli fuorusciti fiorentini allo imperatore Carlo V nel tempo che vi era il duca Alessandro de' Medici l'anno 1535," in *Istorie della città di Firenze*, 379. "... volse Alessandro l'atroce animo suo a un crudelissimo e barbaro disegno e del tutto inumano, di farci morire di morte violenta, promettendo per pubblici bandi grandissimi premi a qualunque che alcuno di noi o con ferro o con veleno ammazzasse."

⁵⁴ Nardi, "Orazione," 379. "...la persecuzione che noi fuorusciti e la città nostra con noi insieme ha sopportato dalla memoria di papa Clemente..."

⁵⁵ Nardi, "Orazione," 379. "...al presente si sopporta da Alessandro tiranno di quella..."

be ignorant, or so blinded by their own interests, as to fail to recognize that he was indeed a tyrant.”⁵⁶ These unmentioned men included Luigi and Francesco Guicciardini, Francesco Vettori, and even the eventual exile Filippo Strozzi. In the eyes of posterity, Duke Alessandro bears nearly all the burden of such actions. Lorenzino declared the duke himself a direct participant in violence, claiming that Alessandro's enemies "were poisoned or killed by his own hands or by his accomplices."⁵⁷

Lorenzino compared Alessandro to the reviled Roman Emperors Nero and Caligula, whose rumored personal cruelty and sexual transgressions overshadowed their legitimate claims to the throne. The assassin and his allies attempted to depict Alessandro's murder as an act mirroring the assassination of Julius Caesar by Brutus. Marcus Brutus and his collaborators murdered Caesar after the latter had named himself dictator for life, flouting the long tradition of Senate rule in republican Rome. The noble tyrannicide was a historical trope used incessantly by Renaissance Italians, where once numerous city-states increasingly fell to foreign and domestic control in the sixteenth century. Instead of framing the justification of Alessandro's assassination in purely political terms, Lorenzino asserted, "as if it were a necessary condition for any tyrant to be no less evil than Nero, no less a hater of mankind and lecherous than Caligula...[he] sought to surpass all of them in wickedness."⁵⁸ Lorenzino claimed Alessandro "was in no way inferior to Caligula in the contempt, ridicule, and torment with which he oppressed the citizens, with his adulteries and his acts of violence, his coarse, harsh words and

⁵⁶ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 3; ASF, "Apologia," 1r-1v. "...che dubiti che il duca Alessandro che si chiamava de Medici non fosse tiranno della nostra Patria, se già non sono quelli che per favorirlo, e per tenere la parte sua, ne divenivono ricchi, i quali non potevano essere però ne tanto ignoranti ne tanto acciccati dall'utilità che non conoscessino che gli era tiranno..."

⁵⁷ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 5; ASF, "Apologia," 2v. "...altri essere stati avelenati, e morti di sua propria mano, e de sua satelliti solamente per non aver à vergognarsi di essi..."

⁵⁸ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 4; ASF, "Apologia," 1v-2r. "...e come se fusse necessario per essere Tiranno non essere meno empio di Nerone, ne meno odiatore dell'uomini, o lussurioso di Caligola ne meno crudele di Faraide, cercò di superare le sceleratezze di tutti."

his menaces," which are, "to men who esteem honor, harder to bear than death—which he eventually inflicted upon them."⁵⁹ Accordingly, Alessandro's greatest crime was not upending the republican system in Florence, but dishonoring his subjects.

Alessandro's methods of torturing and executing his citizens were not only cruel, but unusual, according to his enemies. Nardi's oration before Charles V mentioned Alessandro's "cursed hands in the dirtying blood from the upright citizens," flowing freely after "much pain and torture at first," so that "Phalaris,⁶⁰ Mezenzio,⁶¹ or Dionysius,⁶² the cruelest of cruel tyrants, at no time...were equals" to Duke Alessandro.⁶³ In the process of attempting to establish himself as the new Brutus, Lorenzino called upon the memories of some of the most notorious tyrants of antiquity, men whose reputations had been shaped in the centuries after their deaths in order to make them archetype villains. First among these was Phalaris, who was said place his victims inside a hollow bronze bull invented by Perillus to roast them alive, their scream echoing in the beast for all to hear.⁶⁴ According to Lorenzino, Alessandro "greatly outdid" Phalaris "in cruelty, since, whilst Phalaris punished Perillus quite justly for the cruel device the latter had invented, designed to inflict agonizing torture and death on his victims in the bronze bulls," it is easy to imagine that "Alessandro would have actually rewarded the inventor, if he had lived in his

⁵⁹ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 4; ASF, "Apologia," 2r. "Non fù punto inferiore à Caligola nel vilipendere straziare, e sbeffare i Cittadini con l'adulteri con violenze, con parole villane, e con minacce che sono alli uomini che stimano l'onore più dure à sopportare della morte, con la quale al fine li perseguitava..."

⁶⁰ Phalaris (570—554 BC) served as the Greek tyrant of Agrigentum in Sicily, where he was said to have roasted his enemies alive in a hollow bronze bull. Also see n51.

⁶¹ Mezenzio, or Mezentius in English, was a mythical King of the Etruscans in the works of Virgil, Livy, Cato, and Ovid known for bloodthirsty battlefield conduct.

⁶² Dionysus could refer to the Greek god of wine, who in the *Iliad* made King Lycurgus chop his son to pieces with an axe in order to end a drought, but more likely to Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse (432-467 BC), who was mentioned in *The Divine Comedy* as a blood-thirsty and rapacious ruler (*Inferno*, XII, 106-108).

⁶³ Nardi, "Orazione," 379. "...le sagrate mani nel sangue imbrattare de' giusti cittadini, con tante pene e tormenti quelli straziare in prima, che Falari, Mezenzio o Dionisio, de' crudeli tiranni sì crudelissimi, giammai credo li fussino simili."

⁶⁴ Ovid, *The Poems of Exile: Tristia and the Black Sea Letters*, trans. Peter Green (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 58-9.

time."⁶⁵ By comparing Duke Alessandro to some of the most reviled tyrants of antiquity, his enemies used the horrors that had damned these villains' reputations to quickly tarnish Alessandro's honor and memory, and to cast him in a category with those who deserved scorn and death, but certainly not power.

Alessandro also reportedly punished his enemies that he allowed to live by incarcerating them in horrific ways designed to make death a tempting release from torture. As opposed to those executed immediately, Nardi proclaimed, "[m]any others were confined for some time, which, though they had obeyed and fully accepted the limits of their confinement, they were nevertheless in new prisons, and subjected to worse conditions."⁶⁶ Again, Nardi describes Duke Alessandro as a tyrant with an unusual cruel streak, delighting in the pain of his enemies. Lorenzino claimed, Alessandro "himself was always dreaming up new kinds of torture and death, such as walling up men alive in such confined spaces that they could not bend or turn or change position, but were, so to speak, as much imprisoned in the wall as the bricks and stones;" and "in this state he kept them alive, feeding them the bare minimum and prolonging their agony to an impossible degree, since the mere death of his citizens was not enough to sate this monster."⁶⁷

Even those fortunate citizens who avoided Alessandro's torture schemes found themselves cast out of their city and hunted while in exile. Nardi announced, "After these crimes [Alessandro] turned to exile, and with injustice were those of his country evicted and miserably

⁶⁵ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 4-5; ASF, "Apologia," 2r. "...con la quale al fine li perseguitava, superò la crudeltà di Falaride à gran lunga, perche dove quelli puni con giusta pena Perillo del crudele tormento per far morire gl'uomini miseramente nel Toro di bronzo inventore, si può credere, che Alessandro l'averebbe premiato, se fosse stato à suo tempo..."

⁶⁶ Nardi, "Orazione," 379. "Molt'altri furono per alcun tempo confinati, i quali, benchè avessino obbedito e appieno i confini osservati, furono nondimeno in altri luoghi di nuovo confinati, e con peggiori condizioni..."

⁶⁷ Nardi, "Orazione," 379.

deprived of their rights."⁶⁸ Republican Florentine governments routinely exiled citizens—Dante, Machiavelli, Cosimo de' Medici, and Alessandro de' Medici himself, among them—but firmly establishing a hereditary dukedom required exile for potentially longer periods of time without the former prospect that the composition of the republican government might shift to allow the family to return to Florence soon after. Lorenzino claimed that even those who left Florence or were exiled continually faced death at the hands of Alessandro's henchmen: “For even in this brief time [of seven years], so many citizens were driven out of their fatherland, great numbers of them subsequently being persecuted and killed in exile;” so many were “beheaded without trial and without cause, merely on the pretext of empty fears and words of no importance; and others were poisoned or killed by his own hands or by his accomplices.”⁶⁹ The secret murders in exile and poisonings at the hands of Alessandro and his accomplices, while achieving the same overall goal for the new government as outright executions, were particularly heinous ways to dispose of republican Florentines, since they deprived the victims of the right to a final confession and absolution, the comfort traditionally given to the executed by confraternities, as well as the noble and honorable death by decapitation.

Sources support the claims that Alessandro and his government used violence and murder against political enemies. After Alessandro entered Florence in 1531, the number of executions for reasons of state [*per lo stato*] increased dramatically. From 1480 to 1560, the Florentine government executed 62 men from the office-holding class for political reasons. Of these, nine executions occurred within the five years of Duke Alessandro’s reign. Not only did

⁶⁸ Nardi, "Orazione," 379. "Dopo queste scelleratezze si volse allo esilio; e quanti ingiustamente sono stati della patria cacciati e de' lor ben miseramente spogliati..."

⁶⁹ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 5; ASF, "Apologia," 2v. "...avenga che si trovarono in così poco tempo cacciati dalla patria loro tanti Cittadini e altri perseguitati, e morti, molti esserne stati decapitati senza processo, e senza causa, e solamente per vari sospetti, e per parole di nessuna importanza; altri essere stati avelenati, e morti di sua propria mano, e de sua satelliti..."

Alessandro's government execute a number of prominent citizens, but it did so in ways that appear to have upended the rituals associated with death and execution. Of the nine men executed while Alessandro ruled in Florence, eight were decapitated without their place of death listed by the Compagnia de' Neri, the confraternity that comforted condemned criminals on the way to their place of execution.⁷⁰ This could be the product of poor record-keeping, but it seems far more likely that the condemned were executed without the observation of the confraternity, away from Bargello's central courtyard, or outside of Florence. Secret executions could have been carried out to avoid unrest in the city, or it is possible that the condemned individuals were already so physically broken that presenting them in public would fuel charges of tyranny. In 1534, as Pope Clement VII's health was failing, Duke Alessandro wrote to Capitano Giuliano de' Medici to reprimand him for treating a political prisoner held in Volterra too liberally. Alessandro—or an official writing in his name—demands harsher treatment of the prisoner, yet the complaints originally come from the Otto di Balìa.⁷¹ The harsh treatment of prisoners and high number of political executions under Alessandro may have been outcomes of establishing the Medici principate rather than indications of his personal cruelty. Duke Cosimo I continued regularly executing well-born citizens for reasons of state throughout his reign, despite inheriting the title after the dukedom had already been established.⁷²

Alessandro's general fears of uprising and assassination reveal themselves in his ban on citizens carrying weapons and orders concerning his protection. Filippo Nerli commented, "among the first things, [Alessandro] ordered that the walls of the *castello*," or castle, "should

⁷⁰ BNCF, Palatino 454, 7v.-10v. cited in Baker, "For Reasons of State," 471-473. Alessandro's government executed two men for reasons of state in 1533; three in 1534; three in 1535; and one in 1536.

⁷¹ ASF, MdP 181, 95r. "Questi mag.ci Otto di Balìa si sono molto risentiti meco di te. Dicendo haver confinato nel fondo della torre di quella fortezza Vinc.o Martelli et mandatovelo che tu contro l'honor di quel mag.to permetti che da ciaschuno li sia parlato et che li scriva liberamente et facci quello che li pare senza tener cura alchuna d'esso..."

⁷² Baker, "For Reasons of State," 466.

continue [to be built] lustily and especially he made to solicit the customary provisions for the guards and preservation of his state and, above all other things, he gave orders” to “disarm the *popolo* and *cittadini* that were of any quality.”⁷³ From the start of his reign, before the rifts with Medici supporters, stories of his sexual exploits, and supposed cruelty, Duke Alessandro de’ Medici must have known he was a target for both weapons and words.

In addition to imprisoning, exiling, and executing, Alessandro stole money from his citizens, his critics claimed. Nardi asserted that Alessandro "cast himself to the robbery of other wealth which has been so fool-hardy, rapacious, and wicked that the innocence of the little children did not have the power of moving to pity even so much patrimony that they were able to live." Alessandro "has usurped the females' dowries, giving them a small dispensation for living, and so little that they can hardly support themselves." In the past, "[t]his has never been heard of before, let alone done, because the ancient tyrants, even those that were cruel and without religion, you do not find that they were so inhuman," that, "assuring the fathers, they persecuted the innocent children, and extinguished" hope of "husbands, the dowries usurped from wretched women, always used to be in mercy and in protection."⁷⁴ Nardi seems to refer to the plundering of the bank accounts of the exiles and to Alessandro’s draining of the Florentine *Monte di Pietà* or *Monte delle Doti*, the Florentine public funds in which people could invest. The *Monte delle Doti* provided dowries to the daughters of investors, allowing more girls to marry. Emptying of

⁷³ Filippo Nerli, *Commentari* (Augusta: David Raimondo Mertz e Gio. Jacopo Majer, 1728), 283. "Tornato che fu il duca in Firenze, tra le prime cose, ordinò che si dovesse seguitare gagliardamente la muraglia del castello e massimamente fece sollecitare le provvisioni solite per le guardie e conservazione dello stato suo e, sopra tutte l'altre cose, dette ordine che si seguitasse di disarmare il popolo e i cittadini di qualunque qualità che si fussero. Esequivasi questo ordine per il magistrato degl'Otto di Balìa con ogni possibile diligenza e si procedeva con ogni severità contro a chi erano trovate arme proibite e contro ai bandi."

⁷⁴ Nardi, "Orazione," 379-80. "Appresso a questo si gettò alle rapine delle altrui sostanze; in che è stato tanto strabocchevole rapace ed empio, che la innocenza de' piccioli fanciulli non ha avuto forza di muoverlo a pietà pur di tanto patrimonio che possino vivere. Anzi è tanto avanti proceduto, che alle misere femmine usurate ha le doti, dando loro una piccola dispensa per la vita, e tanto poca, che appena si possono sostenere: cosa mai più per l'addietro udita, non che usata; perchè gli antichi tiranni, ancora che crudeli fussino e senza religione, non però si trova che fussino tanto inumani, che, assicuratisi de' padri, perseguitassino gl'innocenti figliuoli, e spenti i mariti, le doti usurpassino alle donne miserabili, usate sempre d'essere avute in compassione e in protezione."

funds from the Depository of Florence began under Pope Clement VII, so Alessandro may have been continuing a Medici tradition already well underway; or perhaps he was assigned the blame for the looting of Florence under his uncle, whether because accounting discrepancies came to light during his reign or simply because the exiles needed to hold someone accountable for the serious financial and social crime of depriving the government and citizens of their wealth.⁷⁵ Under Clement VII, Florentine and Papal account books were “retouched” to conceal the movement of Florentine public funds to Rome. Alessandro may not have been as careful to conceal the family practice of siphoning from the Florentine treasury.⁷⁶ This crime was particularly important in Florence because so many leading families of the city were bankers or merchants whose place in society was directly tied to wealth.⁷⁷ Little differentiated the wealth of families from that of their banking and merchant empires, so seizing the assets of a family could also place their family firm in jeopardy.

Critics also blamed Alessandro for levies to pay the indemnity imposed on Florence following the siege and tribute paid to the Emperor that suppressed the economy of Florence. Benedetto Varchi recounted, "The *cittadini* seeing themselves beaten, and having" "the father, son, and brother confined or banished, and doubting every hour of new levies" "they dared not discover; and doing much less business and opening of new trade, they locked their doors," and went "into houses or churches, partly being and partly feigning to be, not only poor, but

⁷⁵ See Melissa Meriam Bullard, *Filippo Strozzi and the Medici: Favor and Finance in Sixteenth-Century Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 134-140.

⁷⁶ Bullard, *Filippo Strozzi and the Medici*, 137-139.

⁷⁷ Discussions of what constituted nobility often dealt with the subject of wealth as a leading factor, alongside family name, and one's *virtù*. For fifteenth-century discussions of nobility see *Knowledge, Goodness, and Power: The Debate Over Nobility Among Quattrocento Italian Humanists*, ed. Albert Rabil (Binghamton, NY: 1991), 32-52; 63-89; 178-181.

wretched."⁷⁸ Following the brutal siege that purportedly forced mothers to eat their babies to keep from starvation, levies to pay for the Pope's and Emperor's costs of the war and entertainment for the Emperor on his visit to Florence would have been difficult to justify for any government. Even Alessandro's Ceccheregli's *Sentenze del duca Alessandro de' Medici*, a history of the duke's reign that is largely favorable, mentions the story of a citizen almost driven to debtor's prison by the tribute collected to pay for the feast associated with Emperor Charles V coming to Florence. In the story, Duke Alessandro sees the man in chains as he is led away from his house and asks about his crime. Upon hearing that the man took out a loan to pay the tribute that he was unable to pay back, Alessandro takes on the debt himself so that the man can go free.⁷⁹ The story is presented as an example of the duke's kindness to his subjects, but even this pro-Medici source demonstrates the financial pressure squeezing many of Duke Alessandro's citizens after the siege.

DUKE ALESSANDRO'S ILLEGITIMATE BIRTH AND REPREHENSIBLE CONDUCT

The claims Duke Alessandro's enemies made about his personal qualities and conduct dwarf those concerning his political usurpation in both volume and vitriol. Lorenzino de' Medici in his *Apologia* upended the traditional, purely political definition of a tyrant in favor of a description that took into account the behavior and background of the ruler. And whereas Alessandro's critics recounted his purported cruelty and changes to the government's structure with some detachment, the same critics used personal pronouns and appealed to their wounded honor when discussing the disgrace Alessandro inflicted on those he ruled. For many well-born Florentines, the shame at bowing to a bastard appears to have surpassed their pain at losing

⁷⁸ Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 484. "I Cittadini Popolani veggendosi sbattuti, e avendo chi il padre, chi il figliuolo, e chi il fratello, o confinati, o sbanditi, e dubitando ognora di nuovi Accatti, e Balzegli, non ardivano scoprirsi, e non che far faccende, e aprire traffichi nuovi, serravano gli aperti, e si ritiravano nelle Ville, o per le Chiese, parte essendo, e parte infingendo d'essere, non che poveri, meschini."

⁷⁹ Alessandro Ceccheregli, *Sentenze del duca Alessandro de' Medici* (Mugello: A. Mazzocchi, 1903), 22-3.

control of the government. Compounding their agony was the supposed low status of Duke Alessandro's mother. Although Duke Alessandro has been identified as possibly having black African ancestry, discussions about the Duke's appearance or race do not figure prominently in his negative portrayals. Duke Alessandro's enemies instead blasted him for supposedly having his mother murdered in order to prevent knowledge of her low status. Enemies likewise criticized Alessandro for the purported assassination of his cousin and rival, Cardinal Ippolito. Finally, discussion of Duke Alessandro's sexual indiscretions inspired considerable disapproval among his contemporaries, resulting in the loss of at least one key ally and giving Lorenzino the opportunity to assassinate him.

Illegitimacy

Even some longtime associates of Pope Clement VII and the Medici family smarted under the rule of Alessandro, citing his cruelty and illegitimacy together as causes for their defection. For distantly-related kin such as Filippo Strozzi, unrest came when "their kinsman Clement died, and having satisfied the bond that they held to the House of Medici (in which their mother was born)" and "they could not any longer tolerate being subjected to a bastard, cruel, lecherous, and wicked tyrant."⁸⁰ Among the fractures that eventually resulted in Filippo Strozzi joining the Florentine exiles in lobbying for Alessandro's dismissal, and supporting his eventual assassination, was the interaction between the duke and Filippo's son, Piero. Varchi represents the competition between the young men in all things, including suits of love, as a battle between Piero "born legitimately of Madonna Clarice de' Medici," Alessandro's aunt, and Alessandro,

⁸⁰ Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 2: 60. "Questi parendo loro, morto Clemente, aver soddisfatto all'obbligo che tenevano alla Casa de' Medici (onde erano nati per madre) della ricevuta grazia, tanto più che dicevano, in Firenze esser mancata la stirpe virile di quella famiglia, e della femminile non restava altri che la moglie del Duca d'Orliens, non potevano sopportare più oltre di servire a un bastardo, a un crudele, a un libidinoso, e ad un empio tiranno."

"illegitimately born."⁸¹ This depiction shows that Duke Alessandro was hated not only for usurping power and dismantling the republic, but also because he was illegitimate.

Duke Alessandro's illegitimate birth heaped insult on his Florentine subjects, who linked the ruler's bastard status and birth to a common woman to his other detestable crimes. Lorenzino de' Medici suggested that some of the violence supposedly perpetrated by Alessandro was the result of his debased origins. According to the assassin, Alessandro and his accomplices murdered subjects "simply so that he need not feel ashamed in front of certain men who had witnessed the conditions of his birth and upbringing."⁸² The conditions of Alessandro's birth featured above all his acknowledged illegitimacy, which supposedly embarrassed the duke and enflamed his enemies. After the death of Pope Clement VII, "The Florentines more than anyone made secret celebrations in their hearts, unable to make it public, since they felt to be deprived of life because" Clement, "the principal author of all their miseries, and especially a most bitter tyranny, which brought him even more hatred" had put in charge Alessandro "a cruel lord" and "a bastard prince, and one that could not know in any way the name of his father," according to Bernardo Segni.⁸³ Segni's rejection of Duke Alessandro had as much to do with the circumstances of his birth as how he received and used power.

⁸¹ Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 486. "Non poteva Piero nè sdimenticarsi nè sgozzare, ch'egli sotto le promesse fatte da Clemente più volte al Padre di doverlo far Cardinale, s'era vestito da Prete, e andato fuori per Firenze in abito di Sacerdote; ed in somma essendo nato di Madonna Clarice de' Medici legittimamente, e non avendo tante parte, quante aveva egli, gli pareva dovere d'andare almeno di pari con Alessandro illegittimamente nato, ed in tutto quel che poteva, andava competendo, e massimamente ne' casi d'amore, se non alla scoperta, tacitamente con lui: le quali cose, sebbene le dissimulava, erano al Duca di grandissima noia, nè altro aspettava per farlo tornare a segno, e stare a stecchetto, che una qualche occasione, o cagione di potere con qualche colore, se non ragionevole, apparente, abbassarlo e tenerlo sotto, la quale cagione, e occasione (come i mali vengono prestamente sempre) non pensò molto a farseli innanzi, come poco appresso si vedrà."

⁸² Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 5; ASF, "Apologia," 2v. "...solamente per non aver à vergognarsi di essi, che l'avevano visto nella fortuna che gl'era nato, et allevato..."

⁸³ Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 2: 45. "I Fiorentini sopra tutti ne feciono festa nei segreti cuori, non potendo farne in palese, poichè sentirono esser privo di vita il principale autore di tutte le loro miserie, e soprattutto d'un'acerbissima tirannide, la quale gli recava ancora a più odio, quanto che in lui essendo state bellissime occasioni in più tempi di costituire con suo grande onore la patria in Libertà, avevano veduto mettervi una crudel Signoria nella persona ancora d'un Principe bastardo, e che non sapeva in alcun modo il nome del padre."

Outside of Florence, bastardy presented no bar to power in some Renaissance city-states. Illegitimate offspring were “patiently tolerated” in the fifteenth century, an “age of golden bastards,” according to Jacob Burckhardt.⁸⁴ Francesco Sforza (1401-1466), who rose from fighting as a *condottiero* to the Duke of Milan, serves as a prime example of a fifteenth-century illegitimate gaining power and founding a dynasty. In the course of ruling Milan, Francesco himself fathered at least 17 illegitimate children.⁸⁵ The Este dynasty of Ferrara, Modena, and Reggio famously supplanted legitimate heirs with bastard sons in the fifteenth century.⁸⁶ Niccolò III of Ferrara (1383-1441) was said to have produced over 30 illegitimate children, resulting in only those born to a noble lady from Siena receiving preference, even over legitimate brothers.⁸⁷ Sigismondo Malatesta of Rimini, himself illegitimate, fathered more than ten illegitimate children, which caused each son’s rank in the order of succession to be determined based on his mother’s status.⁸⁸ Powerful fathers did not restrict their support and attention to illegitimate males only. Dukes, merchants, Holy Roman Emperors, and Popes arranged illustrious marriages for a number of their illegitimate female offspring. Illegitimate brides included Margherita of Austria, wife of Duke Alessandro; Lucrezia Borgia, married off three times by her father, Pope Alexander VI; Bianca Maria Sforza, only daughter of Filippo Maria Visconti and eventual wife of Filippo Sforza; and Caterina Sforza, illegitimate daughter of Galeazzo Maria. Daughters produced out-of-wedlock by well-born mothers served as “valuable

⁸⁴ Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S. G. C. Middlemore (London: Penguin, 2006), 12.

⁸⁵ Ettliger, “Visibilis et Invisibilis,” 773, 789-790. The Emperor never formally invested Francesco with the title of Duke, but he ruled and was recognized as such.

⁸⁶ Jane Fair Bestor, “Bastardy and Legitimacy in the Formation of a Regional State in Italy: The Estense Succession,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38 (1996), 550.

⁸⁷ Helen Ettliger, “Visibilis et Invisibilis: The Mistress in Italian Renaissance Court Society,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (1994), 782.

⁸⁸ Ettliger, “Visibilis et Invisibilis,” 783.

marriage pawns” for their fathers.⁸⁹

At the same time that illegitimately-born princes ruled some Renaissance states, the Venetian aristocracy firmly rejected those born outside of marriage. Stanley Chojnacki argued that Venetians excluded illegitimate offspring from the nobility in the fifteenth century, when financial support for the noble class was rapidly evaporating. Beginning in 1400, a man claiming to be of noble status had to prove that he was born in a legitimate marriage, as well as give the social standing of his mother.⁹⁰ Laws regarding proof of legitimacy tightened in Venice through the fifteenth century as the patriciate attempted to limit its numbers, and culminated in the registration of noble births and marriages in the *Libri d’Oro*, or Golden Books. Exclusion from the Golden Books prevented men from serving in the Venetian government—and certainly from becoming *doge*.⁹¹

Illegitimate offspring throughout Italy and Western Europe found fewer opportunities for advancement in the later fifteenth century and sixteenth century. Burckhardt argued that foreign ideas and the Catholic Reformation in the sixteenth century resulted in less acceptance of illegitimate birth.⁹² The Este family crowned no illegitimate ruler after 1471, possibly because of growing prejudice against bastards in general due to the centralization of power by illegitimates such as Cesare Borgia and Borso d’Este in the fifteenth century.⁹³ Elsewhere in Europe, scholarship on the status of noble bastards from Southwest Germany demonstrates that their opportunities dwindled even before the Reformation due greater consciousness concerning

⁸⁹ Ettliger, “Visibilis et Invisibilis,” 783-784.

⁹⁰ Stanley Chojnacki, “Political Adulthood in Fifteenth-Century Venice,” *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 4 (Oct. 1986): 798.

⁹¹ Chojnacki, “Political Adulthood,” 798-9.

⁹² Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 12.

⁹³ Fair Bestor, “Bastardy and Legitimacy,” 580.

lineage and nobility.⁹⁴ French noble bastards and younger legitimate sons also lost ground in the sixteenth century because of the centralization of power by the French monarchy, resulting in fewer people able to claim noble status and the diminishing rewards accompanying it.⁹⁵ These examples from neighboring states hint that the centralization of power itself in Italy potentially served as the greatest threat to the opportunities of illegitimate offspring. Venice's restriction of government positions and financial support to those of legitimate birth suggests that as Italy increasingly fell under the domination of the Holy Roman Empire in the sixteenth century, the shrinking pool of resources and positions would have sustained the legitimate members of the lineage at the expense of those born out-of-wedlock. Unlike most families and states in Renaissance Italy, the primary Medici line was dying out at the same time they gained control of Florence, allowing Alessandro an opportunity that was increasingly exceptional for illegitimate sons.

Contemporaries of Alessandro carefully distinguished illegitimate children from those born in solemnized marriages. Late medieval jurists of both civil and canon law ranked children in a hierarchy based on whether they were born in a marriage, adopted, or were illegitimate. The legal types of children were first divided based on whether the child was *sub patria potestate*, under their father's rule, or not. Legitimate children born in solemnized marriages and formally adopted children were legally under the *patria potestas*, so they formed the highest categories of legal children. Illegitimate children were not under the *patria potestas*, which gave them more freedom, but less honor. Bastards were ranked based on the degree of sexual sin taking place at the time of their conception. Jurists divided illegitimates into two main categories: *naturales*

⁹⁴ Judith J. Hurwich, "Bastards in the German Nobility in the Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries: Evidence of the 'Zimmerische Chronik,'" *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 34, no. 3 (2003): 701-727. Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III objected to elevating the illegitimate Borso d'Este to the Duke of Ferrara in 1454 over the claims of his legitimate brothers. Hurwich, "Bastards in the German Nobility," 705.

⁹⁵ Mikhael Harsgor, "L'essor des bâtards nobles au XVe siècle," *Revue Historique* 253, no. 2 (1975), 352.

tantum, children born of ongoing concubinal relationships, and *nec legitimi nec naturales*, children born of casual or damned sexual relationships. Children who were *nec legitimi nec naturales* were called *spurii* and they constituted the lowest group of children. *Spurii* included those whose father was a priest or of uncertain condition, and the children of a slave. Those who were born of incest or adultery comprised the absolute lowest class of *spurii*.⁹⁶

While the term *naturalis* had a very specific meaning in the legal language of illegitimacy, it served as an adjective meaning simply “illegitimate” in popular usage. In his oration before the Emperor in 1535, Nardi mentioned Alessandro's status as an illegitimate son: “The government of our city” is “in the hands of Alessandro, the *figliuolo naturale*, or illegitimate son, of Lorenzo who was the Duke of Urbino and the son of Piero di Lorenzo di Piero di Cosimo.”⁹⁷ Even after his death, historians mentioned Alessandro's status as an illegitimate son. Varchi reminded his readers, “that Cardinal Ippolito de’ Medici and Duke Alessandro were *naturali e non legittimi*,” or illegitimate and not legitimate.⁹⁸ Segni called “Alessandro *figliuolo naturale di Lorenzo de’ Medici*,” the illegitimate son of Lorenzo de’ Medici.⁹⁹ Renaissance writers used the designation *naturalis* frequently, even when describing people they esteemed; Alessandro's eventual wife and illegitimate daughter of Emperor Charles V, Margaret of Austria; his rival Ippolito de’ Medici; and his son by a mistress were also referred to as *naturalis*, demonstrating the wide use of this term.¹⁰⁰ The precise legal definitions and frequent designation of illegitimate birth in contemporary sources indicates the significance of

⁹⁶ Thomas Kuehn, *Illegitimacy in Renaissance Florence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 36-7.

⁹⁷ Nardi, “Orazione,” 236. “Essendo il governo della nostra città in mano d’Alessandro figliuolo naturale di Lorenzo che fu duca d’Urbino e figliuolo che fu di Piero di Lorenzo di Piero di Cosimo, e alla sua elezione chiamato primo duca di Fiorenza...”

⁹⁸ Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 522. “...il Cardinale Ippolito de’ Medici, ed il Duca Alessandro erano naturali, e non legittimi...”

⁹⁹ Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 1: 161.

¹⁰⁰ Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 505, 516, 579; 491, 520, 522; 595.

illegitimate birth in the Renaissance.

In 1535, Alessandro's cousin Ippolito de' Medici claimed that the Duke's subjects felt his tyranny more acutely because of his illegitimate birth. Ippolito penned a letter to Charles V which argued that the Florentines were ashamed to be ruled by a bastard. He wrote, "This hatred the Florentine gentlemen and the commoners have toward the Duke for the above reasons, was all the greater in consideration of his birth...[which was] clearly illegitimate."¹⁰¹ If Cardinal Ippolito's statement reflected more than just his own desire for ruling Florence, then Duke Alessandro's illegitimacy was important enough to amplify his rejection based on political grounds. This judgment is in keeping with Jane Fair Bestor's argument that illegitimacy was less tolerated in rulers after the mid-fifteenth-century, at least in part due to the fact that the ruled derived honor from the identity of their ruling prince.¹⁰² Since illegitimates were theoretically without honor and lacking in essential social attributes,¹⁰³ Duke Alessandro could contribute little more than shame to the people he ruled. The disgrace of being ruled by a man illegitimately born demonstrates that attitudes toward illegitimate birth—once permissive and even welcoming for ruling men—had changed significantly.

The conflict between Alessandro and his family may have partially emerged from the fact that his illegitimacy allowed them to question whether he was a Medici at all, as Lorenzino did in his *Apologia*, claiming, "I never was a servant of Alessandro, nor he a member of my family or

¹⁰¹ Ippolito de' Medici, "Istruzione del Cardinale Ippolito de' Medici ad un suo Agente appresso all'Imperadore Carlo V., persuadendolo a levare lo Stato di Firenze al Duca Alessandro, e darlo detto al Cardinale," in Rastrelli, *Storia d'Alessandro de' Medici*, 1:226. "Quest'odio che per li sopradetti rispetti li Gentiluomini e popolari Fiorentini portano al Duca, tanto si sa maggiore, quanto considerano il suo nasciamento per conto di madre, manifestamente illegittimo."

¹⁰² Fair Bestor, "Bastardy and Legitimacy," 580.

¹⁰³ Kuehn, *Illegitimacy in Renaissance Florence*, 108.

any kinsman of mine." ¹⁰⁴ According to Lorenzino, "those who, being badly informed or for some other reason, say that I was wrong to assassinate Alessandro" "show themselves to be woefully ignorant of the laws ordained against tyrants."¹⁰⁵ Since Alessandro was already a tyrant, Lorenzino reasoned, "was not I all the more obliged to try to liberate my already enslaved fatherland by the death of one man," who, "even if he had been a member of my family (which he was not), in their view, was still a bastard, and five or six degrees removed from me in kinship?"¹⁰⁶ Lorenzino argues that Alessandro's illegitimacy placed him at the furthest edge of his kinship circle, negating arguments that he murdered a close relative. In the process of defending the assassination, Lorenzino revealed his own damning doubts about Alessandro's status as a Medici, fueling rumors about the duke for centuries after his death.

The claim that Alessandro was not a Medici at all shook the very foundation upon which his rule was based and served as a ready basis for attack. As seen in the discussion of the adjective *naturale* to mark illegitimate birth, Duke Lorenzo of Urbino was officially recognized as Alessandro's father, even by Duke Alessandro himself.¹⁰⁷ But public admissions of paternity did not put to rest all confusion and rumors. Lorenzino de' Medici took advantage of the uncertainty to argue: that Alessandro "was not a member of the Medici family or any kinsman of mine is evident... It may be doubted whether Duke Lorenzo, who was exiled at the time, had

¹⁰⁴ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 7; ASF, "Apologia," 4r. "...io sostengo che non fui mai servitor d'Alessandro, ne egli del sangue mio, o parente..."

¹⁰⁵ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 7; ASF, "Apologia," 6r. "Ma mi par bene, che questi ò per esser male informati, ò per qual che altro rispetto, dicono che io ho cercato amazzare, allegandone le sopradette ragioni, mostrino essere molto meno informati delle leggi ordinate contro à tiranni..."

¹⁰⁶ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 10; ASF, "Apologia," 6r. "...ma astringono il figliuolo ad'accusare il Padre in caso che cerchi di occupare la tirannide della sua Patria, non ero io tanto piú obligato à cercare di liberare la patria già serva con la morte d'uno quando che fusse stato di Casa mia (che non era) ma à suo modo sarebbe stato Bastardo, e lontano cinque, o sei gradi da me o se Imoleone si trovò ad' amazzare il proprio fratello per liberare la Patria..."

¹⁰⁷ ASF, Mediceo del Principato (MdP), filza 181, 26r-26v. In a letter, Alessandro refers to Catherine de' Medici, legitimate daughter of Lorenzo Duke of Urbino, as his sister.

anything to do with [his mother];" and if it did happen, "it happened no more than once."¹⁰⁸

Lorenzino questioned Duke Lorenzo's involvement with Alessandro's mother, who was supposedly married to another man at the time, and reminded his readers, "who is so ignorant of the consensus of mankind and its laws as not to know that, when a woman has a husband," as Alessandro's mother did, "and he lives in the same place as she does, even if she is immoral and flaunts her body in front of every man's lust, all the children she produces are always adjudged to be, and are in fact, her husband's, since the laws wish to preserve decency as much as possible?"¹⁰⁹ Since Duke Alessandro's mother "was married to a coach driver, as is clearly known to everyone, Alessandro, in accordance with human and divine laws, was the son of that coach driver and not of Duke Lorenzo."¹¹⁰ In consequence, Lorenzino trumpeted, Alessandro "had no more in common with me than the mere fact that he was the son of a coach driver who happened to work for the Medici family."¹¹¹ Yet given that surviving male descendants in the main branch of the Medici family were scarce, Alessandro was recognized as one of the family, and reared and educated in Florence along with the similarly illegitimate Ippolito. If Alessandro's mother really was married at the time of his conception, it raises questions about why Lorenzo would recognize and raise a child who would require expensive clothing, food, and schooling, and eventually a city to rule and patrimony to dispense, unless Duke Lorenzo was certain the child was his, and wanted very badly to have a son.

¹⁰⁸ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 7-8; ASF, "Apologia," 4r. "...e tanto più che io sostengo che non fui mai servitor d'Alessandro, ne egli del sangue mio, o parente..." "Dubitassi se il Duca Lorenzo in quel tempo, che egli era fuoruscito ebbe à fare con questa serva, e se accadde, non accadde più che una volta."

¹⁰⁹ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 7-8; ASF, "Apologia," 4v. "Ma chi è così imperito del consenso dell'uomini e delle leggi, che non sappia che quando una Donna ha marito, e che sia dove lei, ancor che ella sia trista, e che esponga il corpo suo alla libidine d'ogn'uno che tutti i figlioli che ella fa sono sempre giudicati, e son del marito per che le leggi vogliono conservare l'onestà quanto si può..."

¹¹⁰ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 7-8; ASF, "Apologia," 4v. "...era maritata ad'un vetturale, e questo è manifesto, e noto à tutto il Mondo secondo le leggi humane e divine Alessandro era figliuolo di quel vetturale, e non del duca Lorenzo..."

¹¹¹ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 7-8; ASF, "Apologia," 4v. "...tanto che non haveva meco altro interesse, se non che egli era figliolo d'un Vetturale di casa Medici..."

Rich fathers such as Duke Lorenzo had the option to abandon or raise their illegitimate children. The records of the Florentine foundling homes, including the *Ospedale degli Innocenti*, which received the city's abandoned infants, reveal that the city's greatest households were responsible for filling some of their cribs. Among the names of households abandoning infants were the Pitti, Salviati, Strozzi, Tournabuoni, and Medici.¹¹² Though abandonment of illegitimates was certainly an option, many fathers selected to keep and rear their bastard babies fathered with servants and slaves. Despite the constraints of honor, Thomas Kuehn found, "what is surprising is not that Florentines abandoned children but that in a large number of cases the fathers did not, while nonetheless not hiding the fact of illegitimacy." Many of the Florentine elite "sired entire satellite families" to demonstrate "how far they were above the moral rules for others," according to Kuehn. Those men who chose not to abandon their children could count on bastards to serve as heirs if they had no legitimate sons.¹¹³

The Medici proudly displayed their bastards, including Carlo di Cosimo il Vecchio, Duke Alessandro, and Cardinal Ippolito. Medici men sired so many prominent bastards that Michelangelo suggested that the Medici palazzo should be razed and made into a *Piazza dei Muli*, or Square of the Bastards. Carlo de' Medici, son of Cosimo il Vecchio and a slave, was one such illegitimate son. After obtaining an official dispensation to serve in the church, he played important roles in the family and the church hierarchy, preparing the way for the future Medici Popes, Leo X and Clement VII. Carlo is depicted in the Gozzoli fresco adorning the walls of the Medici palazzo chapel. He is painted walking behind his father and legitimate half-

¹¹² Iris Origo, "The Domestic Enemy: The Eastern Slaves in Tuscany in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," *Speculum* 30, no. 3 (1955): 348; Philip Gavitt, *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: The Ospedale degli Innocenti* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 207. Origo also lists the Adimari, Bardi, Capponi, Cerretani, Della Stufa, Ridolfi, and Vespucci. Gavitt also lists the Martelli, Davanzati, and Alviatti.

¹¹³ Kuehn, *Illegitimacy in Renaissance Florence*, 140-1, 138, 166.

brother, who ride on horseback.¹¹⁴ Carlo's inclusion, yet less vaunted portrayal is emblematic of a system of illegitimacy within great families that welcomed bastards, yet did not raise them to the level of their legitimate half-siblings. For men such as Duke Lorenzo—or even the eventual Pope Clement VII—who lived in the sixteenth century and had no legitimate male heirs, the cultural rejection of illegitimate children may have conflicted with their own dynastic ambitions. In order for Lorenzo il Magnifico's main line of the Medici family to continue, at least one illegitimate Medici would need to be raised from birth as a prince, and prepared to oversee banking, religious, and political empires, despite the prevailing moral climate. The continuation of the main branch of the Medici family depended on bringing an illegitimate son into the family in order to rule, or else control could potentially pass to the collateral branch—as it did upon Alessandro's assassination and Cosimo I's accession to the dukedom.

The possibility that Pope Clement VII fathered Alessandro relegated the duke, in rumor at least, to the lowest legal class of illegitimate children while still giving him the advantage of being a member of the dominant branch of the Medici family. Varchi claims that Clement's approval of Alessandro's governing had less to do with ability and more to do with parental oversights. Early in Alessandro's reign, "the Archbishop of Capua [Fra Niccolò Schomberg] left Florence and returned to Rome by order of Pope Clement, who, for another more secret reason or because he wanted to show Alessandro that he knew he could" govern alone and "no longer needed a nursemaid nor a pilot, had called [the Archbishop] back. And in truth Duke Alessandro (as all fathers are deceived by love of their sons) satisfied Pope Clement with his governing."¹¹⁵ Without directly asserting that Clement fathered Alessandro, Varchi very clearly

¹¹⁴ Kuehn, *Illegitimacy in Renaissance Florence*, 139-140, 155, 138.

¹¹⁵ Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 486. "Ne' primi giorni del mese di Settembre partì di Firenze l'Arcivescovo di Capova, e se ne tornò a Roma per ordine di papa Clemente, il quale, o per altra più segreta cagione, o perchè voleva mostrare, che Alessandro sapeva far da sè, e non aveva più bisogno nè di balia, nè di piloto, l'aveva richiamato: e nel vero il

implies that. On the other hand, Jacopo Pitti argued that Clement spent the goodwill the Florentines felt toward Giovanni di Bicci, Cosimo, Piero, Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici to give control to "Alessandro, his son, although held by the people to be born to Duke Lorenzo."¹¹⁶ If Alessandro was Clement's son, as so many had suggested or wondered, the reason it was kept secret may have largely been due to laws regarding illegitimate children at the time. As Clement was a member of the clergy, any child born to him would automatically fall into the lowest category of illegitimates, the *nati ex damnato coitu*, children born in a thoroughly illicit union such as that between a man of the cloth and a slave or servant.¹¹⁷

The Status of Alessandro's Mother

The confusion over the identity of Alessandro's father allowed his critics to cast aspersions upon his mother, who was reported to be a woman so giving of her sexual favors that she could not know who fathered her son, a standard slur in the early modern period. As already discussed, Lorenzino de' Medici disparaged the morality of Alessandro's mother. Bernardo Segni parroted the salacious rumors, suggesting, "Alessandro de' Medici, who was the illegitimate son of Lorenzo de' Medici" and a woman "who having had also done that with Giulio, Prior of Capua, and later Pope Clement, and again with a coach driver that was kept in the home when they were rebels,¹¹⁸ was uncertain of whom he was the son."¹¹⁹ A particular

Duca Alessandro (come tutti i Padri sono ingannati dall'amore de' figliuoli) soddisfaceva tanto nel suo governarsi a papa Clemente, ch'egli, come ebbe a dir poi secondo le parole della Scrittura Santa, aveva trovato un uomo secondo il cuor suo."

¹¹⁶ Pitti, *Istoria fiorentina*, 2:137. "Ma a questo gli scoperse il rimedio l'amor proprio nella persona di Alessandro suo figliuolo, quantunque tenuto dal vulgo nato del duca Lorenzo, di maniera che, mentre si ravvolge per la mente la libertà della patria, le prepara, per mantenerla, con grande affetto, un signore spiegando, nella dolcezza di cotali pensieri, la benivolenza del popolo fiorentino verso Giovanni di Bicci, Cosimo, Piero, Lorenzo e Giuliano, stato vendicato da lui con tanta severità contro de' congiurati."

¹¹⁷ Kuehn, *Illegitimacy in Renaissance Florence*, 36.

¹¹⁸ The Medici family was exiled from Florence following the rise of Savonarola in 1494 and did not return to the city until 1512.

¹¹⁹ Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 1:164-5. "In questo modo di vivere narrato, promesse l'Imperadore di ridurre la Città sotto gli auspici d'Alessandro de' Medici, il quale era figliuolo naturale di Lorenze, nato d'una schiava chiamata

thorn in the sides of well-born critics was the idea that they, legitimate sons born to gentlewomen, should be ruled, insulted, and exiled by a man whose mother was supposedly little better than a prostitute and who could only guess the identity of his father. The status of Alessandro's mother was very important because throughout the Italian peninsula the social standing of a child's mother often determined the status of her child. Stanley Chojnacki argues that when early-sixteenth-century Venice nobles wished to limit their numbers, they excluded even the legitimate children of "low-born" mothers from their ranks, although the Venetian example is atypical.¹²⁰ Due to the high number of illegitimate children in Renaissance courts that had to be differentiated and ranked based on status, Helen Ettliger found that a mistress of the prince bestowed her own status on their illegitimate children.¹²¹ Thomas Kuehn states that in Florence when a child was born out of wedlock, the identity and social status of the mother could greatly influence whether the baby would be abandoned to a foundling home or raised within the family; babies born to slaves and servants were brought into the home and raised as family less often than those born to women of higher status.¹²² The possibility that Alessandro's was born to a woman of very low status proved nearly as problematic as being illegitimate.

Enemies of Alessandro triumphantly revealed that his mother had been either a servant or slave in the Medici household near Rome. Lorenzino announced that Alessandro had been "born to a woman of the lowest and basest class, from Collevocchio, near Rome, who was a housemaid of Duke Lorenzo, performing the humblest household tasks, and was married to a coach

Anna, la quale avendo avuto ancora che fare con Giulio Priore di Capua, e poi Papa Clemente, ed ancora con un vetturale, che tenevano in casa, quando erano ribelli, era incerto di che fosse figliuolo."

¹²⁰ Chojnacki, "Political Adulthood in Fifteenth-Century Venice," 799.

¹²¹ Ettliger, "Visibilis et Invisibilis: The Mistress in Italian Renaissance Court Society," 772.

¹²² Kuehn, *Illegitimacy in Renaissance Florence*, 141, 225.

driver."¹²³ Varchi reports that Alessandro's mother was a *contadina* from Colvecchio when recounting the story of the Florentine exiles "or their supporters," who "wrote on the walls of his house, 'Viva Alessandro of Colvecchio'; to disgrace in this manner the baseness of his mother, who was a poor country lass born in that place."¹²⁴ A less-often reported rumor that would have placed his status even lower than suggested by Lorenzino and Varchi was that his mother was a slave. Segni wrote that Alessandro was "born of a slave named Anna."¹²⁵ Later, Segni expanded his claim. He revealed, "Alessandro...was born of a most vile slave."¹²⁶ Segni calls Alessandro's mother *vilissima*, or most vile, suggesting that he thought Alessandro's mother was common, coarse, and base. If true, Alessandro would have been in good company: rich households raised the most illegitimate children in Florence, possibly because in these homes "susceptible, vulnerable women, servants and slaves, abounded," on whom rich men could father children.¹²⁷

An anonymous chronicle shows that many stories existed at the same time about the identity and social status of Duke Alessandro's parents. According to the "Origine e discendenza della casa de' Medici," those "who did not love Duke Alessandro said that he had been born to a slave with whom his father Lorenzo had to do in 1512." Yet "[o]thers claim Lorenzo begat this boy with a hand-maid of his mother's, who was born in the kingdom toward the borders of Cepperano." Still "[o]thers would more likely have you believe they extracted the

¹²³ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 7; ASF, "Apologia," 4r. "...era nato d'una Donna d'infimo, e vilissimo stato da Colvecchio in quel di Roma che serviva in casa il Duca Lorenzo all'ultimi servizi della Casa, et era maritata ad'un vetturale..."

¹²⁴ Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 540-541. "...e quando egli fu giunto in Roma, quei Fuorusciti, che gli erano rimasi, o lor partigiani, fecero scrivere su per le mura dell'alloggiamento suo, *Viva Alessandro da Colvecchio*, per rimproverargli in quella maniera la viltà della Madre, la quale era una povera contadina nata in quel luogo..."

¹²⁵ Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 1:165. "...nato d'una schiava chiamata Anna."

¹²⁶ Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 2:62. "Questo Alessandro, che nato d'una vilissima schiava, o più veramente figliuolo d'un vettura della Casa."

¹²⁷ David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and Their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 245.

secrets of the places of households where certain sacrifices are offered up,” presumably the areas where servants slept, and “they are of the opinion that he would have been the son of Clement, begat with a maid of the house when he was a knight of S. Giovanni.”¹²⁸ This manuscript reveals that even contemporaries of Duke Alessandro were unclear about the circumstances of his birth, and used this uncertainty to tell the types of stories about his parents that best supported their aims.

While Alessandro’s status as an illegitimate child was never in question, the variety of identities given to his parents reveals the importance of the mother’s and father’s status to that of illegitimate children. The rumor told by “those who did not love” the Duke shows that the most damning version of Alessandro’s family tree would have it that he had been born to an unfree mother—a slave—rather than a free servant. In Renaissance Italy, slaves were mostly female and worked mostly within the household, where their status was similar to that of domestic servant. Jacques Heers argued that medieval slaves “belonged” to the family in every sense of the word.¹²⁹ Iris Origo argues that in Renaissance Italy slaves were also considered part of the *famiglia* and treated like the free servants. Though a slave could be beaten and whipped because she was under her owner’s *potestas puniendi*, so could wives and children at this time.¹³⁰ But the evidence regarding how Duke Alessandro’s enemies talked about his mother shows that her status was of such importance that even the nuances that separated slaves from servants could be exploited to shame him. The claim that the future Pope Clement VII fathered Alessandro with a house maid suggests that that version of the story may have been told by people who reveled in

¹²⁸ “Origine e discendenza della casa de’ Medici,” Syracuse University, Ranke Manuscript 74, 189r-189v. “Coloro i quali non amarono il Duca Alessandro dicono lui esser nato di una schiava con cui Lorenzo suo Padre ebbe che fare l’anno 1512 e che egli e gli zij rimasero in Firenze. Altri affermano Lorenzo aver generato questo fanciullo con una donzella della madre, la quale era nata nel regno verso I confini di Cepperano altri a chi più si ha la credere; hanno cavato questo segreto da penetrali domestici sono di opinione che egli fusse figlio di Clemente generato con una fante di casa mentre era cavaliere di S. Giovanni.”

¹²⁹ Jacques Heers, *Esclaves et domestiques au Moyen Age dans le monde méditerranéen* (Paris: Fayard, 1981), 204.

¹³⁰ Origo, “The Domestic Enemy,” 340.

salacious gossip and did not intend to injure the Duke directly, and instead wanted to portray themselves as those who had “extracted the secrets of the places of households where certain sacrifices are offered up” in order to whisper rumors about the Pope and his “son” for entertainment and social gain.

Race

The possibility that Alessandro's mother was a slave, coupled with descriptions of the duke and paintings of him, have led at least one scholar to declare him "what we could call today a black man, that is, a man of mixed white and African descent," although the historian acknowledges that none of the duke's enemies suggested such ancestry beyond a few general descriptions of his appearance.¹³¹ Segni, the same historian who called Alessandro's mother a slave claimed, "the Duke...[was] a memorable person: strong, black [or swarthy] in color, and with a big nose."¹³² Alessandro's harshest critics, including Lorenzino, failed to describe his appearance in a negative way—while they seemingly mined every other bit of salacious gossip about him. The one source in which Duke Alessandro's appearance was mentioned in a negative way comes from a story from the favorable account by Ceccheregli. According to the chronicler, Duke Alessandro reacted magnanimously to a peasant who complained about him forcing farmers from the countryside to build the new fortress, the *Fortezza da Basso*, and then insulted his appearance. When the farmer "came before the Duke," Alessandro "began to examine him" to see whether he had “said bad things about the Duke.” “The farmer daringly turned and said that [Alessandro] was the one that was brown and had a big nose.” “Hence, the court with the Duke, for these words of the peasant, lifted up a great sound of laughter.”¹³³ The farmer realized

¹³¹ Brackett, “Race and Rulership,” 310.

¹³² Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 2:66-7. “...il Duca d'ire fuori la notte sovente armato, e fare di simili insulti, come giovane animoso, e gagliardo di forza, essendo di persona raccolta, nerbuto, di color nero, e di naso grande.”

¹³³ Ceccheregli, *Sentenze del duca Alessandro de' Medici*, 21. “Visto il Duca l'aria turbata si ritirò per que' boschi, tanto che si rimisse in caccia, et per Jeronimo da Carpi mandò immediate per il contadino. Et così venuto innanzi al

his mistake and fell to the ground, wept, and asked for forgiveness and mercy, which Duke Alessandro granted him. The peasant played on notions that he, the laborer, should appear brown and have a larger nose, but that the Duke who ruled him should not.¹³⁴

Duke Alessandro lived at a moment when skin color was noticed, yet it was not a barrier to political rule or literary fame. Writers used the adjectives “black”, “brown,” and “dark” to describe some of the most honored and powerful men in Renaissance Italy. In his *Life of Dante*, Boccaccio wrote that Alighieri’s “complexion was dark, his hair and beard thick, black, and curling,” his “nose aquiline,” and his “underlip protruding beyond the upper.” Boccaccio recounts a story of the poet passing a group of women in Verona, one of whom asked if he was the man who “goes to Hell, and comes again, at his pleasure, and brings tidings up here of them that are below?” To which another answered “vapidly,” according to Boccaccio, “In truth it has to be as you say. Do you not see how his beard is crisped and skin darkened by the heat and smoke that are there below?” The biographer records that Dante believed that the words “sprung from...genuine belief” and he smiled and felt pleased at his description.¹³⁵ Closer to Alessandro’s time, Duke Ludovico Sforza (1452-1499) of Milan was “called the Moor for being somewhat black.”¹³⁶ Ludovico’s mother, when reporting his birth in 1452, noted the dark color of his skin. Ludovico’s father even anointed him *Maurus* for his dark color—using the Latin

Duca cominciò lui stesso a esaminare chi gli avessi detto tanto male del Duca. Il contadino arditamente si rivoltò et disse, che gli era stato uno che era bruno et aveva uno grande naso, 'et parmi quello che è là.' Onde la Corte con il Duca, per il detto del contadino, levarono uno grande rumore di risa. Conobbe il povero uomo, per tante reverenze, essere il Duca quello con chi nel campo s'era bisticciato; et gittatosi in terra, con gran pianto chiese perdono al Duca et misericordia."

¹³⁴ These things were often said about peasants, who were thought to have coarse features and dark skin from laboring in the sun. See Paul Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 157-176.

¹³⁵ Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Life of Dante* (London: Oneworld Classics, 2009), 37.

¹³⁶ A. Colombo, “La fondazione della villa Sforzesca secondo Simone del Pozzo e i documenti dell’archivio vigevanasco,” *Bolletino storico-bibliografico subalpino* I (1896): 375 cited in Elizabeth McGrath, “Ludovico il Moro and his Moors,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 65 (2002): 71. The term Moor could mean a Muslim, a person coming from North Africa or Sub-Saharan Africa, or a European thought to have darker skin than other contemporaries.

term for Moor that links directly back to the *Mauri* of ancient Rome.¹³⁷ As an adult, Ludovico himself approved of the nickname and placed a prominent Moor in a headband in his *impresa*.¹³⁸ Dante and Ludovico were described in ways similar to Alessandro, and they also seem to have derived a similar sense of amusement from their descriptions.

The meaning and perception of “blackness” changed considerably over the Renaissance as the population of black Africans in Italy increased. In the fifteenth century, the relative scarcity of Africans in Northern Italy led to curiosity and a fetish for dark skin. Black African slaves were regarded less as contributors to the domestic workforce, and more as luxury objects, as they had been in ancient Greece. Visibly different slaves were regarded in much the same way as exotic animals; they were paraded around in an effort to demonstrate the wealth and status of their owner.¹³⁹ The most prized gondoliers of Venice were Moors—a catch-all term used to describe Northern Africans, those with dark skin, and Muslims—due to their scarcity.¹⁴⁰ Specialists acknowledge the difficulty in determining the total number of black Africans living in Europe during the Renaissance; Spain and Portugal appear to have had the highest relative concentrations of Black African slaves. Elsewhere in Europe, “numbers were considerably lower, but could still be significant.”¹⁴¹ This fascination with Moors may have been a result of the continuation of the negrophilia of the late Middle Ages in parts of Northern and Western Europe, which created and was reinforced by stories of *le bon Nègre*, the first non-Jewish convert to Christianity, and Prester John, the imaginary Christian king whose land was located in Africa at the time of the Renaissance.¹⁴² Yet the color black served as a symbol of evil to

¹³⁷ McGrath, “Ludovico il Moro and his Moors,” 71.

¹³⁸ Colombo, “La fondazione della villa Sforzesca,” 375.

¹³⁹ Origo, “The Domestic Enemy,” 334.

¹⁴⁰ Dennis Romano, “The Gondola as a Marker of Social Station in Venetian Society,” *Renaissance Studies* 8, no. 4 (1994), 362.

¹⁴¹ *Black Africans in Renaissance Europe*, xvii.

¹⁴² George Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 26, 27.

Europeans in Roman times, the medieval period, and the Renaissance. In the medieval period, some religious works used dark skin as a metaphor for sin.¹⁴³ According to Sergio Tognetti, slaves listed in Florence's fifteenth-century registers as "black" fetched less money than slaves listed as "white."¹⁴⁴ The difference in slaves' values may have been due to the Eastern European and North African slaves being better acquainted with the local language and customs of Italy due to their relative proximity to Western Europe. But the difference in price could be attributed to what James Sweet calls "racism without race."¹⁴⁵ Even before a clear, modern division of humanity into races, Sweet argues that racist beliefs that would be later refined into a science were firmly entrenched by 1492 in Iberia—which was different from Italy in that Iberia already had a large population of black slaves.¹⁴⁶

Literary works from the second half of the sixteenth-century demonstrate extremely negative views of both Moorish slaves and free Moors. A reading of *Novella XXI* by Matteo Bandello (1485-1561), the bishop of Agen, first published in 1554, demonstrates that stereotypes of Moors fused with the general fears of slave owners.¹⁴⁷ The Moorish slave in the story—set in Majorca—kidnaps and murders his abusive owner's family. At the conclusion of the story, the author tells his readers, "[t]his is the reason why I would advise you against being served by this type of slave [*schiaivi*]," presumably Moorish slaves. The reason for this warning is "because seldom are they faithful, but are full of subversion and sex-crazed like goats. But all of these

¹⁴³ Niobeh Crowfoot Tsaba, "Africans and Native Americans as 'Racial Deviants' in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Europe," *UCLA Historical Journal* 10, (1990), 94.

¹⁴⁴ Tognetti, "The Trade in Black African Slaves," 217.

¹⁴⁵ James H. Sweet, "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (Jan. 1997), 165. Although some time has passed since the publication of Sweet's article, it remains one of the most important and respected sources on the formation of racial thought—far more often cited and consulted than most monographs, in fact.

¹⁴⁶ Sweet, "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought," 144.

¹⁴⁷ Matteo Bandello, "Novella XXI" in *Novelle di Matteo Bandello* (Milan: Giovanni Silvestri, 1814).

things are nothing compared to the undaunted cruelty of their reigns.”¹⁴⁸ Although Bandello’s story contains particularly negative assumptions about Moors, it also deals with the fears of slave owners concerning slaves of all ethnicities.¹⁴⁹ Giovanni Battista Giraldi (1504-1573), known as Cinthio, offers in his collection of stories entitled *Hecatommithi* (1565) a familiar tale of a noble and free Moor who marries an Italian lady, only to be led into doubt and murder by a trusted associate.¹⁵⁰ Although the Moor is introduced as “most valiant” and “highly regarded,” when the Moor expresses doubts about the fidelity of his wife, Disdemona, she replies, “you, my Moor, are so passionate by nature that little things can move you to anger and revenge.”¹⁵¹ As their marriage crumbles, the Moor is told that Disdemona “has come to hate the color of your skin.”¹⁵² Cinthio’s tale reveals the limbo in which Renaissance Moors of significant standing lived: they were accepted and their appearance or otherwise different characteristics were not remarked upon so long as they followed all social rules, but the moment their conduct or status fell below an acceptable level, their Moorish identity raised significant social barriers and provided reasons for ridicule.

Duke Alessandro’s contemporaries seem to have explained his dark coloration according to medieval stereotypes concerning the features of peasants rather than the growing racial discourse deriving from the trade in African slaves. The fact that most of Alessandro’s critics labeled his mother a peasant rather than a slave illustrates how he was attacked on the grounds of his shameful identity—his identity as a peasant. Alessandro’s appearance, his interest in the outdoors and country life, and purported assistance to citizens of low status combined to make

¹⁴⁸ Bandello, “Novella XXI,” 258.

¹⁴⁹ Origo, “The Domestic Enemy,” 321-366.

¹⁵⁰ Giovanni Giraldi Cinthio, “Hecatommithi, decade three, story seven,” in *Shakespeare and his Sources*, ed. and trans. Joseph Satin (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), 430-439.

¹⁵¹ Cinthio, “Hecatommithi,” 430, 433.

¹⁵² Cinthio, “Hecatommithi,” 433.

him a dangerous outsider to members of his own family and patrician class. Although after 1535, Alessandro remained the last living member of the main Medici line emanating from Cosimo il Vecchio, he seems to have most resembled Pierfrancesco de' Medici (1430-1476), the founder of the cadet *popolano* branch of the family that produced Lorenzino and Duke Cosimo I.¹⁵³ The assumption of power by a quasi-peasant at odds with their political and social values appears to have presented both members of the Medici family and the former republican elites with far more anxiety than the unnoticed possibility that they were ruled by the son of a black African slave.

Matricide

Lorenzino alleged that Alessandro had his mother murdered in order to prevent verification of her, and therefore his, social standing. After recounting the torture, poisoning and executions Alessandro inflicted upon his citizens, Lorenzino remarked, “over and above the cruelties he inflicted on the citizens, which were no less appalling than those inflicted by former tyrants, he surpassed Nero’s wickedness in killing his mother.” Nero “committed the deed since he feared he might otherwise lose his power and his life,” and “thus acted so as to forestall the plot he feared was being hatched against himself; but Alessandro committed the infamy out of mere cruelty and inhumanity, as I will shortly relate.”¹⁵⁴ For his supposed crime of matricide, the assassin placed Alessandro above, or rather below, the reviled Nero in the hierarchy of villains. According to Lorenzino, “this monster, this prodigy of crime, had his own mother

¹⁵³ Brown, “Pierfrancesco de’ Medici,” 92-93, 101-102. Pierfrancesco appears to have thoroughly enjoyed country life before being coaxed into Florentine politics at the instigation of his in-laws and the Medici family. His actions led to the division of the family’s assets between the elder branch of the family and his own around 1470, and his sons broke with the family in 1494 to support the exile of Piero de’ Medici, son of Lorenzo il Magnifico. Those sons, Lorenzo and Giovanni di Pierfrancesco, officially changed their name from Medici to Popolani to symbolize their political sympathies.

¹⁵⁴ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 4; ASF, “Apologia,” 2r. “Poiche oltre alle crudeltà usate ai Cittadini che non furono punto inferiori alle loro, ei superò nel far morire la madre la crudeltà di Nerone l’fece per timor dello stato, e della vita sua, e per prevenir quello, che dubitava fusse fatto à lui Alessandro commesse tanta sceleratezza, solo per mera crudeltà, come io dirò appresso.”

poisoned, for no other reason than that, as long as she remained alive, he considered her as evidence of his own low birth.”¹⁵⁵ Alessandro’s cousin suggested that he felt so horrified by the social standing of his mother that he would take the extraordinary step to have her murdered on his order, implying that despite being named Duke of Florence in 1532, Alessandro could have felt so uneasy about his mother’s status that he had her poisoned later in order to protect his own position in society and power.

Lorenzino claimed that Alessandro had his mother killed in order to prevent her appearing before Charles V in 1535. Lorenzino claimed that Alessandro “had left her in her poverty,” even after his rise to political prominence, and she was “consigned to ordinary activities in the household or out in the fields, so that those citizens who had fled from our city to escape the tyrant’s cruelty and avarice, together with those who had been driven out by him,” found her and “decided to take his mother with them to the Emperor in Naples, to show his Majesty from what low birth the man he was allowing to rule Florence had sprung.”¹⁵⁶ The assassin’s contention suggests that he believed the status of Alessandro’s mother to be important enough to the rule of Florence to warrant an audience with the Holy Roman Emperor, and part of a well-crafted argument in favor of the Duke’s dismissal. “Thus Alessandro, not merely because he was ashamed of his mother and so ignored the filial piety and love due to her (a love that in any case he never felt),” but “out of his innate cruelty and savagery, ensured that she was killed

¹⁵⁵ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 9-10; ASF, “Apologia, 5r. “...questo monstro fece avelenare la propria Madre, non per altra causa se non che vivendo li faceva testimonianza della sua ignobiltà.”

¹⁵⁶ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 9-10; ASF, “Apologia,” 5r-5v. “E ben che egli fusse stato molti anni in grandezza, egli l’haveva lasciata nella sua povertà, e ne i suoi esercizi à lavorar la terra, insino à tanto, che quei cittadini, che erano fuggiti dalla Città mediante la crudeltà del Tiranno, e quelli che da lui ne erano stati cacciati, volero menare all’Imperatore a Napoli questa sua madre per mostrare a Sua Maestà d’onde era nato quello il quale egli comportava, che comandassi Firenze.”

before she could be brought into Caesar's presence."¹⁵⁷ Whereas Nero received some absolution from Lorenzino for the matricide he commissioned because he did it to protect himself from a plot, the assassin allows no such indulgence for his cousin, who appears to have found himself in a remarkably similar situation.

Following the revelation of Alessandro's supposed matricide, Lorenzino drummed up sympathy for the woman and hatred for her son, grieving for the "poor old woman" "spinning wool and feeding the sheep" no longer hoping "for any kindness from her son," but at least not anticipating "such an inhuman and horrendous deed; and had he not been, as well as the cruelest, the most foolish man in the world, he could have taken her to some other place in secret," where "even if he had been unwilling to treat her as his mother, he could at least have kept her alive, rather than being prepared to add such disgraceful and unspeakable wickedness to his list of ignominious crimes."¹⁵⁸ In the process of Lorenzino defending his assassination of Alessandro he paints an excessively pitiful picture of the Duke's mother, no doubt to rend the heartstrings of his readers and damn Alessandro after his death for his supposed crime of matricide against such an object of pity.

Duke Alessandro's Conflict with Cardinal Ippolito

The low status of Alessandro's mother raised questions about why he was installed as duke instead of his cousin, Ippolito. In his oration before Charles V, Jacopo Nardi claimed,

"Alessandro cannot tell who his father was, and the mother, for her baseness he did not want to

¹⁵⁷ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 9-10; ASF, "Apologia," 5v. "Allora Alexandro non scordatosi per la vergogna della pietà, e dell'amore debito alla Madre, que lui mai non ebbe, ma per una sua innata ferità e crudeltà, commesse che ella fusse morta avanti che andassi alla presenza dell'Imperatore..."

¹⁵⁸ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 9-10; ASF, "Apologia," 5v. "...il che quanto adesso fosse difficile si può considerare, immaginandosi una povera vecchia che si stava a filare la sua lana, ò à pascere le sue pecore; e se ella non sperava bene alcuno piú dal suo figliolo al manco ella non temeva cosa con inumana, e sí orrenda, e se non fusse stato il piú crudele, e insensato uomo del Mondo ei poteva pure condurla in qualche luogo segretamente, dove se non l'havessi voluta tener da Madre la poteva tener almeno viva, e non voler alla ignobilità sua aggiungere tanto vitupero, e cosí nefanda sceleratezza..."

know, her having all the needs of the most poor."¹⁵⁹ Nardi's airing of Alessandro's dirty laundry before his overlord and future father-in-law was part of a plan to convince the Emperor to replace Alessandro with his cousin, Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici. While Ippolito was illegitimate, he had always maintained that he was the son of a gentlewoman, and one who was sexually faithful to his father, thereby elevating him in legal and social status above Alessandro, if his claims are to be believed. While Ippolito maintained most of the power in Florence when he and Alessandro managed the family's affairs jointly in the absence of Pope Clement in the 1520s, it was Alessandro who received the title of Duke upon their return to power, infuriating Ippolito and raising questions that he passed on to his exiled friends about how Alessandro could have deserved such an honor instead of him.

Even more than the confusion over how Alessandro ended up a Medici, the confusion over how he became Duke of the Florentine Republic instead of Ippolito spawned talk that Giulio de' Medici, future Pope Clement VII, and not Duke Lorenzo of Urbino, fathered Alessandro. The news that Alessandro, rather than Cardinal Ippolito, would become Duke shocked the young churchman. Varchi recounts, "During this time, Cardinal Ippolito having realized himself and understood by the reports from others, that Pope Clement had ruled that the wealth and grandeur of the House of Medici would continue in Alessandro, son of Lorenzo, and not him, son of Giuliano," Ippolito "took incredibly to anger and sorrow, thinking that" due to being "a nearer relative of the pope, and for other qualities, he expected he and not Alessandro to be higher in succession," "not knowing or not believing what they secretly whispered, that

¹⁵⁹ Nardi, "Orazione," 380. "A lui è successo nella misera città nostra uno, che per natura a per costumi non è punto a lui difforme, ma è bene in tanto peggior grado, in quanto non può dire chi suo padre fussi, e la madre per sua viltà non vuol conoscere sendo lei di tutti i bisogni poverissima."

Alessandro was the son of Clement.”¹⁶⁰ The author of the *Storia fiorentina* suggests that if Ippolito had been paying attention to the rumors about his own family, he would have suspected that Clement would choose Alessandro due to their possible blood connection. The paternity of Alessandro is still such a mystery that historians debate it and DNA testing has been done in an attempt to identify Alessandro's father.¹⁶¹ Even without official proof, the rumors themselves reveal a desire to understand why Pope Clement selected Alessandro, a young man seen as unsuited to the task of being duke, when a supposedly viable alternative existed in his cousin. On the other hand, Ippolito would have had to renounce his coveted and expensive cardinal's hat in order to marry and produce the legitimate children that a hereditary dukedom would have required, as the later Duke Ferdinando de' Medici did in 1589.

Not only had Alessandro murdered his mother, claimed Lorenzino, but he had also murdered his cousin and potential replacement as Duke, Cardinal Ippolito. Lorenzino reasoned that Alessandro “never did love anyone, and usually men cannot trust anyone else except those whom they love.”¹⁶² He supported this assertion by claiming Alessandro “never loved anyone, but indeed hated everyone,” which “can be seen from the fact that he hated and harried—contriving to bring about their deaths by poison—the people closest to him,” the very ones “who should have been dearest: his mother, and Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici, who was thought to be

¹⁶⁰ Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 468. "In questo tempo il Cardinale Ippolito avendo compreso da sè, e inteso per relazione d'altri, Papa Clemente aver deliberato, che la ricchezza, e grandezza della Casa de' Medici si continuasse in Alessandro figliuolo di Lorenzo, e non in lui figliuolo di Giuliano, s'alterò stranamente, e ne prese sdegno, e dispiacere incredibile, parendogli, che per lo esser egli, e maggiore di tempo, e più propinquo Parente del Papa, e per l'altre qualità, s'aspettasse a lui, e non ad Alessandro così alta successione, e tanto onorato maritaggio, non sappiendo per avventura, o non credendo quello, che segretamente si bucinava, cioè Alessandro esser figliuolo di Clemente."

¹⁶¹ Brackett, “Race and Rulership,” 303-25; personal e-mail communication with Dr. Bob Brier, member of the Medici Crypt Project in Florence, Italy. E-mail from Mummy123@aol.com on March 1, 2008.

¹⁶² Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 9-10; ASF, “Apologia,” 5v. “...che non amò mai nessuno, e per conseguenza non si fidò mai di nessuno, per che come ho detto noi non ci possiamo fidare di quelli che noi amiamo.”

his cousin.”¹⁶³ The sudden death of Cardinal Ippolito at Itri in 1535 when he was on his way to Naples to denounce Alessandro to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V shocked the exiles, who planned to suggest that the Emperor replace Alessandro with Ippolito. The rift between Ippolito and Alessandro began when Pope Clement named Alessandro Duke of Florence rather than Ippolito. Ippolito’s fury and confusion appears to have driven him to seek out alliances with Florentine exiles that opposed Alessandro’s rule, and realized that they would have to present the Emperor with a viable alternative candidate rather than suggest that Florence return to independence from his oversight.

Ippolito's opposition to Alessandro’s rule bore the marks of a personal battle, although it was represented as the product of Ippolito’s learning. Bernardo Segni suggested that Ippolito’s study of the humanities naturally led him to join the exiles: "The Cardinal was most desirous of glory, and well learned in the humanities by men of letters, who he kept in his house—he encouraged many scholars and soldiers.”¹⁶⁴ Inspired by tales of classical heroes, the desire for glory appears to have motivated both Lorenzino and Ippolito to oppose their cousin Alessandro. Segni continues, “At which point [Ippolito] was incited by himself to great things, he did not refuse the opportunity put before him, or smelling of or pretending to want freedom to take advantage of buying favors to acquire the principedom of our city”...“but publicly accepting not only the malcontents that remained friends of the rule of the Medici, but the old exiles of the *Popolo*, or Florentine government, formed in 1530. He sent out word, as he wanted to do

¹⁶³ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 8-9; ASF, “Apologia,” 5r. “Che non amasse persona e che egli odiasse ogn'uno, si conosce, poi che egli odiò, e perseguitò con veleni sino alla morte le cose sua più propinque, e che li dovevano esser più care, cioè la madre, et il Cardinal de Medici che era reputato suo Cugino.” Alessandro’s mother and Cardinal Ippolito were not the only people he was said to have poisoned; Bernardo Segni claims Alessandro poisoned both Giorgio Ridolfi and Luisa Strozzi, daughter of his eventual enemy Filippo Strozzi. Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 2:88. “...ed ammazzatore d'uomini di sua mano propria coll'esempio di Giorgio Ridolfi, e con quello della Luisa figliuola di Filippo Strozzi.”

¹⁶⁴ Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 2:60-1. “Era il Cardinale desiderosissimo di gloria, ed erudito assai bene in lettere umane da uomini letterati, che teneva in casa, favorendo egli molto i virtuosi, e soldati...”

anything so that Alessandro would lose the state."¹⁶⁵ Notably, Ippolito did not commit to reinstalling the republic, but simply to ensuring that his hated cousin would no longer serve as duke, opening the door to his own rule.¹⁶⁶ Ippolito's defection is not surprising in light of his rumored shock at Alessandro's accession to the dukedom, and the death of Pope Clement VII, who appears to have protected Alessandro from criticism, in September 1534. Clement's death served as a watershed moment in Duke Alessandro's rule: his access to the Papal army and coffers shut off, enemies gathered and prepared to pounce, and supposed friends defecting to oppose his rule.¹⁶⁷

Ippolito appeared to contemporaries as the golden boy of the Medici, who boasted of every quality that Alessandro lacked, allowing critics to support the Medici while criticizing Alessandro. According to Segni, Cardinal Ippolito was "young and handsome of face, shining with the *virtù* of knowledge, more inclined to arms than the religious [life]."¹⁶⁸ This mention of the young man's inner beauty showing on his face no doubt reflects contemporary ideas about internal goodness revealing itself in one's outer beauty. Goodness revealed as beauty was often discussed in relation to female beauty, there is no reason why a male youth would not have been viewed the same way, particularly in Florence where male same-sex relationships were

¹⁶⁵ Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 2:60-1. "...onde incitato da per sè stesso a cose grandi, non rifiutò quella occasione messali innanzi, o sappiendo fingere di desiderare la liberta, per valersi de' favori in acquistare il Principato della nostra Città, ovvero perchè così l'intendesse; però pubblicamente raccettando non pure i malcontenti stati amici dello Stato de' Medici, ma gli antichi fuorusciti del Popolo fatti nel MDXXX., mandava fuori voce, come ei voleva fare ogni cosa, perchè Alessandrro perdesse lo Stato."

¹⁶⁶ Nardi, *Istorie della città di Firenze*, 246. The exiles put forth Ippolito as the most suitable ruler for Florence because he was thought to be most closely related to Clement VII.

¹⁶⁷ Pope Clement supported Alessandro's claim to the throne and rule over the claims of Ippolito, even when confronted with criticism of Alessandro. Varchi attributed Clement's approval of Alessandro to parental pride and oversight. See note 81. Upon Clement's death, longtime allies of the Medici clan defected to join the *fuorusciti* cause, among them Filippo Strozzi. Bullard, *Filippo Strozzi and the Medici*, 174-176.

¹⁶⁸ Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 2:8-9. "Papa Clemente non mancando al debito d'un Sacrosanto Pontefice, fatta provvisione di grossa somma di danari, con mettere cinque decime a tutti i benefizi, mandò suo Legato in quell'impresa Ippolito de' Medici con diecimila fanti pagati, il qual Cardinal giovane e bello d'aspetto, e molto più d'animo grande, risplendeva per molta virtù d'ingegno, inclinato più all'arme che alla religione, pareva, che avesse avuto un grado conveniente a'suoi desideri."

commonplace. Varchi describes Ippolito in a similar way, finding "Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici in the most beautiful flower of his youth, having no more than twenty years, he was beautiful and pleasing in appearance, delightfully witty, full of all the graces and *virtù*," he was "affable and open handed with everyone. He was like one who began anew the grandeur and goodness of Leo," not the "scarcity and frugality of Clement, most liberal to all the great men in arms, letters, or in any other liberal arts."¹⁶⁹ The sudden death of Ippolito allowed Alessandro's enemies to cast the Duke as a dark, coarse, uneducated tyrant who cut short the life of his opposite, the beautiful, witty, and generous Ippolito, who sought to steal away the title simply to spare the Florentine people further terror under his cousin.

Duke Alessandro's Sexual Transgressions

Alessandro's supposed sexual transgressions joined tales of murdered family members as fodder for the rumor mill in Florence. The histories of Alessandro's reign, written by his enemies, are filled with accounts of his sexual transgressions, including sex with ladies from good families and even nuns. Bernardo Segni claimed Alessandro "was lecherous...shameless in the honor of women, and by most convents vilified."¹⁷⁰ Elsewhere in his *Storie fiorentine* Segni writes that Alessandro submitted his citizens "to his libidinous and licentious life of lust; indeed every night he went out with a few armed men, sometimes to the home of the nobility, and sometimes to the convents, committing many outrages which I will keep silent as to the

¹⁶⁹ Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 469. "Era Ippolito Cardinal de' Medici in sul più bel fiore dell'età, non avendo più di ventun'anno, era bellissimo, e grato d'aspetto, era di felicissimo ingegno, era pieno di tutte le grazie, e virtù, era affabile, e alla mano con ognuno, era, come quegli che ritraeva alla magnificenza, e benignità di Leone, e non alla scarsità, e parsimonia di Clemente, liberalissimo verso tutti gli Uomini eccellenti, o in Arme, o in Lettere, o in qualsivoglia altra dell'Arti liberali, tanto che una mattina, essendo venute novelle (benchè poi riuscirono false) d'una vacanza di quattromila ducati di rendita l'anno..."

¹⁷⁰ Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 2:88. "...che egli era libidinoso, e di questo ne adducevano esempio di molte nobili famiglie, svergognate nell'onore delle donne, di più Monasteri vituperate..."

particular names for the honor of those families" involved.¹⁷¹ Again, Segni mentions Alessandro's sexual exploits when he discusses the feud between the Duke, Filippo Strozzi, and his sons, who were angered by Alessandro's desire "to tamper with the honor of many women of noble families. Not content with this, he had dared to penetrate in the religious houses and had secret knowledge of the virgins consecrated to the service of God, in whom he committed very unspeakable shame."¹⁷² Segni's shock seems not to stem from Alessandro having sex with his subjects or with many women; it was that Alessandro reportedly engaged in such casual activities with honorable women of high status and nuns. Segni's repeated references to Alessandro's supposed sexual insults to the honor of his subjects shows the degree to which such slights were as important to how a ruler was perceived as how he came to his title and reigned.

Alessandro's sexual adventures served as a metaphor for his usurpation of the state. Jacopo Nardi recounted, "Alessandro lived safely and in great happiness, but so inclined and dedicated to lust that he had little respect for the honor of women," including ladies of quality, so much that "it was believed that even virgins consecrated in the ministry of God were not safe or spared from his lust."¹⁷³ Benedetto Varchi piped in to charge, "Duke Alessandro, in respect to women was most dishonest and unforgivable, by venting his lust, not only on the sacred virgins, and but on any other kind or degree of women."¹⁷⁴ Although rape is not mentioned by name in

¹⁷¹ Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 2:59-60. "... la libidinosa e licenziosa vita sua nella lussuria; anzi ogni notte andava fuori con pochi armati, ora a casa de' nobili, ed ora ai Monasteri, commettendo molte vergogne, le quali tacerò nei nomi particolari per onor di quelle famiglie."

¹⁷² Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 2: 19-20. "Filippo Strozzi massimamente, e de' suoi figliuoli, in tal modo trapassò il seguò nei piaceri di Venere, che non gli bastava i leciti e conceduti, de' quali egli abbondava in gran copia, voleva manomettere l'onore di molte famiglie delle donne nobili, e non contento anche in questo, ebbe ardire di penetrare nei luoghi sagri e recondite delle vergini consacrate al servizio di Dio, ne' quali commesse assai vergogne nefande."

¹⁷³ Nardi, *Istorie della città di Firenze*, 238-9. "si viveva Alessandro sicuramente e in grande felicità, ma tanto inclinato e dedito agli amori, che egli aveva poco rispetto dell'onore delle donne di qualunque condizione elle si fussero, in tanto che ei si credeva che anche le vergini consacrate ne' munisteri a Dio non fussero dalla sua libidine sicure nè risparmiare."

¹⁷⁴ Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 508. "...il Duca Alessandro, inverso le donne era dionestissimo, e non perdonava, per isfogar la libidine sua, nè alle sacre vergini, nè ad alcun'altra sorta o grado di donna..."

the sources, Varchi casts Alessandro as a sexual predator. Lorenzino de' Medici more generally claimed, "deeds of extortion and rapine and acts of adultery were so rife, and such widespread violence was committed against things both secular and sacred, that it will seem difficult to decide whether the tyrant is more blameworthy for his evil and wickedness, or the people of Florence for being meek and cowardly and putting up with such dire calamities for so many years."¹⁷⁵ Lorenzino de' Medici equates Alessandro's sexual behavior with violence against the sacred and secular, which allows him to tie the Duke's supposed sexual exploits to the charges of tyranny. In the *Apologia*, the Duke's purported illicit sex with protected women not only serves as a metaphor for his tyranny, but the main reason he was a tyrant, according to Nicholas Scott Baker.¹⁷⁶

The charges concerning Alessandro de' Medici's sexual behavior deserve scrutiny. Outrageous sexual rumors about rulers seem to have been commonplace in the past; Duke Cosimo I de' Medici was said to have engaged in incest with his daughters, yet those charges have not been incorporated into the modern historical record as have the claims about Alessandro. Sources produced by authors without a direct stake in Florentine politics indicate that Alessandro certainly engaged in sexual acts with a number of women, including nuns. Beyond producing illegitimate offspring—as even Cosimo I did before his marriage—Alessandro gained a reputation for engaging in debauchery in the company of friends. Alessandro was said to have “shared a horse” with Lorenzino de' Medici on their nights spent

¹⁷⁵ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 5; ASF, “Apologia,” 2v. “...si trovarono in oltre essere state fatte estorsioni, e prede essere stati commessi tanti adulteri, et usate tante violenze, non solo nelle cose profane, ma nelle sacre ancora, che gl'apparirà difficile à giudicare chi sia stato più ò scelerato ed empio il Tiranno, ò paziente, e vile il populo Fiorentino, avendo sopportato tanti Anni...”

¹⁷⁶ Baker, “Power and Passion,” 457. “Alessandro de' Medici earned disapprobation and an enduring title as a hated tyrant not so much from the nature of his government as from his behavior in the bedroom. His excessive heteroerotic passion, his undiscerning and ill-disciplined pursuit of women regardless of their state or status, demonstrated his unsuitability to rule.”

carousing in Florence, according to the otherwise sympathetic chronicler Fra Girolamo Ughi.¹⁷⁷

Ughi also supported claims that Alessandro engaged in sexual activity with nuns and women of

high status: “He began to profane and dishonor convents and women both noble and

plebeian...but never, however, with force.”¹⁷⁸ Ughi claimed that the Florentines hated and

feared Alessandro on account of his “disordered lust.”¹⁷⁹ More convincingly than any other

author, Ughi demonstrates the extent to which Alessandro’s sexual behavior earned him the title

of tyrant, since he approved of Alessandro’s governance. Duke Alessandro also seems have

engaged in the Renaissance courtesan culture documented by Pietro Aretino. Writing to La

Zufolina, a courtesan specializing in cross-dressing, Aretino remarked, “Duke Alessandro did not

wish to sleep with you for any other reason than to find out if you were a hermaphrodite in

reality or merely in jest.”¹⁸⁰ In these sources, Duke Alessandro appears less as a predator, but

rather as a sex enthusiast—who nonetheless deeply offended and shocked his contemporaries.

Historians maintained that the Duke’s lust resulted in the neglect of his usual security

precautions, leading to his assassination. Lorenzino, the man responsible for the assassination,

claimed Alessandro would not “have risked being with me on that night which was to prove his

last, had it not been for his unbridled lust, which so blinded him that it made him change his

habits, quite contrary to his intentions.”¹⁸¹ The temptation that lured Alessandro to his death was

one of Lorenzino’s female kin, although historians disagree as to her identity. Segni reports,

Lorenzino “had promised the Duke to lead him that evening to his full blood sister, called

Laudomine, who was newly widowed by Alamanno Salviati, her husband, who was dead,

¹⁷⁷ Fra Giuliano Ughi, “Cronica di Firenze o compendio storico delle cose di Firenze dall’anno MDI al MDXLVI,” *Archivio storico italiano*, appendix 7 (1849), 186.

¹⁷⁸ Ughi, “Cronica,” 180.

¹⁷⁹ Ughi, “Cronica,” 180-1.

¹⁸⁰ Pietro Aretino, *The Letters of Pietro Aretino*, trans. Thomas Caldecot Chubb (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1967), 249.

¹⁸¹ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 8; ASF, “Apologia,” 4v-5r. “...ne quella notte, che fù l’ultima si sarebbe fidato se non fusse stata la sfrenata libidine, che l’acciccò egli fece notare contro la sua voglia proposito...”

because Lorenzo, who knew the vagaries of the Duke, and that he wanted to have a sure son,” a child that he felt certain he had fathered, “had put this before his sister, and asserting to her several times, that he would lead him to her when their mother was not in Florence”¹⁸² It is no wonder that Lorenzino did not mention in the *Apologia* the prize he used to set the trap; even if Lorenzino had been universally hailed as a hero, his widowed sister’s honor would have been compromised for her role in the plot, thereby staining Lorenzino’s own honor. Such a deliberately designed assassination could only have been considered poetic justice by the enemies of Alessandro, who complained vociferously about his supposed sexual transgressions, yet again showing the close connections between politics and sexuality.

The sexual trap Lorenzino set was necessary because of Alessandro’s obsession with both state and his personal security, particularly following the death of his patron, Pope Clement VII, and the challenge by the exiles before the Emperor in 1535. Key to the Duke’s personal safety was an order banning citizens from bearing arms. Lorenzino mused, “That he did not trust me I can easily prove: he would never consent to allow me to carry weapons, but always kept me unarmed, as he did the other citizens, all of whom he feared and suspected.” But “[w]hat is more, he never trusted himself to be alone with me, even though I never bore weapons and he was always armed” and had “three or four of his accomplices with him.”¹⁸³ This statement

¹⁸² Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 2:123. "Ebbono altri opinione (e Lorenzo poi l'ha detto) che egli avesse promesso al Duca di condurgli in quella sera la sua sorella carnale, chiamata Laldomine, rimasa vedova frescamente di Alamanno Salviati suo marito, che era morte; perchè Lorenzo, che sapeva i capricci del Duca, e che desiderava d'averne un figliuolo certo, aveva messa innanzi questa sua sorella, ed affermatogli più volte, che gliela condurrebbe, quando la madre non fosse stata in Firenze." In contrast, Benedetto Varchi account states that the woman in question was Catherine Ginori, the aunt of Lorenzino. Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 589. "Per le quali cose aveva il Duca tanta sicurtà presa sopra Lorenzo, che non gli bastando di servirsene come di ruffiano, così colle donne religiose, come colle secolari, o pulzelle, o maritate, o vedove, o nobili, o ignobili, o giovani, o attempate, ch'elle si fossono, che lo ricercò ancora, che gli volesse condurre una sorella di sua madre da canto di padre, giovane di maravigliosa bellezza, ma non punto meno pudica, che bella, la quale era moglie di Lionardo Ginori, ed abitava non guari lontana dall'uscio di dietro del Palazzo de' Medici."

¹⁸³ Medici, *Apology for a Muder*, 8; ASF, “Apologia,” 4v. “...che non si fidassi di me lo provo, che non volse mai acconsentire, che io portassi armi, ma mi tenne sempre disarmato, come faceva gl'altri Cittadini, quali haveva tutti à

reveals Alessandro's paranoia about the safety of his own life, which extended to a man with whom he was supposed to have shared both a horse and bed. In retrospect, this anxiety was entirely warranted. Ceccheregli tells the story of Alessandro's comfort with bathing in a group: "he entered the water, and then stripped and cheerfully, without any suspicion, went into the water with Raffaello and many others," suggesting that the duke may have felt less fearful among men who would not eventually assassinate him.¹⁸⁴ It is possible that the Duke could have been suspicious of his cousin, who had been exiled from Rome in 1534 for knocking the heads off statues on the Arch of Constantine, and physically freer with others in his acquaintance. But Alessandro's general fears of uprising and assassination reveal themselves in his ban on citizens carrying weapons. Filippo Nerli comments, "among the first things, [Alessandro] ordered that the walls of the *castello*," or castle, "should continue [to be built] lustily and especially he made to solicit the customary provisions for the guards and preservation of his state and, above all other things, he gave orders" to "disarm the *popolo* and *cittadini* that were of any quality."¹⁸⁵ From the start of his reign, before the rifts with Medici supporters, stories of his sexual exploits, and supposed cruelty, Duke Alessandro de' Medici must have known he was a target for both weapons and words.

Alessandro's enemies portrayed his death as a solution to the problem of tyranny in Florence. Lorenzino murdered the Duke during the feast of Epiphany on January 6, 1537, locked the body in the assassination chamber, and fled Florence before his deed could come to light.

sospetto; oltre à questo mai si fidò meco solo, ancorche io fussi sempre senza arme, e lui armato, che del continuo haveva seco tre, o quattro de suoi satelliti..."

¹⁸⁴ Ceccheregli, *Sentenze del duca Alessandro de' Medici*, 29. "...s'entrava alla acqua, et indi spogliatosi allegramente et senza sospetto, entrò con Raffaello et con molti altri nella acqua..."

¹⁸⁵ Nerli, *Commentari*, 283. "Tornato che fu il duca in Firenze, tra le prime cose, ordinò che si dovesse seguitare gagliardamente la muraglia del castello e massimamente fece sollecitare le provvisioni solite per le guardie e conservazione dello stato suo e, sopra tutte l'altre cose, dette ordine che si seguitasse di disarmare il popolo e i cittadini di qualunque qualità che si fussero. Esequivasi questo ordine per il magistrato degl'Otto di Balìa con ogni possibile diligenza e si procedeva con ogni severità contro a chi erano trovate arme proibite e contro ai bandi."

News of the sudden death of Alessandro shocked the populace, and the failure of the masses to rise up in favor of the exiles in turn shocked Lorenzino and his fellow conspirators. A special government session elected seventeen-year-old Cosimo de' Medici, the legitimate son of an honored *condottiere* and his revered widow who was well-versed in the humanities and did not get along with Alessandro, the new Duke of the Florentine Republic. Cosimo descended from the *popolano* branch of the Medici family, a lesser Medici line overshadowed by that of the great Cosimo and Lorenzo il Magnifico. As Cosimo solidified his reign and established his dynasty, rumors about the rotten Alessandro continued, seemingly unchecked.

The expansion of the concept of tyranny to include the feeling of shame inflicted on citizens by a dishonorable duke assisted Cosimo I's consolidation of power, allowing him to deflect charges of tyranny both by emphasizing his own embodiment of majesty and allowing Alessandro to continue to serve as a target for republicans. Cosimo tacitly encouraged Duke Alessandro's ongoing association with tyranny. A secret society of anti-Alessandro republicans met without harassment despite Cosimo's knowledge.¹⁸⁶ The assassin Lorenzino not only lived for ten years following his crime, but spread word of Duke Alessandro's tyranny in Italy and at foreign courts until he was finally murdered on the orders of Charles V.¹⁸⁷ Benedetto Varchi writes in his *Storia fiorentina* of his desire to end the work with the last Florentine republic, yet extending the history to include the regimes of Alessandro and Cosimo because his patron, "most excellent Duke Cosimo not only wishes, but urges me to continue, and promises to give me new books and documents, public as well as private." Varchi intended to demonstrate in the *Storia fiorentina* "how different a licentious, confused, tyrannical and violent regime is from that of a

¹⁸⁶ Domenico Zanrè, "Ritual and Parody in Mid-Cinquecento Florence: Cosimo de' Medici and the Accademia del Piano," in *The Cultural Politics of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 189-204.

¹⁸⁷ Dall'Aglio, *L'Assassino del duca*, 147-257.

just and legitimate prince.”¹⁸⁸ Duke Alessandro’s unworthiness and tyrannical character provided contrast to Duke Cosimo’s virtue, which allowed otherwise embarrassing rumors about Alessandro to flourish in works commissioned by the Medici Grand Dukes. Although Cosimo I would strip away liberties far more effectively than Alessandro, it was upon the first, illegitimate duke upon whom condemnation was heaped.

CONCLUSION

Alessandro’s critics tied his illegitimacy, low birth, alleged cruelty, and rumored lasciviousness with nuns and other protected women to tyranny, previously used in the Renaissance exclusively to describe a type of political usurpation and rule. Alessandro represented an older form of tyrannical rule in Renaissance Italy embodied by the fifteenth-century young, illegitimate scions of Popes and Dukes running roughshod over the republican rights and honor of respectable citizens. In the late-fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, lineage and birth came to be judged more strictly throughout Europe due to the consolidation of states and the noble class itself while princes in Italy were expected to maintain decorum including portraying sexual restraint. As the European powers now lording over much of Italy amalgamated increasingly centralized states on the path to absolutism, the princely rulers of Italy used decorum as a veil behind which they could wield autocratic rule. For Duke Cosimo I and

¹⁸⁸ Benedetto Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 483. "Insino a qui, come io dissi nel principio di questa Storia, era l'intendimento mio di volere scrivere particolarmente le cose pubbliche della Città di Firenze, e col principio dello Stato nuovo, e fine di questo Dodicesimo Libro pensava io, e desiderava, che dovesse essere il fine delle mie fatiche, e il principio in quest'ultima vecchiezza, non già di riposarmi, non essendo cosa più contraria alla felicità e beatitudine umana che lo starsi, ma bene di ritornare a' dilettevoli studi tanto tempo da me tralasciati della santissima Filosofia. Ma poichè Nostro Signore Dio per sua infinita bontà e benignità mi concede ancor vita, e sanità, e l'Eccellentissimo Duca Cosimo non pure vuole, che io seguiti, ma mi sollecita, e promette di dovermi dare nuovi libri, e nuove scritture così pubbliche, come private, onde io, e possa, e debba trarre, e l'ordito, e il ripieno di questa lunga, e non agevolissima tela, io non recuserò per tesserla in quel modo che saperrò, e potrò migliore, di mettermi con nuova incredibile diligenza a nuova incredibile fatica, la quale, per quanto avviso, non dovrà esser disutile, perciocchè si conoscerà manifestamente ne' libri, che seguiranno, quanto sia diverso un Reggimento licenzioso, e confuso, ed un tirannico, e violento, da quello d'un giusto, e legittimo principe." Despite Cosimo's wishes and Varchi's intention, the historian never wrote past 1538, only one year into Duke Cosimo's reign. As a result, the contrast between Alessandro, the bad prince, and Cosimo, the good prince, does not appear in the work. See Richard Samuels, "Benedetto Varchi and Sixteenth-Century Florentine Humanism," Ph.D. Diss., University of Chicago, 1976, 374-375.

his descendants, Alessandro served as a useful model of the old, dissolute style of prince upon which scorn could be heaped in order to deflect charges of their own increasingly authoritarian rule.

Chapter Two: Benedetto Varchi and Jacopo Nardi

This chapter argues that the involvement of historians Benedetto Varchi and Jacopo Nardi in the movement to depose Duke Alessandro in the 1530s resulted in the later defamation of Alessandro de' Medici their respective histories of Florence. In recent scholarship on Duke Alessandro's life and rule, Nardi's and Varchi's histories remain among the most frequently cited and respected sources. Yet the self-identification of Nardi and Varchi with the Florentine exile [*fuorusciti*] movement against Alessandro's rule lasted long after the duke's assassination, to the time they wrote their histories. In the course of protecting and enlarging the reputation of the anti-Alessandro group and recording the negative statements about Duke Alessandro discussed in the first chapter, Nardi and Varchi directly and indirectly denigrated the memory of Alessandro. This chapter first provides a brief overview of Renaissance historiography. I then outline Jacopo Nardi's life, including his role as the official orator for the Florentine exiles or *fuorusciti*. This discussion is followed with a close examination of an overlooked letter written by Nardi to Benedetto Varchi in the 1550s, in which Nardi requests that Varchi fail to mention some damaging information about the *fuorusciti* cause in his *Storia fiorentina*. The chapter next surveys the life of Benedetto Varchi, who worked for a prominent *fuorusciti* family and corresponded with the mother of Duke Alessandro's assassin before becoming an official Florentine historian under Duke Cosimo I. The chapter concludes with an analysis of Neo-Latin poems by Varchi, written to laud the assassin Lorenzino de' Medici as a new Brutus and forgotten savior of Florence.

RENAISSANCE HISTORIOGRAPHY

Renaissance humanist historiography grew out of the tradition of the Medieval and early Renaissance vernacular chronicles, as well as the humanist talent for criticism and enthusiasm for ancient models of history.¹ Prior to the advent of humanist histories, early Renaissance writers conceptualized information about the past and their own time in lists with little to no thematic organization or overarching argument.² Humanist history set itself apart from chronicles because it followed “the concepts of change through time;” studied “the contingency of single historical events” through “a succession of different historical epochs;” regarded “human affairs” independent “from divine or supernatural causation” and mimicked the form of ancient authors, although with considerable independence.³ Florence served as the center of humanist historiography in the fifteenth century. Scholars today regard Leonardo Bruni’s (1370-1444) *The History of the Florentine People* as the first humanist history, and possibly the first modern work of history altogether. Bruni’s methodology appears familiar to historians working today: he made extensive use of the Florentine archives, studied change over time, put forth an overarching argument for his work, and proposed a periodization for the history of Florence.⁴ While Bruni was certainly in a position to comment on current affairs of state, his history ended in the year 1402; thoughts on more recent events were restricted to his *Commentaries*.⁵

Humanist historians sometimes portrayed their work as a heroic endeavor done for the good of the state and society. Renaissance humanists regarded history as a form of literature that

¹ Eric W. Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

² For example, Giovanni Villani’s (1280-1348) vernacular *Nuova Cronica* (1348) represents the apex of early Renaissance chronicle writing in Florence, although it is most reliable when dealing with recent events.

³ Eric W. Cochrane, “The Transition from Renaissance to Baroque: The Case of Italian Historiography,” *History and Theory* 19, no. 1 (Feb. 1980), 26.

⁴ Leonardo Bruni, *History of the Florentine People*, ed. James Hankins (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001-2007).

⁵ Gary Ianziti, *Humanistic Historiography Under the Sforzas: Politics and Propaganda in Fifteenth-Century Milan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 50.

allowed them to teach moral, ethical, and political lessons while celebrating the glories of the fatherland.⁶ Practitioners considered history to be the only art that could distinguish good and bad models of moral behavior.⁷ Writers believed that they could prevent heroes and events from being forgotten, or rescue them from it if they had been lost. Bruni wrote that he intended “to rescue [recent deeds] from oblivion and the power of fate—indeed, to render them hallowed and immortal” like those of the ancients.⁸ The respect for the discipline gave works of history incredible power. When explaining his reasons for writing about the overlooked Florentine hero Niccolò Acciaiuoli, Matteo Palmieri (1406-1475) asserted, “not those who complete great actions, but those of whom the actions have been written, succeed in obtaining glory.”⁹ Palmieri represents writing about forgotten heroes as a noble enterprise itself, which involved saving worthy individuals from oblivion and giving readers examples of honorable and patriotic behavior to emulate. The status given to writers of history is perhaps best demonstrated by the fact that Machiavelli’s original tomb called him simply *Nicholaus Machiavellus Historiarum Scriptor*.¹⁰

Central to history’s reputation as the foremost humanistic discipline was the expectation that writers would tell the truth about the past and stamp out inaccuracies or forgeries. Scholars made Cicero’s *prima lex historiae* a mantra, repeating his admonition, “an author must not dare

⁶ Wallace Klilppert Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought; Five Centuries of Interpretation* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1948), 5.

⁷ Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography*, 29.

⁸ Bruni, *History of the Florentine People*, 5.

⁹ Matteo Palmieri, *La vita di Niccolò Acciaiuoli*, ed. by Alessandra Mita Ferraro (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2001), 4-5: “Non enim qui res magnas fecere, sed quorum facta probe scripta sunt, gloriam habent. Credere quidem consentaneum est, et id doctissimi viri affirmant, multas fuisse nobilissimas gentes, multos vixisse excellentissimos viros, qui res maximas magnificasque gessere, quarum nulla memoria durat, non quia memoranda non fuerint, sed scriptore et litteris caruerunt.”

¹⁰ Donald J. Wilcox, *The Development of Florentine Humanist Historiography in the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 1-2.

to tell anything but the truth” and “must make bold to tell the whole truth.”¹¹ The adherence of historians to writing only the truth elevated their discipline above others in the *studia humanitatis*. In his history of Ferdinand of Spain, Lorenzo Valla claimed, “History is more robust than poetry because it is more truthful...oriented not towards abstraction but towards truth.”¹² Valla and other fine scholars applied their talent to unmasking historical forgeries such as the Donation of Constantine.¹³ The desire for truthful accounts propelled some historians such as Petrarch to search like detectives for lost ancient texts that would correct errors in the understanding of ancient figures such as Cicero.¹⁴ The commitment to truth and accuracy in writing history continued into the sixteenth century, when Varchi produced a manuscript detailing the errors Paolo Giovio made in *A History of his Own Time*.¹⁵

The writing of history changed in accordance with the rise of princely states and the new perspectives that accompanied them. The political realism exemplified by the works of Niccolò Machiavelli and Francesco Guicciardini shattered the notion that history could be guidebook to ethics. Instead, authors portrayed man in all of his misery and dignity amidst changing historical conditions.¹⁶ In the late-fifteenth century, ducal commissions in Milan gave rise to realistic history that also falsified the historical record to portray the patron-prince in a favorable light. The Milanese ducal history genre practiced under the Sforzas was defined by the shift away from writing about the past, which was popular earlier in the century, to writing about events taking

¹¹ Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De oratore*, trans. E. W. Sutton (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976-1977), 2.15.62.

¹² Lorenzo Valla, *Opera omnia*, ed. Eugenio Garin (Turin: Bottega d’Erasmus, 1962), 2:5-6.

¹³ Lorenzo Valla, *On the Donation of Constantine*, ed. and trans. G. W. Bowersock (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

¹⁴ Petrarch, *Letters on Familiar Matters*, trans. Aldo S. Bernardo (New York: Italica Press, 2005), III: 317.

¹⁵ Benedetto Varchi, *Errori del Giovio nelle Storie* (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 2010).

¹⁶ Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth-Century Florence* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965).

place within the last twenty years.¹⁷ Whereas Bruni had once rejected the notion of studying the events of his own day as history, the needs of Renaissance princes dictated that their historians write about recent years. The example of the Sforza in Milan raises questions about whether Duke Cosimo I exerted a similar pressure on the historians he sponsored.

Modern scholars dismiss the possibility that Nardi and Varchi produced biased accounts, whether due to pressure from a patron or their own political beliefs. Ann Moyer argued that Duke Cosimo exclaimed with delight when Varchi read new passages of his *Storia fiorentina* aloud for him, but that Cosimo did not dictate what Varchi should present in his work.¹⁸ In his *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance*, Eric Cochrane acknowledged Varchi's relationship with the anti-Alessandro exiles, but found that he and *fuorusciti* such as Nardi "had put aside their former political loyalties and had become reconciled with the regime imposed by Clement VII in 1530 and consolidated by Duke Cosimo after 1537."¹⁹ But pragmatic reconciliation (or attempts at reconciliation, in Nardi's case) with Duke Cosimo I should not be taken to mean that the historians had necessarily made peace with the memory of Duke Alessandro and his reign, particularly when hatred of Alessandro served the needs of Duke Cosimo I.

Scholars working outside of the Renaissance period have noted the role of self-interest in how authors shaped their accounts of the past. Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Friedrich Nietzsche hailed Thucydides for his disengagement and objectivity, but Donald Kagan argues that Thucydides wrote to advance a specific interpretation of the Peloponnesian War based on his

¹⁷ Ianziti, *Humanistic Historiography Under the Sforzas*, 5-7.

¹⁸ Ann Moyer, "'Without Passion or Partisanship': Florentine Historical Writing in the Age of Cosimo I," in *History and Nation*, ed. Julia Rudolph (Cranbury, NJ: Bucknell University Press, 2006), 45-69.

¹⁹ Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography*, 278-9.

own experiences and exile.²⁰ In *Phantoms of Remembrance*, Patrick Geary found that eleventh-century chroniclers created the notion of a sharp break with the earlier era, when in fact there was none. As a result, they knowingly selected and omitted evidence to distance themselves from the late-Carolingian period.²¹ Elisheva Carlebach found that early modern Ashkenaz chroniclers living in Christian lands consciously omitted mention of messianism to avoid martyrdom.²² That historians write from a specific point of view and shape their works based on their own ideas and experiences is unsurprising and universal, yet Renaissance scholars have failed to consider how the long-term involvement of Jacopo Nardi and Benedetto Varchi in the *fuorusciti* cause influenced the depiction of Duke Alessandro in their histories.

THE POLITICAL LIFE OF JACOPO NARDI

Jacopo Nardi, born in Florence in 1476, faced exile upon Duke Alessandro's accession for his involvement in the anti-Medici Savonarolan republic. Nardi had always been involved in Florentine politics, but after helping to bring about the fall of the Medici family in 1527, he became particularly active in the Savonarolan government of 1527-1530. The so-called "Last Republic" elected Christ the King of Florence and allowed Savonarolans or *Piagnoni* to rule the city once again.²³ When Savonarola had ruled Florence in the 1490s, the city famously hosted a number of bonfires into which art, luxurious clothing, cosmetics, and jewelry were destroyed in hopes of pleasing God. Savonarola's government sought to enforce morality, although this typically centered on the prosecution and execution of those committing sex crimes such as sodomy, rape, or adultery. The Republic of 1527-1530 sought to combat the moral laxity permitted by the Medici from 1512 to 1527 and recover the virtuous way of life that the *Piagnoni*

²⁰ Donald Kagan, *Thucydides: The Reinvention of History* (New York: Viking, 2009).

²¹ Patrick J. Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 6-8.

²² Elisheva Carlebach, "Between History and Hope: Jewish Messianism in Ashkenaz and Sepharad," Third Annual Lecture of the Victor J. Selmanowitz Chair of Jewish History, May 17, 1998, New York, NY: Graduate School of Jewish Studies, Touro College, 1998, 1-17.

²³ Eduard Fueter, *Storia della storiografia moderna*, trans. Altiero Spinelli (Milan: Riccardo Ricciardi, 1970), 113.

believed would protect the city from God's wrath. Instead of sponsoring the return of Christ to earth, the rule of the republic was threatened in 1529, when the troops of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V besieged the city for nine months. By 1530, the siege had resulted in the death of one-third of Florence's population due to starvation and disease. An agreement in 1530 ended the siege and allowed the Holy Roman Emperor to serve as the overlord of Florence, paving the way for him to re-install the Medici.²⁴ Nardi remained a moderate *Piagnone* his whole life, which no doubt influenced his view of Duke Alessandro's political legitimacy, circumstances of birth, and personal conduct. Nardi's family had been traditionally anti-Medici, and his own Savonarolanism combined with leadership in the republic of 1527-30 made him a dangerous enemy of the young Duke. Following the siege of 1529-30, Nardi was swiftly exiled from Florence on December 2, 1530. The initial order of exile was temporary, yet Nardi's exile was confirmed, or converted to a ban-for-life, from Florence in 1533²⁵

Banishment constituted one of the most serious punishments meted out by the earlier Florentine republics. An official order of exile entailed a ban from entering the city; a loss of one's political rights, business, and property; and public shame. The theme and practice of exile in Florence and Renaissance Italy has been exceptionally well-studied—likely because it was so common.²⁶ Just one of the several registers of exiled individuals, the *Libro del Chiodo*, or Book

²⁴ Najemy, *A History of Florence*, 309-399, 446-452.

²⁵ Rudolf von Albertini, *Firenze dalla repubblica al principato*, trans. Cesare Cristofolini (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1970), 314.

²⁶ See Randolph Starn, *Contrary Commonwealth: The Theme of Exile in Medieval and Renaissance Florence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); *Exil et civilization en Italie (XII^e-XVI^e siècles)*, ed. Jacques Heers and Christian Bec (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, 1990); *L'exil et l'exclusion dans la culture italienne: Actes du colloque franco-italien*, ed. George Ulysse (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 1991); Christine Shaw, *The Politics of Exile in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Desiderio Cavalca, *Il bando nella prassi e nella dottrina giuridica medievale* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1978); Peter Pazzagli, *The Criminal Ban of the Siena Commune 1225-1310* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1979); Fabrizio Ricciardelli, *The Politics of Exclusion in Early Renaissance Florence* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007); Angelo Bartlett Giamatti, *Exile and Change in Renaissance Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Giuliano Milani, *L'esclusione dal commune: Conflitti e bandi politici a Bologna e in altre città italiane tra XII e XIV secolo* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 2003).

of the Nail, records the banishment of 3,269 citizens in the fourteenth century.²⁷ From the advent of the Guelf and Ghibelline conflict in 1215 until 1434, when Cosimo il Vecchio de' Medici himself returned from banishment to lead the city, Florence's frequent changes in government produced vast numbers of exiles. For the regime conferring the ban, exile offered a chance to consolidate power over the city without escalating hostilities due to execution.²⁸ For those exiled, banishment was not necessarily permanent. Citizens might be exiled by the *bannum pro tempore*, which would be lifted if they paid a fine. In the case of more serious crimes, the *bannum pro maleficio* banned citizens from reentering Florence for life.²⁹ Despite supposedly permanent bans, many political figures returned to the city following major shifts in government control.

Florence exiled some of its most famous citizens throughout the Renaissance, which contributed to an association of exile with virtue and literary productivity. The Black Guelfs exiled Dante Alighieri in 1302; the punishment tormented him for the rest of his life and figures in his works. While in *Paradise*, Dante's ancestor Cacciaguida warns him that he will "be forced to leave behind those things [he] love[s] most dearly" to "know how salty is the taste of others' bread" and "how hard the road that takes you down and up the stairs of others' homes" (*Paradiso* XVII, 55-60).³⁰ In describing his own future exile, Dante evokes the quotidian yet virtuously borne sufferings of one banned from his house, table, and city.³¹ Boccaccio

²⁷ *Il Libro del chiodo: Riproduzione in facsimile con edizione critica*, ed. Francesca Klein and Simone Sartini (Florence: Polistampa, 2004).

²⁸ Ricciardelli, *The Politics of Exclusion*, 1-2; Susannah Foster Baxendale, "Exile in Practice: The Alberti Family In and Out of Florence 1401-1428," *Renaissance Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (1991): 720-756.

²⁹ Ricciardelli, *The Politics of Exclusion*, 17.

³⁰ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy, Volume 3: Paradise*, trans. Mark Musa (New York: Penguin, 1986), 204.

³¹ For more information on Dante's exile and the theme of exile in Dante's work see Giuseppe Mazzotta, "Dante and the Virtues of Exile," *Poetics Today* 5, no. 3 (1984): 645-667; Yeo Wei Wei, "Embodiment in the *Commedia*: Dante's Exilic and Poetic Self-Consciousness," *Dante Studies* 121 (2003): 67-93; *Dante e le città dell'esilio*, ed. Guido di Pino (Ravenna: Longo, 1989); Isidoro Del Lungo, *Dell'esilio di Dante* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1881); Gino

vociferously complained about Dante's exile and campaigned to have his remains brought back to Florence in his biography of Dante.³² Florence cast some of the leading families—the Medici and Alberti among them—out of the city at various points in the fifteenth century for their purported plots against the ruling republic.³³ Other citizens left Florence due to unfavorable political climates without being officially banished. Niccolò Machiavelli, accused of aiding an anti-Medici conspiracy, exiled himself to his estate in 1513. Machiavelli did not confess to the charges despite the use of torture, but he was unable to serve in politics and was likely under suspicion while he remained in the city. For one who perhaps claimed “I love my native city more than Christ,”³⁴ exile from Florence—whether resulting from legal banishment or pragmatic self-preservation—constituted a tremendous loss.

The advent of the Medici dukedom transformed the nature of punishment and exile in Florence. Whereas the republics relied mainly on exile to maintain political power and marginalize the opposition, the Medici Dukes used execution to demonstrate their control of the city.³⁵ Not only did the Dukes execute citizens for political reasons more often than did the earlier republics, but those condemned to exile did not have a reasonable hope of returning. Temporary bans handed down in 1530 that confined the exiles to parts of the Florentine or Church dominion were converted to permanent bans upon expiration in 1533. Having lost hope of returning to Florence, many exiles decided to break the terms of their exile and leave the

Salmoria, *I processi e le condanne di Dante* (Castelfiorentino: Giovanelli e Carpitelli, 1923); Starn, *Contrary Commonwealth*, 60-85.

³² Boccaccio, *Life of Dante*, 5-6. I discuss Boccaccio's statements about Dante's exile further in chapter three.

³³ Foster Baxendale, “Exile in Practice,” 720-756; Ricciardelli, *The Politics of Exclusion*, 230-249.

³⁴ Scholars have traditionally copied the phrase as “I love my native city more than my own soul,” a common phrase in Renaissance Florence, yet the last part of the phrase was “furiously” blotted out as if to conceal something devastating and heterodox. Giorgio Inglese, editor of Machiavelli's letters to Francesco Vettori and Francesco Guicciardini, speculates based on close examination and the faint mark of “st” in the blotting that Machiavelli actually wrote that he loved Florence more than Christ, which would have warranted the extreme editing. See Niccolò Machiavelli, *Lettere a Francesco Vettori e a Francesco Guicciardini*, ed. Giorgio Inglese (Milan: Rizzoli, 1989), 384, n. 9; see discussion in Maurizio Viroli, *Machiavelli's God* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 35-36.

³⁵ Baker, “For Reasons of the State,” 463-467.

assigned cities—becoming rebels against Duke Alessandro in the process—in order to join “Florentine nations” of *fuorusciti* gathered in Pesaro, Rome, Venice, Flanders, and Lyon. The most active Florentine nation resided in Venice, where Jacopo Nardi served as one of the primary leaders.³⁶

While in exile, Nardi campaigned against the rule of Pope Clement VII and Duke Alessandro. After moving to Venice in 1534, Nardi wrote several republican discourses arguing against Medici rule of Florence.³⁷ Nardi initially focused on the abuses of Pope Clement VII, but switched his attention to Duke Alessandro following the Pope’s death in 1534. Nardi joined the *fuorusciti* in Naples in 1534-1535 as they attempted to determine how they could induce Holy Roman Emperor Charles V to either restore the Florentine republic or replace Duke Alessandro with his Medici cousin, Cardinal Ippolito. Since the Emperor’s court moved constantly, the group decided to elect representatives that would travel to plead the case of the *fuorusciti*. After much debate, Jacopo Nardi was among the representatives chosen by the exiles. He and his associates arranged for an audience before the Emperor. Nardi delivered an oration on January 3, 1536 (1535 in the Florentine dating) against Alessandro, detailing his crimes and the exiles’ proposals for alternatives.³⁸ A few documents in the Florentine archive list Filippo Parenti as the orator giving the speech, but recent scholarship confirms that the actual speaker

³⁶ For scholarship on the *fuorusciti* see Simoncelli, *Fuoriuscitismo repubblicano fiorentino, 1530-54*; De Los Santos, “Iacopo Nardi et les exilés florentins (1534-1537),” 51-78; Simoncelli, “The Turbulent Life of the Florentine Community in Venice,” 113-133; Capasso, *Firenze, Filippo Strozzi, i fuorusciti, e la corte pontificia*; Cosentino and De Los Santos, “Un nuovo documento sul fuoriuscitismo fiorentino,” 141-167; Picquet, “Un républicain florentin à Venise,” 117-137; De Los Santos, “Florence et les exilés républicains.”

³⁶ “Istruzione del Cardinale Ippolito de’ Medici ad un suo Agente appresso all’Imperadore Carlo V, persuadendolo a levare lo stato di Firenze al Duca Alessandro, e darlo al ditto Cardinale,” in Rastrelli, *Storia d’Alessandro de’ Medici*, 2:221-240. For information on the death of Cardinal Ippolito de’ Medici see Rebecchini, *Un altro Lorenzo*, 117-130; Moretti, “Il cardinal Ippolito de’ Medici,” 137-178; Sodana, “La morte di Ippolito de’ Medici,” 29-35.

³⁷ De Los Santos, “Iacopo Nardi et les exilés florentins (1534-1537),” 52. The discourses may be found in: Picquet, “Un républicain florentin à Venise,” 117-137; Jacopo Nardi, “Discorso fatto in Venezia contro ai calunniatori del popolo fiorentino,” in *Vita di Antonio Giacomini e altri scritti minori* (Florence: Barbèra, 1867), 227-310.

³⁸ *Archivio di Stato di Firenze*, Miscellanea Medicea, 457, f. 4, cc. 1-14.

was Nardi himself.³⁹ Charles V, of course, failed to remove Alessandro from power, and Nardi remained in exile in Venice, where he slowly wrote his *Istorie fiorentine*.⁴⁰ Modern scholars have argued that Nardi integrated exile discourse into his *Istorie*.⁴¹ Although Nardi remained an ardent republican, he attempted to secure patronage from Duke Cosimo I. Cosimo I failed to support Nardi's work, yet Nardi considered Cosimo to be a better choice for a ruler than Duke Alessandro, who he characterized as a dissolute tyrant, and without religion or *virtù*.

Nardi's political background made him an excellent candidate for serving as a source of information about Florence in the 1520s and 1530s, although his passionate involvement in the debates of the day may have made objectivity impossible.

NARDI'S LETTER TO VARCHI

A 1551 letter written by Jacopo Nardi to Benedetto Varchi demonstrates that even 15 years after Duke Alessandro's death, prominent Florentine *fuorusciti* such as Nardi were concerned with portraying their opposition to Duke Alessandro in a favorable light. A previously ignored letter from the *Archivio di Stato di Firenze* written by Nardi to Varchi on August 1, 1551 in response to Varchi's request for information about the exiles' activities, shows how Nardi urged his colleague to conceal information about the past and thus allow it to slip into oblivion. As one of the most important *fuorusciti* opponents of Duke Alessandro, Jacopo Nardi perhaps knew more about politics in the 1530s than anyone alive following Francesco Guicciardini's death in 1540. Nardi's fame depended greatly on how Alessandro, his rule, and the activities of the *fuorusciti* were depicted in histories. Nardi's desire to retroactively create unity and republicanism in the exile party led him to ask Varchi to falsify the historical record by concealing the motivations and desires of many *fuorusciti*. Not only does this explosive letter

³⁹ De Los Santos, "Jacopo Nardi et les exilés florentins," 69-75.

⁴⁰ Nardi, *Istorie della città di Firenze*.

⁴¹ De Los Santos, "Jacopo Nardi et les exilés florentins," 76-77.

hint at a conspiracy among the exiles long after the 1530s, but demonstrates the incredible power of the historians and their friends—in this case, Duke Alessandro’s enemies—to permanently shape history.

A copy of the letter appears in volume 95 of the *Carte strozziane* series one, originally collected by Cardinal Carlo di Tommaso Strozzi (1587-1670). About a century after Alessandro’s reign, Strozzi amassed a huge personal library of purchased and copied manuscripts, which passed into the Medici archive in the late-eighteenth century. A number of the items Strozzi collected reflected his interest in his family’s history. Carlo Strozzi would have perhaps had greater-than-usual interest in the *fuorusciti*, since his ancestor Filippo Strozzi led the exiles against Duke Alessandro from 1534 and supported the assassination by Lorenzino de’ Medici. Volume 95 contains a number of documents pertaining to the activities of the Florentine exiles, including poems by Varchi discussed later in this chapter and two epitaphs studied in the next.⁴²

Among the archivists responsible for supplying and copying manuscripts for Carlo Strozzi was Antonio d’Orazio da Sangallo (1551-1636), who may have provided some or all of Strozzi’s volume 95 documents. The Medici Grand Dukes awarded their archivist Antonio d’Orazio da Sangallo a privilege to trade in manuscripts starting in 1606. Among the documents in volume 95 is the copy of a letter written in 1533 from Duke Alessandro to the architect of the Fortezza da Basso, Antonio da Sangallo, ancestor of the archivist. While the letter pertains to a fortress project that troubled the *fuorusciti*, it does not entirely fit with the theme of protest against the rule of Duke Alessandro such as the other documents do. Further investigation demonstrates that the letter in question was either copied by Antonio da Sangallo, the Medici

⁴² For more information on Cardinal Carlo Strozzi and the formation of his library see Alessandro Gherardi and Cesare Guasti, *Le Carte Stroziane del R. Archivio di Stato in Firenze. Inventario. Serie prima* (Florence: Cellini, 1884), v-xxxix.

archivist, or under his direction, in the *Mediceo del Principato* volume 181 (fig. 2.1), which would have given the archivist an opportunity to also make the copy that appears in *Carte strozziane* volume 95 (fig. 2.2). The handwriting of the copied *Carte strozziane* letter matches the handwriting in the autograph journal kept by Sangallo in the 1620s and 1630s, the time when he and his associates would have been copying the letters in the *Mediceo del Principato* volume 181 (fig. 2.3). The volume also contains an original autograph letter written by Alessandro Vitelli, the Emperor's general stationed in Florence, to Antonio Sangallo in 1535 (fig. 2.4 and fig. 2.5). As the reader will see in chapter four, it was common for families to carefully save correspondence from important political figures, even when the person in question was later considered a despised soldier or tyrant. Given that Strozzi's library suddenly swelled in the year of Sangallo's death, 1636, Strozzi may have acquired the archivist's papers, including documents concerning Sangallo's own family, as well as the copies of documents written by several important historians concerning the Strozzi family and *fuorusciti* activities.⁴³

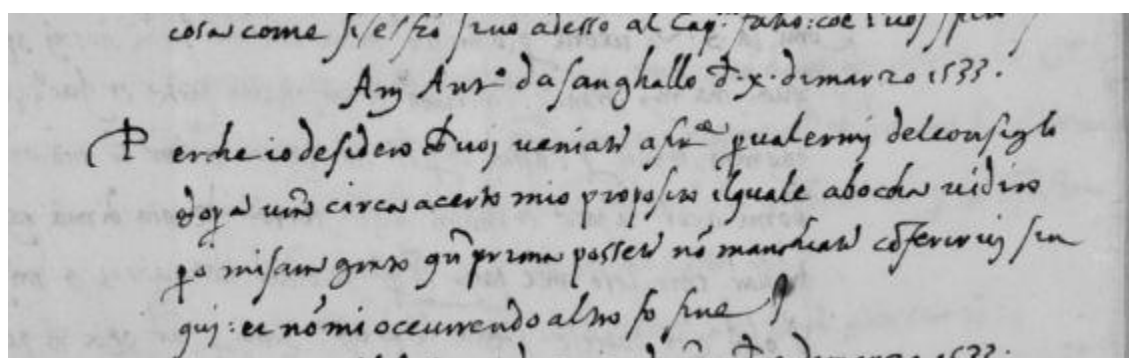


Figure 2.1: A copied letter from Duke Alessandro de' Medici to the architect Antonio da Sangallo, March 10, 1533 (Florentine dating applies). (Photograph of folio 11v in the *Mediceo del Principato*, volume 181 in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze.)

⁴³ Callard, *Le prince et la république*, 293.

Alorze Au^{to} Arc^{to} da sangallo nostro Co^{se}
 Per che io desidero che use nemate affrenze qua le mⁱ
 col consiglio a opa nostra i acerto uice proposito
 Il quale l'hoce di dero. Sono mi s'hoce q'ato q'ca
 fine perche non manicare uo' f'oc'ni f'eri q'ui
 et non mi o'ocore ad'altro so' fine
 De' fine ~~del~~ 10 di Marzo 1533 —
 Il Duca Aless^o

Figure 2.2: Another copy of the letter from Duke Alessandro de' Medici to the architect Antonio da Sangallo, March 10, 1533 (Florentine dating applies). (Photograph of folio 21v in Carte strozziane, series one, volume 95 in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze.)

Addi 4 d'ottobre, 1627 In Firenze
 Nota come questa mattina ce nuova che il Ser^o Duca di Parma
 ha uoluto solennizare questo giorno se in corona desu' arati
 Et adde detto se publicato uanto Felinto Garbichia de' Pitti in Janero
 ha uoluto uolere contratto fra il Ser^o Duca di Parma et il Ser^o
 uicini nato della S^{ta} medalena d' Austria q' Sanu' uolta
 Il quale uicini di Parma q' uicini La Regina de' Cechi all' Ho' Janero
 Loreto et a' Roma a' far uicini a sua s'antita et ad' uicini
 uicini q' f'oc'ni uicini et uicini uicini uicini La
 sposa a casa sua —

Figure 2.3: A sample of Antonio d'Orazio da Sangallo's handwriting from his autograph journal. (Photograph of folio 1r in Palatino manuscript number 470 in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze.)

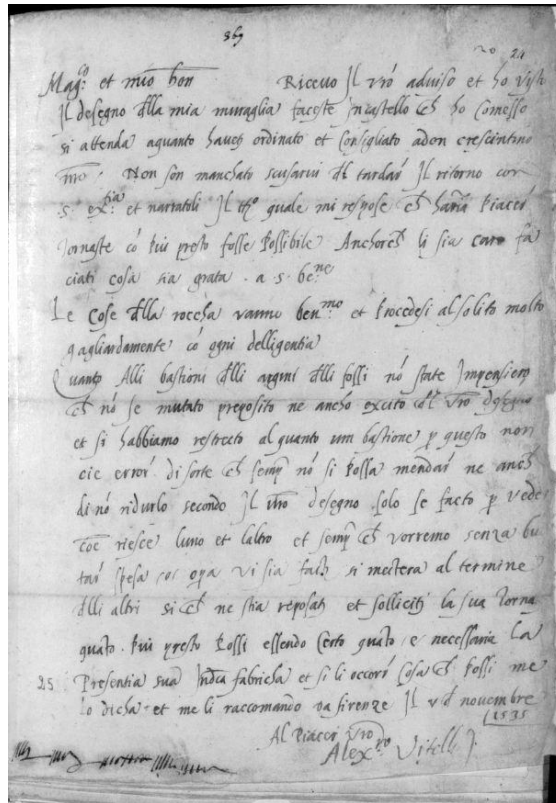


Figure 2.4: Original letter from Alessandro Vitelli to Antonio da Sangallo, November 5, 1535. (Photograph of folio 24r in Carte Stroziane, series one, volume 95 in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze.)



Figure 2.5: Evidence that the letter from Alessandro Vitelli to Antonio da Sangallo was original and posted. (Photograph of folio 25v in Carte Stroziane, series one, volume 95 in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze.)

At the time of writing the letter in 1551, Nardi remained in exile from Florence. He lived in Venice, a gathering point for exiled Florentines, hoping that Duke Cosimo I would take an

interest in the history of Florence he was writing and invite him back to the city. At the same time, Varchi acted as the official court historian for Cosimo. Varchi had recently decided to expand his history of Florence into contemporary events, but found that the ducal archive lacked information about Alessandro's rule and the activities of the exiles. Varchi wrote to old friends such as Nardi and asked for autobiographical accounts of their activities at the time, which he used as sources in his *Storia fiorentina*. At some point, a copy of Nardi's letter came into Strozzi's collection, and it was filed with other documents concerning the activities of the *fuorusciti*. The evenness of the script, lack of any address or marks suggesting that the letter had been posted, and the notation "copia" in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of the letter suggests that this letter was copied from an original at some point before the binding of *Carte strozziane* volume 95. An original version of the letter has not been found, nor have I identified mention of this letter in any form in the extant scholarship.

The substantial letter written by Nardi to Varchi alludes to their ongoing communication, which can be traced by many surviving printed and manuscript copies of Nardi's letters to Varchi.⁴⁴ Given Varchi's favored position in Florence as official historian, Nardi's motivation in writing seems to have been to help his friend do research on contemporary history, protect his own reputation as a partisan in the events described, and to entice Duke Cosimo to allow him to return to Florence—or at least sponsor Nardi's own history of Florence from afar. Nardi was thus in the position of depending on his friend for help while trading to him the very knowledge that could help Nardi reach his goals. Whether the letters were kept or copied by Varchi himself

⁴⁴ Varchi and Nardi appear to have carried on a fairly regular correspondence from at least 1542 until 1555. A number of their letters have been transcribed and printed. A collection of Varchi's letters contains one letter from Varchi to Nardi, sent in 1542. Benedetto Varchi, *Lettere, 1535-1565*, ed. Vanni Bramanti (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2008), 125-128. An early-twentieth biography and assessment of Jacopo Nardi's life and work contains a trove of letters written from Nardi to Varchi from 1542 until 1555. Alfredo Pieralli, *La Vita e le opere di Jacopo Nardi* (Florence: Civelli, 1901), 1:175-193. A letter from Nardi to Varchi from 1548 appears in Nardi, *Vita di Antonio Giacomini*, xxviii-xxxii.

or intercepted by other figures is impossible to know with certainty. Yet the presence of the 1551 letter from Nardi to Varchi in a volume compiled by Carlo Strozzi, which also contains some not-widely-circulated Latin poems by Varchi that will be discussed later in this chapter, suggests that Strozzi or Sangallo may have gained access to the original letter or a copy of it from one of Varchi's heirs or another collector. Given Nardi's pleas for secrecy, it seems safe to say that Nardi valued the friendship, or at least Varchi's influence with the ruler of Florence, more than did Varchi.

Nardi states in the beginning of the letter that he writes in response to a letter from Varchi in which he requested information about the exiles' activities in the 1530s; the letter from Varchi to Nardi has not been located. Nardi congratulates his friend on deciding to write about the period after Pope Clement VII's death, for which Varchi has few sources. Nardi promised to give Varchi a full narration of the *fuorusciti* activities over the course of a few letters; thus far I have been unable to locate evidence that those letters survive. The letter from Nardi has roughly four parts: greetings and congratulations, a preface to the narration, the narrative, and the closing statements.

In the course of his preface, Nardi requests that Varchi suppress information about the exiles' activities in 1534. Nardi wrote, "Just for the sake of information I can tell you that, without going deep into the details or following any temporal order, the things that happened just wasted that winter and the summer in arguments and controversies and that no useful action was taken for their cause."⁴⁵ The lack of unity among the plotting exiles gathered in Rome in 1534-5 troubled Nardi, but the particular arguments they made bothered him most. "Those same

⁴⁵ Jacopo Nardi, Letter from Jacopo Nardi to Benedetto Varchi, 1 August 1551, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Carte Strozziiane, prima serie, 95, 104r: "Possovi pertanto dire con brevità, et per capita senza una ordinata, et esatta narratione, quelle cose che vi seguirono consumando piu tosto il tempo quel verno, et la state in dispareri, et controversie, che alcuna azzione utile per la causa loro."

things,” Nardi continued, “because of the different feelings that brought them up, would be better forgotten and hidden rather than kept alive in memory for the future times” because “what showed in most people was hatred towards the Prince rather than towards the principedom and maybe the will to change it rather than remove it.”⁴⁶ In this explosive statement, Nardi proposed to Varchi that he neglect to mention that some exiles joined the cause because they had personal disagreements with the duke, and would have lived happily under another duke. This position differs considerably from the view Nardi wanted to advance: that the *fuorusciti* were simply republicans who desired liberty.

Nardi’s plea to Varchi demonstrates how he thought about history and its role in perpetuating memory, as well as his willingness to do what modern historians would call falsifying the historical record to manipulate memory in the future. Concerning the disagreements among the exiles, Nardi asked Varchi to hide and forget them, even though they constituted an important part of the story and explained the motivations and intentions of many who opposed Duke Alessandro’s reign. Nardi did not want the embarrassing arguments remembered in the future. Nardi explained that because of these disagreements, “time and reputation was lost, especially among those in whom it would have been better to be gained and kept, just as it would have happened if amongst the small and great men there was unity, since it showed that they disagreed in principles.”⁴⁷ A united exile front would have helped the reputations of all, but since that did not happen, Nardi preferred to attempt to retroactively create unity in works of history to protect the memory of his exile allies. Nardi claimed the reason he

⁴⁶ Nardi, Letter to Varchi, 104r.-104v: “Le quali cose per la diversità degli humori, che vi apparivono, sarebbe meglio dimenticare et occultare, che mantenere vive nella memoria de’ Futuri tempi conciosia cosa che si mostrasse in alcune persone piu tosto l’odio del Principe, che dal principato, et forse desiderio maggiore di mutarlo, che di levarlo.”

⁴⁷ Nardi, Letter to Varchi, 104v: “Onde si perse il tempo, et la reputazione appresso di chi conveniva acquistarla, et mantenersela, come fatto si sarebbe, se tra piccoli, et grandi si fusse veduta l’unione, che pareva, che discordassero ne primi principij.”

asked Varchi to commit a historical manipulation was because he did not want the memory of fractured unity among the exiles and the true motivations of some of the group to be “kept alive in memory for future times.” This letter shows the remarkable power of historians such as Nardi and Varchi when recounting events with which they were intimately familiar when the official archives lacked documents that could have corrected distortions. Historians in such cases did not need to invent information; they could simply allow certain memories to fall away and be forgotten—which Nardi does not seem to associate with writing false history.

In the narrative portion of his letter, Nardi changed his account to emphasize the political reasons for replacing Duke Alessandro, rather than the personal dislike of the Duke expressed by key members of the *fuorusciti* party. Nardi claimed, “Everyone wanted not only [the end] of Alessandro, but the restitution of precisely the same government from before the accord, except for maybe two or three, who were the leading authority of the *Maggiori*” party.⁴⁸ Nardi minimized the influence of those who specifically opposed Duke Alessandro, yet acknowledge that the debates about the proper course of action “consumed the rest of the winter and much of the following summer.”⁴⁹ The description of the time spent debating what to request of the Emperor in the narrative of the letter differs from that given by Nardi in the preface, where he reflected with frustration on the “arguments and controversies” that “wasted that winter,” which resulted in “time and reputation lost.”⁵⁰ In the narrative of the letter, Nardi also maintained that

⁴⁸ Nardi, Letter to Varchi, 105r: “Tutti volevano non solo [...] d'Alessandro, ma la restituzione del medesimo governo appunto che davanti all'accordo, eccetti forse due o tre, che seguitavano l'autorità de' Maggiori, i quali oppugnavano anch'essi Alessandro opponendo alle sue ragioni il medesimo scudo della libertà; ma quale fusse il governo di questa libertà, che si domandava per tutti non convenivano.”

⁴⁹ Nardi, Letter to Varchi, 105r: “Di modo, che nella contesa di dividere questa pelle dell'Orso non ancora preso, si consumò, il resto del verno, et gran parte della state seguente in molte controversie...”

⁵⁰ Nardi, Letter to Varchi, 104r and 104v: “Possovi pertanto dire con brevità, et per capita senza una ordinata, et esatta narratione, quelle cose che vi seguirono consumando piu tosto il tempo quel verno, et la state in dispareri, et controversie, che alcuna azione utile per la causa loro.” “Onde si perse il tempo, et la reputazione appresso di chi conveniva acquistarla, et mantenersela, come fatto si sarebbe, se tra piccoli, et grandi si fusse veduta l'unione, che pareva, che discordassero ne primi principij.”

the motivating force for the vast majority of the *fuorusciti* was the full restitution of Florentine liberty from the Medici and Holy Roman Emperor. Nardi claimed that those who petitioned the Emperor for Alessandro's removal did so because "Alessandro had prevented the justice of His Majesty with violence, and with the assembly, without waiting for His Majesty's orders of government."⁵¹

Nardi's narrative presents the proposed substitution of Ippolito de' Medici for Alessandro as a practical solution to political problems rather than an outcome of personal hatred. The exiles, according to Nardi, presented Cardinal Ippolito as a replacement Duke as a means to "His Majesty [maintaining] the promise given to holy Pope Clement of keeping the Medici in Florence" and because Ippolito "would govern civilly as they had done...and not with the violence Alessandro had made nor displeasure of the city."⁵² In the narrative portion of the letter, Nardi represents the selection of Ippolito as an alternate Duke as a pragmatic way of achieving republican political goals, rather than as a means of settling personal scores with Duke Alessandro. As seen in chapter one, many of the exiles, Filippo Strozzi and his sons among them, joined the movement due to their humiliating disputes with Duke Alessandro. In the course of his letter, Nardi not only asks Benedetto Varchi to conceal the motivations of the *fuorusciti* cause, but also provides an alternate narrative that portrays the Florentine exiles in a better light, according to his view of how their affairs should have been conducted.

Nardi's request that Varchi forget the letter's contents reveals that he possibly knew he was asking his colleague to break the contemporary rules concerning the writing of history.

⁵¹ Nardi, Letter to Varchi, 105v: "Perche gli minori volevano domandare la liberta, et il medesimo governo del tempo di quella, dicendo che Alessandro haveva prevenuto il giudizio di sua Maesta con la violenza, et col parlamento, senza aspettare la ordinazione del governo che doveva fare sua Maesta et desideravano che i loro Oratori esse guissero tale commessione, efficacemente, et fedelmente."

⁵² Nardi, Letter to Varchi, 105v: "Allegando che cosi sua Maesta conservarebbe la fede data a la Papa Clemente di mantenere i, Medici in Firenze, sa diffarebbe circa alla liberta allo Universale, perche governerebbe Civilmente come havevano fatto i suoi antinati, et non quella violenza che faceva Alessandro ne scontentezza della Citta..."

After asking Varchi to conceal details about the exiles, Nardi requested in the closing remarks a “firm promise in all your honesty, that no one but you will read this my short little sorry letter [*lettereccia*], and that you will immediately extinguish the memory.”⁵³ Nardi’s demand that Varchi suppress the letter’s contents demonstrates the ongoing importance of the events of the 1530s, even in 1551. This was not the first time that Nardi asked Varchi to extinguish memory of a letter; Nardi requested that Varchi burn a letter on 24 January 1547 to protect him as the source of Varchi’s information.⁵⁴ It also shows that he knew that fellow humanists and posterity would not look kindly upon his attempt to control history, and thereby future memory of the exiles’ activities. Nardi then wrote, “You make that promise to me and I will trust you just as I trust myself and, starting with this present letter, with one or two more to follow, I shall tell you the whole story, which certainly will not be lie, nor any kind of calumny, but will convey all simply and frankly and without artifice (as you will see), since I do not want to rack my brain, and these few notes alone will suffice for you to get the gist.”⁵⁵ I argue that this passage shows that Nardi recognized that asking Varchi to break the rules and allow polemic and personal motivations to enter his work would make his colleague doubt the whole account, so Nardi took pains to assure him that the rest of the story would be straightforward and true.

Nardi promises in the preface to the letter that his account will not be untrue, which suggests that some sixteenth-century historians believed that they could conceal portions of the past, but still profess to write the truth as long as they did not fabricate or mangle facts. Nardi proclaimed, “I will send the tale, which certainly will not be untrue [*non sara bugiarda*], nor

⁵³ Nardi, Letter to Varchi, 104v: “Con speranza però, et ferma promessa, et fede vostra, che niuno altro che voi vegga questa mia lettereccia, et che subito ne spegna te la memoria.”

⁵⁴ Samuels, “Benedetto Varchi and Sixteenth-Century Florentine Humanism,” 353-4.

⁵⁵ Nardi, to Varchi, 104v: “Voi melo prometterete, et io vi crederrò come à me stesso et cominciando nella presente con un altra o due altre sole lettere espedirò la favola, la quale cierto non sara bugiarda, ne punto maligna, ma racconterà semplicemente, et candidamente, et senza alcuno artificio (come vedrete) che non mi voglio stillare il cervello, et à voi bastaranno i cenni soli à farvi intendere qualche cosa.”

pointedly malignant.”⁵⁶ Nardi uses the word *bugiarda* to proclaim his honesty as a historian. Other versions of the root word appear in discussions between sixteenth-century historians. In a letter to Varchi in 1563, Donato Giannotti singled out Paolo Giovio and Francesco Guicciardini for their lies [*le sue bugie*].⁵⁷ In both cases, the meaning of *bugie* and *bugiarda* seems to deal with the veracity of historical facts, and not differences in viewpoint or perspectives missing from the narrative. Whereas Varchi produced a manuscript detailing the errors of Paolo Giovio in his history of Florence [*Errori del Giovio nelle Storie*], Giannotti claims that Nardi “has written not a right history [*Istoria giusta*], but a commentary,” although Nardi may escape due criticism on account of his “extreme old age.”⁵⁸ This assessment of Nardi’s *Istorie fiorentine* suggests that the former orator’s style and perspective of writing about the past was not fully accepted as history by his peers, and suggests that Varchi read the letter by Nardi carefully before reporting its contents as fact.

Although Nardi did not set out directly to skew memory of Alessandro in his letter, he had the potential to do so indirectly, since fame was considered a limited resource. By bolstering the fame of Alessandro’s enemies and turning them all into republican heroes instead of memorializing their petty personal feuds with Alessandro, Nardi would have obscured knowledge about Alessandro. Nardi not only provided an account based on his role as one of the most visible enemies of Alessandro, but his desire to preserve the fame of his compatriots and

⁵⁶ Nardi, Letter to Varchi, 104v: “Voi melo prometterete, et io vi crederrò come à me stesso et cominciando nella presente con un altra /o/ due altre sole lettere espedirò la favola, la quale cierto non sara bugiarda, ne punto maligna, ma racconterà semplicemente, et candidamente, et senza alcuno artificio (come vedrete) che non mi voglio stillare il cervello, et à voi bastaranno, i, cenni soli à farvi intendere qualche cosa.”

⁵⁷ Donato Giannotti, Letter to Benedetto Varchi, *Raccolta di Prose fiorentine, parte quarta* (Florence: Nella Stamperia di Sua Altezza Reale, 1734), I: 86. The letter in the *Prose fiorentine* collection is said to have been sent on March 3, 1536, although Varchi biographer Richard Samuels very convincingly argues that the final two numbers were switched during typesetting. As a result, the letter was sent in 1563, which makes sense as it refers to histories that had not been imagined or commissioned in 1536. Samuels, “Benedetto Varchi and Sixteenth-Century Florentine Humanism,” 371-2.

⁵⁸ Giannotti, Letter to Varchi, I:86.

himself.

BENEDETTO VARCHI, THE *FUORUSCITI*, AND DUKE COSIMO I DE' MEDICI

Born in Florence in 1503 (1502 in Florentine dating) and expired there in 1565,

Benedetto Varchi was one of the most celebrated men of letters in his day.⁵⁹ Varchi originally trained and worked as a notary until an inheritance allowed him to study full time.⁶⁰ Since Varchi was not so wealthy that he could support himself without external income, he relied on patrons and pupils for additional support, which appears to have put him in the position of aiding people or working on projects seemingly at odds with his values. Varchi was sympathetic to the republican cause, and participated in the defense of Florence during the siege of 1529-30, as did Nardi and Michelangelo. Varchi may have supported the republican cause, but his own rumored sexual involvement with youths would have put him very much in jeopardy with the resurrected Savonarolan regime of 1527-1530.⁶¹ Following the siege, the future historian forged a friendship with the Strozzi family beginning in 1532.⁶² Filippo Strozzi, leader of the *fuorusciti*, was a patron of Varchi, and brother, Lorenzo, was his life-long mentor.⁶³ After Filippo Strozzi was captured at the Battle of Montemurlo in July 1537, months after Duke Alessandro's assassination, Varchi looked after the three youngest Strozzi sons while their brothers attempted to affect Filippo's release.⁶⁴ In addition to Varchi's connection to the Strozzi family, he remained in frequent correspondence with Maria Soderini, the mother of Lorenzino de' Medici, in the months following Duke Alessandro's assassination.⁶⁵

Despite Varchi's involvement with the most prominent Florentine republicans, Duke

⁵⁹ Fueter, *Storia della storiografia moderna*, 115.

⁶⁰ Moyer, "Without Passion or Partisanship," 48.

⁶¹ Varchi was accused of raping a nine-year-old girl in 1545, but Duke Cosimo I pardoned him after intervention by Varchi's friends. See Samuels, "Benedetto Varchi and Sixteenth-Century Florentine Humanism," 288-293.

⁶² Albertini, *Firenze dalla repubblica al principato*, 339.

⁶³ Moyer, "Without Passion or Partisanship," 48.

⁶⁴ Samuels, "Benedetto Varchi and Sixteenth-Century Florentine Humanism," 168.

⁶⁵ Ferrai, *Lorenzino de' Medici*, 435-439.

Cosimo I de' Medici persuaded him to return to the city in 1543.⁶⁶ While in Cosimo's employ, Varchi became a member of the *Accademia fiorentina*, translated works for members of the ducal family, and wrote a number of dialogues, poems, and plays. Around 1546 or 1547, Duke Cosimo ordered Varchi to write the history of Florence between 1527 and 1530, the period of the last republic and its defeat.⁶⁷ Varchi had never written history before, but he developed a careful research method of comparing accounts given by sources and determining their veracity. The care with which Varchi conducted research most likely led to him borrow whole passages from earlier work, to the point that Varchi's syntactical structure sometimes changes based on his source material.⁶⁸ As a result of Varchi's method, the sources he selected for his history were critical for determining the composition of the *Storia fiorentina*. The history of Florence expanded into the 1530s at Cosimo's encouragement, and Varchi called upon old friends and colleagues such as Nardi for their accounts of periods in Florentine history for which there were few sources. Among those providing accounts for Varchi were Nardi and Lorenzo Strozzi, the brother of Filippo.⁶⁹ Given Varchi's predilection for allowing his sources to do the talking, his consultation of the most prominent living *fuorusciti* contributed significantly to the damning stories told about Duke Alessandro in the pages of the *Storia fiorentina*.

Varchi's purpose in extending his *Storia fiorentina* provides yet another reason to read the work critically when considering his treatment therein of Duke Alessandro. Duke Cosimo convinced Varchi in the early 1550s to extend the work to cover the reign of Alessandro and the beginning of his own rule. Varchi died before the work reached completion, which means that the intended scope and purpose of the later portion of the *Storia fiorentina* cannot be read or

⁶⁶ Moyer, "Without Passion or Partisanship," 47.

⁶⁷ Albertini, *Firenze dalla repubblica al principato*, 340.

⁶⁸ Samuels, "Benedetto Varchi and Sixteenth-Century Florentine Humanism," 368.

⁶⁹ Samuels, "Benedetto Varchi and Sixteenth-Century Florentine Humanism," 367-368.

inferred from the whole.⁷⁰ Instead, Varchi states in the preface to the later section, “you will see manifestly in the books that follow how different was a licentious, confused, tyrannical and violent regime from that of a just and legitimate prince.”⁷¹ Varchi states quite clearly that Alessandro is a foil to Duke Cosimo, Varchi’s patron. Although Alessandro was a member of the Medici family, Duke Cosimo would benefit from the most negative depictions of Alessandro. By serving as the figurative savior of Florence from Duke Alessandro’s alleged licentiousness and violence, Cosimo could rule as an increasingly authoritarian Duke, yet still merit the title of a just and legitimate prince.

Benedetto Varchi’s own political leanings, his use of a wide array of accounts from Duke Alessandro’s sworn enemies, and his stated desire to use Alessandro as a foil for the just rule of Duke Cosimo suggest that his *Storia fiorentina* may do more to unwarrantedly slander Duke Alessandro than previously believed. In the next section, I analyze poems from the Florentine archive to demonstrate Varchi’s desire to favorably memorialize Duke Alessandro’s assassin.

VARCHI’S SONNETS ABOUT LORENZINO AND ALESSANDRO

Benedetto Varchi wrote a series of Latin poems that celebrate Duke Alessandro’s assassin Lorenzino, describe Duke Alessandro as a tyrant, and laud his former Strozzi employers. The poems, collected in the same *Carte strozziane* volume as Nardi’s letter, demonstrate Varchi’s involvement in the political debates about Alessandro continuing after the Duke’s

⁷⁰ Samuels, “Benedetto Varchi and Sixteenth-Century Florentine Humanism,” 371.

⁷¹ Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 483: “Insino a qui, come io dissi nel principio di questa Storia, era l’intendimento mio di volere scrivere particolarmente le cose pubbliche della città di Firenze; e col principio dello stato nuovo, e fine di questo dodicesimo Libro pensava io e desiderava che dovesse essere il fine delle mie fatiche, e il principio in questa ultima vecchiezza, non già di riposarmi, non essendo cosa più contraria alla felicità e beatitudine umana che lo starsi, ma bene di ritornare a’ dilettevoli studi tanto tempo da me tralasciati della santissima Filosofia. Ma poichè nostro Signore Dio per sua infinita bontà e benignità mi concede ancor vita e sanità, e l’eccellentissimo duca Cosimo, non pure vuole che io seguiti, ma mi sollecita, e promette di dovermi dare nuovi libri e nuove scritture così pubbliche come private, onde io possa e debba trarre e l’ordito e il ripieno di questa lunga e non agevolissima tela, io non recuserò, per tesserla in quel modo che saprò e potrò migliore, di mettermi con nuova ed incredibile diligenza a nuova ed incredibile fatica, la quale, per quanta avviso, non doverà esser disutile, perciocchè si conoscerà manifestamente ne’ libri che seguiranno, quanto sia diverse un reggimento licenzioso e confuso, ed un tirannico e violento, da quello d’un giusto e legittimo principe.”

death. Varchi wrote the poems well after July 1537, when he was attempting to regain employment with the Strozzi family.⁷² Although the poems could be seen as a pragmatic attempt to secure patronage, the language used to celebrate Lorenzino and mourn his punishment by the Florentine republic demonstrates that the future historian had more than just a passing or practical interest in the composition of the poems.

Although the set of eleven Latin poems in *Carte Strozziiane* volume 95 are not signed by Varchi or yet found elsewhere, we can be fairly certain that the historian composed them and that they were passed down in the Strozzi family. Varchi admits to writing some poems celebrating the murder of Alessandro as an act of tyrannicide, and lauding the assassin as “the New Tuscan Brutus,” in his own *Storia fiorentina*; both subjects are covered extensively in the *Carte Strozziiane* poems.⁷³ An attribution to Varchi is made on the first page of the poems in a different hand than that of the poems’ copyist.⁷⁴ The pages on which the *Carte strozziane* poems are written are smaller than those of the surrounding pages, and covered by a blank sheet of paper preceding the first poem and following the last poem that has served to protect the text from wear or damage from either the elements or the facing pages. Whereas some sheets of paper in the volume exhibit significant wear, the Varchi poems are in pristine condition (fig. 2.6). It is possible that these are original poems sent by Varchi to the Strozzi family, although it is unlikely that that would have been sent by courier. The pages bear no sign of having been folded or sent, and no letter from Varchi to the Strozzi presenting them appears in the volume. The size of the paper on which the poems are written is also significant for suggesting their origin: whereas

⁷² Samuels, “Benedetto Varchi and Sixteenth-Century Florentine Humanism,” 148.

⁷³ Benedetto Varchi, *Storia fiorentina* (Colonia: Pietro Martello, 1721), 603-4: “...onde molti, e tra questi Benedetto Varchi, molto più che nessun altro, composero, e volgarmente, e latinamente molti versi così in lode, e commendazione del TIRANNICIDA, e del nuovo BRUTO TOSCANO, che con tali nomi si chiamava in quel principio Lorenzo, come in biasimo, e vituperio del Duca Alessandro, e talóra del Signor Cosimo...”

⁷⁴ ASF, *Carte Strozziiane* (CS), prima serie, 95, 119r: “Di M. Benedetto Varchi.”

letters in the volume and others appear to have been sent on larger paper, these poems are copied on smaller paper, as if they were intended to be tucked into a book or hiding place for safekeeping. The hand that copied the poems is exceptionally fine and clear, with even lines of text and no visible corrections. The care with which the poems were preserved and the quality of the copying suggests that this set of poems may have been a keepsake with special meaning for the owner. It is possible that the poems bound in the *Carte strozziane* came from Varchi's papers, yet given that Carlo was a member of the Strozzi family, it is more likely that the poems were handed down among the Strozzi until they came to rest in Carlo's library.

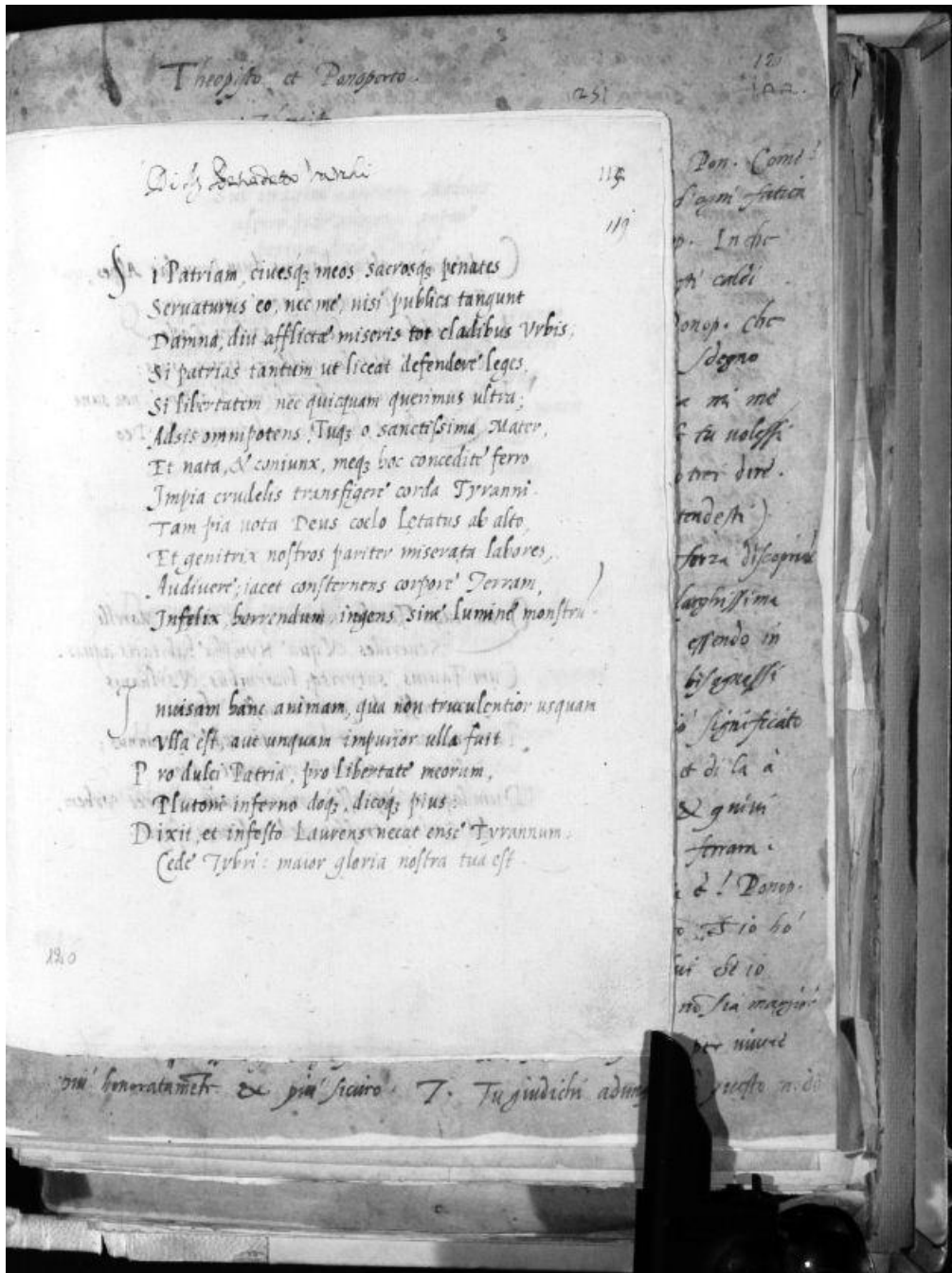


Figure 2.6: The first page of the Varchi Latin poems in the Carte strozziane, demonstrating the small size of the paper and, in contrast to its clarity, the wear exhibited by a nearby document. (Photograph of folio 119r in Carte Strozziiane, series one, vol 95.)

The eleven Latin poems pertain to the events following Duke Alessandro's assassination.

The first four poems and final epitaph concern the assassin, Lorenzino de' Medici.⁷⁵ The first poem narrates the saga of Alessandro's assassination as though Lorenzino is a new Aeneas. The mythical Lorenzino demands of the gods, "you grant me this sword/to transfix the cruel unpatriotic hearts (or spirits) of the Tyrant," the tyrant being Duke Alessandro.⁷⁶ After Lorenzino wielded the sword, "the unfortunate, horrible, immoderate monster lies dead on the ground, the body without the light of life."⁷⁷ Varchi depicts Duke Alessandro in an extremely unfavorable light, as a detestable monster slain by the heroic Lorenzino. The adjectives that Varchi chooses, most notably "immoderate," align with his criticisms of Duke Alessandro's sexual conduct, seen in his *Storia fiorentina* and analyzed in chapter one. In the aftermath of the assassination, Varchi's Pluto tells Lorenzino, "Leave from Tiber: our greater glory is you," after which Lorenzino crosses the Alps.⁷⁸ The poet requests, "grant that rested Lorenzo flies through the high Alps, he swiftly travels the brief journey in winter."⁷⁹ Varchi transforms Lorenzino's sudden flight from Florence after assassinating Alessandro, criticized and questioned by his supporters and enemies alike, into a valorous mission set upon him by the gods by having Pluto give Lorenzino the order to flee and by Varchi requesting divine assistance for him. Varchi's poems treat the assassin Lorenzino as a heroic figure with a divine mission to slay the monstrous tyrant, Duke Alessandro.

In the second poem about Lorenzino de' Medici, Varchi alludes to the *pittura infamante*, or defaming painting, of him commissioned by Duke Cosimo I's government. Florentine

⁷⁵ The remaining poems concern Piero di Filippo Strozzi (numbers 5-8); Giuliano de' Medici, brother of Lorenzino (number 9); and Maria Soderini, mother of Lorenzino de' Medici (number 10).

⁷⁶ ASF, CS, prima serie, 95, 119r: "Adsis omnipotens, Tuque o sanctissima Mater,/Et nata, quem coniunx, meque hoc concedite ferro/Impia crudelis transfigere corda Tyranni"

⁷⁷ ASF, CS, prima serie, 95, 119r: "iacet consternens corpore Terram,/Infelix horrendum, ingens, sine lumine monstrum."

⁷⁸ ASF, CS, prima serie, 95, 119r: "Dixit, et infesto Laurens necat ense Tyrannum:/Cede Tybri: maior gloria nostra tua est."

⁷⁹ ASF, CS, prima serie, 95, 119v: "Cede recens altis Laurus dum pervolat Alpes,/Et celer astrictum frigore currit iter."

governments during the Renaissance commissioned a number of *pitture infamanti* to disgrace upper class male bandits, escaped traitors, and debtors who could not be brought to justice, but who warranted some form of punishment. The Florentine government officially commissioned artists to paint the *pitture infamanti* on government buildings, including the *Stinche* prison. The *pittura infamante* served as an effective punishment because of the incredible importance of one's fame, honor, and reputation in Renaissance Italy. Appearing in a *pittura infamante* was a source of incredible shame for Florentine exiles; for example, the successful negotiation of a peace treaty in the 15th century depended on the "depainting," or removal from a *pittura infamante*, of an Archbishop. The paintings also served the pedagogical purpose of providing citizens with examples of bad behavior and its severe punishment. The paintings typically showed the condemned person or persons hanging from a rope by one foot, an extremely shameful pose—although the reasons this particular pose caused so much consternation for those depicted is not entirely clear (see fig. 2.7). In 1537, the government of Cosimo I ordered a *pittura infamante* of Lorenzino de' Medici for his assassination of Duke Alessandro, the last defaming painting in Renaissance Florence.⁸⁰ Varchi's second poem from the *Carte strozziane* volume describes the humiliating *pittura infamante* of Lorenzino.

⁸⁰ Samuel Y. Edgerton, *Pictures and Punishment: Art and Criminal Prosecution During the Florentine Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 71-72, 109, 123.



Figure 2.7: A sketch for a *pittura infamante* by Andrea del Sarto.

In the second poem of the collection, Varchi imagines displaying his verses to counter the effects of Lorenzino’s *pittura infamante*. Varchi sees the second poem, “Under the painted image of Lorenzo de’ Medici having been hanged up by one foot above the gate of the citadel of Florence.”⁸¹ In a poem that breaks free from the classical tropes used in the first poem, Varchi laments, “Although he restored the fatherland by having killed the young and monstrous tyrant...Lorenzo is glorified by such an image.”⁸² A theme in all five of Varchi’s poems about

⁸¹ ASF, CS, prima serie, 95, 120r: “Sub imagine Laurentij Medices/altero pede suspensi supra/portam Arcis Florentie/depicta”

⁸² ASF, CS, prima serie, 95, 120r: “Quod Patriam iuvene occiso, immanique Tyranno,/Ciuibus ab nimium ingratis, populoque timenti/Restituit; tali decoratur imagine Laurus.”

Lorenzino is contrast between the glory that he should have received and the dishonor that was heaped upon him by his fellow citizens and Duke Cosimo I's government. Not only did Lorenzino fail to win the honor he so richly deserved for having been the one citizen to step forward and slay the monster, but he was also subjected to the worst *in absentia* punishments Florence could inflict. After expressing anguish at Lorenzino's defaming painting, Varchi protests the destruction of Lorenzino's house, the result of a *damnatio memoriae*, or condemnation of memory, carried out by Florentine citizens and soldiers.⁸³ Although Lorenzino's house was always open to the good men, Varchi claims, "the middle of the house had been razed and had been made passable" in retribution for the assassination.⁸⁴ Varchi refers to the *damnatio memoriae* of Lorenzino in his *Storia fiorentina*, as well, reporting that Lorenzo's house had a thoroughfare cut through it,⁸⁵ although a nineteenth-century historian states that Varchi's claim of an actual road called the "Passage of the Traitor" [*chiasso del traditore*] running through the house contradicts every other account of the house's destruction.⁸⁶ The unique overlap of very specific and apparently false information demonstrates the extent to which Varchi relied on his own memory and interpretation of past events to write the *Storia fiorentina* years later.

In the third poem of the set, Varchi imagines a positive commemoration for Lorenzino, where he would be given glory and honor. Just as Boccaccio lamented that Dante had been exiled from his fatherland instead of winning lasting memory in statues and gold tablets, Varchi

⁸³ The third chapter treats the subject of *damnatio memoriae* in depth, including analysis of the practice of house razing in ancient Greece and Rome, and Renaissance Florence.

⁸⁴ ASF, CS, prima serie, 95, 120r: "Diruta quod media est Domus haec, quem peruia facta,/Que patuit populo semper aperta bonis;/Ne mirere Hospes, iuuenem hac, seuumque Tyrannum/Stravit humi ferro, consilioque puer;/Hac illud gestum est semper memorabile factum,/Cui par nulla unquam secla tulere prius:/Nulla ferent posthac, redeat nisi perfidus ille/A stygia, rursus sic periturus, aqua."

⁸⁵ Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 612: "...come traditore della patria dopo avergli tagliato dal tetto a fondamenti sedici braccia della sua casa, e fattovi una via, che si dovesse chiamare il chiasso del traditore..."

⁸⁶ G. O. Corazzini, "Il Chiasso del Traditore et la casa di Lorenzino de' Medici," *Miscellanea Fiorentina di Erudizione e Storia* I, no. 12 (1886), 177-183.

seems to particularly protest Lorenzino's lack of tangible glorification by his fellow citizens, making imaginary monuments for him on paper instead. He conjures a statue of Lorenzino, no doubt in Florence, and writes an elegant inscription: "Because he restored, alone of the people, the liberty of the fatherland and the fatherland of the tyrant by having murdered [the tyrant]."⁸⁷ Missing from my translation is the word "vi," which is an adjective meaning "power" or "force" that could modify either the first "fatherland" or "people" or both. I chose not to translate the word because it could also refer to the number six, which Varchi posits had special significance for Duke Alessandro's assassination. In the *Storia fiorentina*, Varchi records that some people noted that Lorenzino assassinated Alessandro in 1536 (in the Florentine-style dating), Alessandro was 26 years old, it was the sixth day of the month, the sixth hour of the night, he died after six stabs, and he had reigned six years.⁸⁸ Given the association of the number six with evil in the Book of Revelations, Varchi and his sources may have wanted to tie Alessandro's assassination and Alessandro himself to mystical depictions of evil in the course of rehabilitating Lorenzino's memory.

The final poem about Lorenzino describes Duke Alessandro as a morally foul and cruel tyrant. The poems by Varchi end with an epigraph written in the style used to commemorate ancient Roman heroes. After identifying Lorenzino as the subject of the poem, Varchi lauds him for "having freed the fatherland from the morally foul and most savage tyrant by reason and by arms [*consilio et armis*]."⁸⁹ Although Varchi was not a dedicated Savonarolan like Nardi, for one of the two adjectives describing the tyrant, Varchi uses the word *impuro*, or "impure, foul, or morally foul." The selection of this word demonstrates again the significance of Duke

⁸⁷ ASF, CS, prima serie, 95, 120v: "Sub statua ipsius/Quod libertatem Patriae, Patriamque Tyranno/Vi ceso, solus restituit populo."

⁸⁸ Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 593: "

⁸⁹ ASF, CS, prima serie, 95, 123v: "LAVRENTIO MEDICE/PETRIFRANCISCI IVNIORIS .F. OB/PATRIAM/AB IMPVRO, ET TRVCVLEN =/TISSIMO TYRANNO/CONSILIO ET ARMIS/LIBERATAM/S.P.Q.F./P."

Alessandro's purported sexual behavior for the rejection of his rule. The other adjective, *truculentissimo*, the superlative of *truculentus*, means savage or cruel. The three words Varchi uses in Lorenzino's epitaph to describe Duke Alessandro—tyrant, morally foul, and exceedingly cruel—align with the complaints made against Duke Alessandro by writers including Varchi in his *Storia fiorentina*, discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation.

Varchi uses a number of allusions to Rome in the final poem in order to honor Lorenzino. He describes Lorenzino freeing the fatherland “by reason and by arms,” a common Latin expression very much in keeping with the classical, and thereby Renaissance, ideal of the educated man of action. The poem's penultimate line, “S.P.Q.F.,” is the acronym for the Senate and Florentine people, which was used by other Renaissance writers attempting to depict Florence as the inheritor of Rome's republican mantle. The acronym is modeled on “S.P.Q.R.,” denoting the Senate and Roman people of classical antiquity. Varchi may have had Julius Caesar's assassin Brutus in mind when he composed the epigram—a comparison also made by Michelangelo, who sculpted a bust of Brutus to commemorate Duke Alessandro's murder.⁹⁰ The use of the acronym S.P.Q.F. could also refer to the numerous public plaques erected in classical antiquity by the Senate and Roman people to commemorate heroes. The final poem is copied in the lapidary style (see fig. 2.8), which means that it was written and copied as though carved in stone and displayed publicly, although it may have never actually been carved or displayed.⁹¹ The final poem demonstrates not only hatred of Duke Alessandro and support for Lorenzino, but awareness of ancient strategies for heroic commemoration.

1

LAVRENTIO MEDICE

⁹⁰ Piccolomini, *The Brutus Revival*, 38.

⁹¹ Iiro Kajanto, “On Lapidary Style in Epigraphy and Literature in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 43 (1994): 150. See chapter three for additional information about the lapidary style.

2 PETRIFRANCISCI IVNIORIS .F. OB
3 PATRIAM
4 AB IMPVRO, ET TRVCVLEN =
5 TISSIMO TYRANNO
6 CONSILO ET ARMIS
7 LIBERATAM
8 S.P.Q.F.
9 .P.

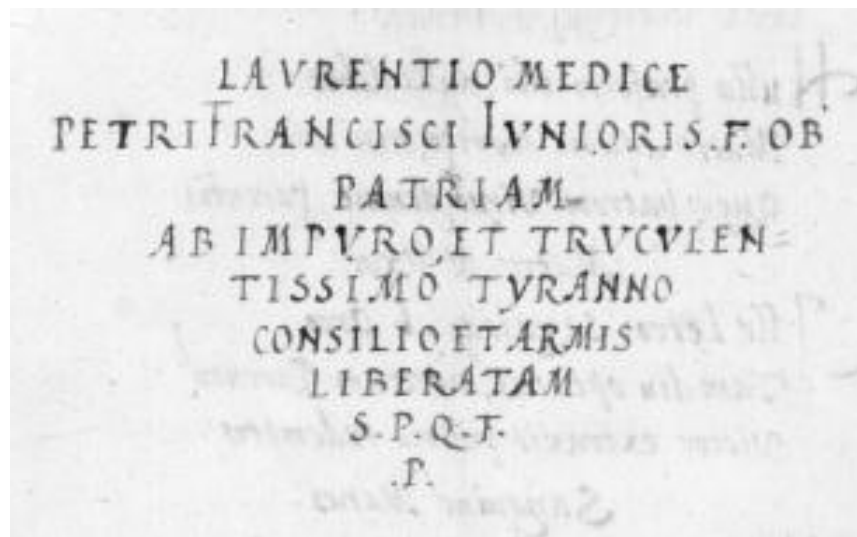


Figure 2.8: An epitaph for Lorenzino de' Medici, written in the lapidary style. (Photograph of folio 123v in Carte Stroziane, series one, volume 95, Archivio di Stato di Firenze.)

Varchi's poems on Duke Alessandro's assassination and the dishonoring of Lorenzino allow a glimpse into the earlier thoughts of one of the historians most often cited in current scholarship on Duke Alessandro and his rule. While Varchi personally had less at stake than Nardi in the commemoration of the *fuorusciti* cause, he seems to have expressed genuine distress at the infamy heaped on Lorenzino, as well as disgust at Duke Alessandro. Varchi's statements about

Duke Alessandro and Lorenzino in the poems resemble what he would later write in his *Storia fiorentina*, as seen in chapter one.

CONCLUSION

The histories of Benedetto Varchi and Jacopo Nardi grievously damaged Duke Alessandro de' Medici's posthumous reputation. Jacopo Nardi, a life-long politician, saw fit to encourage his friend Varchi to alter details of the exiles' campaign in the 1530s. And Benedetto Varchi, while less directly involved in Florentine politics, was either willing to adjust his views to suit those of his employers or he harbored a long-time hatred of Duke Alessandro. We have long known that historians, even those celebrated for their objectivity,⁹² write from their own perspective. Yet the gross undermining of Duke Alessandro's reputation results from more than the kinds of bias typical of historical writing, and rather from conspiracies launched by contemporary historians, politicians, and Medici Dukes. The reason the historical depictions by Nardi and Varchi have dominated our knowledge of Duke Alessandro is because few original primary sources from the rule of Duke Alessandro still exist in the Florentine archive. The fourth chapter picks up this thread and examines how the construction of the Florentine archives minimized Duke Alessandro's rule.

⁹² Moyer, "Without Passion or Partisanship," 49.

Chapter Three: The *damnatio memoriae* of Alessandro de' Medici

When Alessandro de' Medici came to power, he destroyed objects and images symbolic of the republican government he was intent on replacing. When he was assassinated, in turn, his own memory fell prey to his enemies. These acts of *damnatio memoriae*, or condemnation of memory, perpetrated on the relics of the dead Alessandro belong to a long tradition of such retaliatory activity that goes back to antiquity and flourished during the Renaissance, when the cult of personal fame advanced by the humanists made the destruction of reputation an even more potent form of punishment. This chapter begins with overviews of the ancient practice of *damnatio memoriae*, and the condemnation of memory in Renaissance Italy until 1530. The chapter then closely examines the condemnation of memory of the Duke of Athens in fourteenth century Florence. I conclude with sections on how Duke Alessandro erased memory of the previous republic, to the outrage of Florentine citizens, and how anonymous Florentines condemned Duke Alessandro's memory by altering records and objects. In the sum, these discussions demonstrate that enemies of Duke Alessandro used the well-known practice of *damnatio memoriae* to defame him after his assassination in 1537, effectively condemning Alessandro de' Medici to the ranks of historical villains – where recent historians have left him, uncritically accepting the judgment of those who had the power to alter the narrative and obliterate the truth.

Scholars have overlooked the posthumous *damnatio memoriae* suffered by Duke Alessandro de' Medici, as they have failed to recognize how frequently Renaissance cultural

leaders and regimes wielded the tool of condemnation of memory. The first book-length examination of the history of *damnatio memoriae* in the Renaissance appeared as a volume of conference proceedings published in late 2010.¹ Before that, the most developed discussion of Renaissance *damnatio memoriae* occupies two pages of art historian Samuel Y. Edgerton's 1985 study of *pitture infamanti*, or defaming paintings, in the Florentine Renaissance.² While art historians have examined examples of destroyed and manipulated paintings and statues,³ since condemnation of memory also resulted in altered and erased laws, buildings, wills, and literary sources, *damnatio memoriae* becomes a necessary topic also for historians. Although *damnatio memoriae* often coincided with banishment in early Renaissance Florence, scholars writing about exile do not significantly address memory in their work.⁴ Historians and art historians studying ancient Rome, in contrast, have published extensively and articles on *damnatio memoriae* in recent years.⁵ Their refined and rigorous methodology is adopted here to discuss condemnation of memory in the Renaissance.

¹ I. Lori Sanfilippo and A. Rigoni, eds., *Condannare l'oblio: pratiche della Damnatio memoriae nel Medioevo* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 2010). The volume contains a number of fine essays, yet the book's impact is limited by the fact that the authors discuss isolated cases of *damnatio memoriae* in many different places and in many different centuries without a systematic overview that allows comparisons of cases or larger conclusions to be drawn from the practice. Recognizing instances of *damnatio memoriae* in the Middle Ages and Renaissance is not new; historians and art historians have been briefly mentioning cases in footnotes and examining single examples in articles for some time now—for examples see footnote 3 below. Missing from the book and from the literature in general is an overview that sets out what constituted *damnatio memoriae*, what people in the Middle Ages and Renaissance themselves said about *damnatio memoriae*, who merited punishment by *damnatio memoriae*, who wielded *damnatio memoriae* punishments, and what *damnatio memoriae* was thought to accomplish. This chapter provides the necessary overview so that discussion of *damnatio memoriae* can hopefully progress beyond pointing out cases.

² Edgerton, *Pictures and Punishment*, 68-9.

³ Wendy J. Wegener, "'That the Practice of Arms is Most Excellent Declare the Statues of Valiant Men:' the Luccan War and Florentine Political Ideology in Paintings by Uccello and Castagno," *Renaissance Studies* 7, no. 2 (1993): 159; Gabrielle Langdon, "Damnatio Memoriae: Isabella de' Medici Orsini, 'La stella di casa Medici,'" in *Medici Women: Portraits of Power, Love, and Betrayal from the Court of Duke Cosimo I* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 146-170; John T. Paoletti, "Medici Funerary Monuments in the Duomo of Florence during the Fourteenth Century: A Prologue to 'The Early Medici,'" *Renaissance Quarterly* 59 (2006): 1117-63.

⁴ Ricciardelli, *The Politics of Exclusion*.

⁵ Harriet Flower, *The Art of Forgetting: Disgrace and Oblivion in Roman Political Culture* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Charles Hedrick, Jr., *History and Silence: Purge and Rehabilitation of Memory in Late Antiquity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000); Eric R. Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation: Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2004).

Although condemnation of memory in the Renaissance has received little attention, it is topic to which scholars should attend, because the primary sources they use are often, in fact, contaminated: they are the texts and materials that were changed or destroyed by the practice of *damnatio memoriae*. Such manipulation is conspicuous in the case of funeral orations and official portraits, which are self-evidently constructed to praise or blame their subjects, but it is far more widespread and sometimes difficult to recognize. Almost every text, work of art, and tomb from the Renaissance serves as an instrument by which to secure the glory or infamy of its subject, documenting an existence that might otherwise succumb to the natural process of forgetting, and so achieve an earthly form of eternal life. Just as these artifacts were created, so too were they destroyed or manipulated so as to shape the legacy later to be accessed by historians, thus arranging the glorification of heroes, or condemnation of villains, long after their deaths. Historians must be alert to this process, or by repeating the slanders inserted into the historical record by enemies of their subjects, they may wrongfully perpetuate the *damnatio memoriae*.⁶

THE THEORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF *DAMNTIO MEMORIAE*

This chapter uses the term *damnatio memoriae* to discuss memory erasure and manipulation. Romans used the term *damnatio memoriae* for a very specific legal punishment inflicted in only a few instances, yet modern scholars incorrectly expanded the term until Friedrich Vittinghoff, German historian of the Roman Empire, exposed the inaccuracies in 1936.⁷ Historians writing long after the ancient period adapted the Roman legal term *damnatio memoriae* to more generally describe punishments employed by the Romans to limit, manipulate,

⁶ Italian scholars have recently begun rehabilitating the memory of Lucrezia Borgia, for example, once condemned by the *pratiche dell'infamia*, or practice of infamy. For information on the defamation and reevaluation of Lucrezia Borgia see Michele Bordin and Paolo Trovato, *Lucrezia Borgia: storia e mito* (Florence: Olschki, 2006), 165-254.

⁷ Friedrich Vittinghoff, *Der Staatsfeind in der römischen Kaiserzeit: Untersuchungen zu "damnatio memoriae"* (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt Verlag, 1936).

or destroy the memory of elite citizens condemned by the community after death.⁸ Although the Romans did not use the term *damnatio memoriae* to mean this wider corpus of punishments, the term has been deemed by scholars to be useful as long as it is understood to imply a loose category analogous to "memory punishment."⁹ But categorizing *damnatio memoriae* as "memory punishments" creates false limits; in many cases, *damnatio memoriae* erasures and manipulations happened without formal sanctions or a legal sentence, and were thus not official punishments. In addition to "memory punishment" being too specific to adequately define *damnatio memoriae* in the Renaissance, the term is also too vague. In the Renaissance, "memory punishment" or "memory manipulation" could include any number of behaviors from razing family palaces after an attempted coup to posthumous slander regarding a neighbor's sexuality.

The razing of homes and towers as a punishment began in the West even before ancient Rome. The Greeks practiced *kataskaphê*, or the razing of houses, walls, and whole cities in Athens, Sparta, Corinth, Syracuse, and Locris during the archaic and classical periods as a punishment for crimes against the state. Other punishments happened concurrent with the razing, including the placement of bronze *stele* commemorating the treason on the site of the razed structure, destruction of tombs and removal of bones, denial of an honorable burial, a curse, a fine, and exile of those condemned who were still living.¹⁰ The ancient Roman Senate or Emperor also ordered the homes of political usurpers razed during the Republic and the Empire. Official house razing happened infrequently during the Roman Republic; sources

⁸ Vittinghoff, *Der Staatsfeind in der römischen Kaiserzeit*; Flower, *The Art of Forgetting*, xix, 5; Hedrick, *History and Silence*, 93-4.

⁹ Hedrick, *History and Silence*, xii.

¹⁰ W. R. Connor, "The Razing of the House in Greek Society," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 115 (1985): 79-85.

identify no more than nine examples of it in nearly five centuries.¹¹ Cicero protested the razing of his house in an oration, *De domo sua* [*On His House*], in which he complained about being treated like an actual traitor and claimed that he felt the eyes of all Rome on the lot where his domicile once stood.¹² In pre-modern Europe, families used their palaces as both shelter for blood kin, servants, apprentices, and illegitimate children, and also as business and political offices, personal fortresses, and symbols of the family's importance. Death masks and other objects necessary to maintaining the family cult were kept in homes, as well. In the rare cases where execution and *damnatio memoriae* happened concurrently in ancient Rome, even high-born citizens and former Emperors could be subjected to the sort of *poena post mortem*, or posthumous bodily punishment, typically reserved for common offenders. While Roman history and literature contains few representations of cannibalism, the murderers of Caligula ate the flesh off the detested emperor's body. After discovered conspiring against Tiberius, executioners forced Sejanus to watch the destruction of his own portraits, then killed him and gave his corpse to crowds, who violated his body for a three-day period. Punishers fed usurper Celsus' corpse to dogs, an insult otherwise only inflicted on Emperors Maximinus Thrax and Maximus.¹³

***DAMNATIO MEMORIAE* IN RENAISSANCE NORTHERN ITALY**

Florentines inflicted condemnations of memory from 1250 to 1530 according to a fairly rigid taxonomy of legal and extra-legal actions that was set by the early Renaissance and based on *damnatio memoriae* described in ancient texts. Despite the similarities, Florentines condemned memory far more often than did the ancient Romans. In the Renaissance, republican

¹¹ Matthew B. Roller, "Demolished Houses, Monumentality, and Memory in Roman Culture," *Classical Antiquity* 29, no. 1 (April 2010): 117-180.

¹² Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Back from Exile: Six Speeches Upon His Return*, trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 80-81.

¹³ Eric R. Varner, "Punishment After Death: Mutilation of Images and Corpse Abuse in Ancient Rome," *Mortality* 6, no. 1 (2001), 55-7.

governments, princes, individual citizens, and crowds performed *damnatio memoriae* on rebellious cities; citizens and their families who were members of a party ousted from power; tyrants, usurpers, and assassins of the prince—all of whom fundamentally threatened the structure and stability of the government and economy; whole religious sects and governments; and disgraced family members of the prince whose infamy and memory threatened his honor. Each of these categories had its own types of punishments, some of which were only performed on one category of offender. For example, crowds sometimes cannibalized tyrants, but not citizens on the wrong side of the Guelf and Ghibelline conflict, to my knowledge. *Damnatio memoriae* served not only as a political tool, but it inspired political change itself. Part of the reason for the swift changes in government control between parties was citizens' desire to avenge past condemnations of memory and inflict *damnatio memoriae* on their enemies, as attested by evidence that recounts strings of back-and-forth condemnations. The following section surveys the razed structures, corpse abuse, cannibalism, depainting, and legal curses that served as the most visible signs of *damnatio memoriae* before Alessandro's rule.

The frequent exchanges of power in Renaissance Florence between the Guelfs and Ghibellines resulted in the razing of many houses. In the twelfth century, Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa's attempt to assert his power in northern Italy met the resistance of the papacy, which caused the formation of parties: the Papal Guelfs and the Imperial Ghibellines. The conflict resulted in many symbolic and practical attacks on buildings. In the middle of the twelfth century, when the Ghibellines gained control of Florence, they discussed razing the entire city, but the Ghibelline leader Farinata degli Uberti supposedly rejected the plan (*Inferno*, X, 91-3). Such a widespread attack on Florence would have not only erased memory of the Guelf party, but the homes and economic base of several prominent Ghibellines, as well. The

Ghibellines instead leveled 103 Guelf palaces, 580 houses, and 85 defensive towers, among many other shops and castles outside the city.¹⁴ Such a widespread attack on Guelf structures not only erased memory, but also the economic base of the party. When the Guelfs returned to power, they convicted the same Uberti family of heresy 19 years after Farinata's death for supposedly denying the immortality of the soul. The surviving document that details the blended civic and church excommunication of Farinata and his wife stipulates that their bodies be disinterred from the family tomb and burned; their wealth confiscated; and their heirs permanently disinherited.¹⁵ According to Villani's chronicle, the *Piazza della Signoria* in Florence is irregularly shaped because the new Signoria palace and piazza were built on the site of the razed Uberti palazzo to ensure that nothing ever be built there again.¹⁶

The Venetian government also razed homes, and did so in such a way that reflected the republic's ties to Byzantium and ancient Greece. Only a few decades after the Guelfs destroyed the Uberti *palazzo*, the Venetian government razed the house of Bajamonte Tiepolo, who had attempted to overthrow the Doge and Grand Council of Venice in 1310. Following Tiepolo's conspiracy, the Venetian government ordered that his house be razed to the ground and a column *d'infamia* erected to mark the spot where it once stood. The column read: "Of Bajamonte had been this ground,/And now through him you know the wickedness of treason/It was placed by

¹⁴ Giovanni Villani, *Cronica di Giovanni Villani* (Florence: Sansone, 1845), 2: 116-118; Dante, *Inferno*, 161; Najemy, *A History of Florence*, 71-2.

¹⁵ Niccolò Ottokar, "La condanna postuma di Farinata degli Uberti," *Studi comunali e fiorentini* 3 (1948), 115-123; Najemy, *A History of Florence*, 33-4; Nicola Carinci, *Farinata degli Uberti nel canto X dell'Inferno dantesco* (Chiavari: Tipografia Artistica L. Colombo, 1935).

¹⁶ Roger J. Crum and John T. Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 89. Crum and Paoletti mention the razing of the Uberti palace again on page 225, and refer to the act as a *damnatio memoriae* unmatched by later punishments on pages 241-2.

the commune so others would know/And by showing to everyone, everyone always knowing.”¹⁷

The column played the double role of dishonoring Tiepolo’s memory and advising citizens to stay loyal to the Venetian government. The Venetians may have learned the practice from their contact with the Byzantines, who retained many practices from the Greeks. In contrast, the Florentines, whose histories indicate that they drew their influences from the ancient Etruscans and Romans, did not erect a column to commemorate the razing of the Uberti palace, but left the bricks scattered on the site of the house to achieve a similar effect. The related, but distinct *damnatio memoriae* attacks on the houses of condemned citizens in Florence and Venice shows how Renaissance cities acted out their founding myths and influences in the creation, destruction, and manipulation of memory.

Sources disagree about whether the Black Guelfs razed Dante Alighieri’s (1265-1321) house in 1302 when they condemned him to exile and confiscated his wealth for his involvement in the White Guelf party.¹⁸ The Guelfs in Florence split into two factions following their decisive defeat of the Ghibellines at Campaldino in 1289: the Black Guelfs, who supported the Pope, and the White Guelfs, who opposed papal influence in the city. Dante served as a White Guelf ambassador to Pope Boniface VIII (1235-1303) in 1301, at the same time that the Black Guelfs entered Florence and forcibly gained control. Boniface allowed the other delegates to return to Florence, but strongly implied that Dante should stay at his court rather than return to fight the punishment of exile and confiscation of his goods and property in Florence. Dante refused several offers sent to him by the new government that would have allowed him to return to Florence, but surrender his honor in the process. After some time had passed, the government

¹⁷ Quoted in Pompeo Molmenti, *Venice*, trans. Horatio F. Brown, part I, vol. I (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1906), 86 n. 1: “Di Bajamonte fo questo tereno,/E mo per lo so iniquo tradimenlo/Se posto in Chomun per Altrui spavento/E per mostrar a tutti sempre seno.”

¹⁸ Najemy, *A History of Florence*, 92.

converted Dante's temporary sentence of banishment to a permanent punishment of exile, with the threat that if he were to return to the city, he would be burned alive for his crimes. Dante's first biographer, Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375), lamented the punishment in his *Trattatello in laude di Dante* (1357), bemoaning, "[i]n place of reward" Dante received "injustice and furious condemnation, perpetual banishment and alienation of [his] paternal estate, and, if that could have been accomplished, the staining of [his] most glorious fame with false accusations."¹⁹ The quote by Boccaccio shows that exile and the confiscation of wealth were understood to attack fame, which I argue makes them legitimate condemnations of memory, even when the terms *damnatio memoriae* or the Tuscan *memoria dannata* were not mentioned. Unlike Machiavelli,²⁰ Boccaccio does not mention that Dante's house was razed, but the law passed by the Black Guelph government of Florence states that *omnia bona*, or all the goods, of Dante would be destroyed if he did not pay the fine—which Dante refused to do.²¹

In the wake of his own *damnatio memoriae*, Dante Alighieri lived in exile and constructed an imagined world of the dead in the *Divine Comedy* into which he damned his enemy, Pope Boniface VIII. In the circle of hell for those who practiced simony, or paying for holy sacraments and church positions, the similarly-damned Pope Nicholas III mistook Dante for Pope Boniface, come earlier than expected to assume his position upside down and buried in a

¹⁹ Boccaccio, *Life of Dante*, 5-6.

²⁰ Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, trans. Laura F. Banfield and Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 73.

²¹ *Il libro del Chiodo*, 170. "...Palmerium, Dante, Orlanduccium et Lippum...quod si non solverint condempnationem infra tertiam diem a die sententie computandam omnia bona talis non solventis publicentur, vastentur et destruantur et vastata et destructa remaneant in comuni, et si solverint condempnationem predictam ipsi vel ipsorum aliquis nichilominus stare debeat extra provinciam Tuscie ad confines duobus annis, et ut predictorum domini Palmerii, Dante, Lippi et Orlanducci propterea eorum nomina fiat memoria // scribantur in stat(uto) populi et tanquam falsarii et baracterii nullo tempore possint habere aliquod offitium vel benefitium pro comuni vel a comuni Florentie in civitate, comitatu vel districtu vel alibi, sive condempnationem solverint sive non, in hiis scriptis sententialiter condempnamus, computato bampno in condempnatione presenti."

hole with his feet exposed and on fire for his sins (*Inferno*, XIX, 49-63).²² While Dante lost the power to officially condemn his enemies to exile and raze their houses when the White Guelfs lost control of Florence, he condemned the memory of Boniface VIII, whom he called “the prince of the new Pharisees,” in *The Divine Comedy* by creating a new and disgraceful memory of him in literature (*Inferno*, XXVII, 85).²³ Later in the *Inferno*, Dante accused Boniface of promising indulgences to the soldiers who razed the town of Palestrina to the ground and salted its earth, an ancient curse, yet another example of a *damnatio memoriae* (*Inferno*, XXVII, 101-102).²⁴ The chronicler Giovanni Villani (1280-1348) confirms that Pope Boniface ordered the Colonna family’s town of “Pilestrino” razed, among others.²⁵ The destruction of Palestrina appears to hearken back to Biblical punishments, as well as Rome’s legendary razing of Carthage and purported salting of its land in 146 B.C.E. The memory of Pope Boniface VIII faced an additional posthumous attack when the newly-created Avignon papacy held a trial in 1310-1311 to determine if his rule would be subject to an official *damnatio memoriae*. According to Villani, “if the Church had condemned the memory [*condannata la memoria*] of Pope Boniface, that which he had done would have been made null and void,” although the council did not find him guilty.²⁶ The fourteenth-century historian Villani’s use of the term *condannata la memoria* suggests that he was familiar with at least an ecclesiastical concept of memory condemnation, possibly analogous to excommunication for those outside the Church hierarchy.²⁷

²² Dante, *Inferno*, 242.

²³ Dante, *Inferno*, 318.

²⁴ Dante, *Inferno*, 318.

²⁵ Villani, *Cronica*, 2:28.

²⁶ Villani, *Cronica*, 2:135. “...se la Chiesa avesse condannata la memoria di papa Bonifazio, ciò ch'aveva fatto era casso e annullato...”

²⁷ The relationship between *damnatio memoriae* and excommunication has been noted by scholars of memory. See Harald Weinrich, *Lethé: The Art and Critique of Forgetting* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 33; Jacques Le

The *damnatio memoriae* that Lorenzo de' Medici (1449-1492) ordered on the Pazzi family in 1478 included "exemplary" corpse abuse of the type once practiced on hated emperors in antiquity.²⁸ The Pazzi orchestrated an assassination attempt on the Medici leaders in the cathedral of Florence on April 26, 1478, that resulted in Giuliano de' Medici's death and Lorenzo's near escape with his life.²⁹ As Lorenzo tended to his wounds, he ordered the deaths of scores of men, seeking to do more than kill his enemies: he ordered the "ruin of the Pazzi."³⁰ Crowds shouting in support of the Medici attacked the bodies of the worst offenders, "and the limbs of the dead were seen fixed on the points of weapons or being dragged about the city, and everyone pursued the Pazzi with words full of anger and deeds full of cruelty."³¹ So many plotters were executed and dismembered that "the streets were filled with the parts of men."³²

Machiavelli's description of the symbolic, multi-stage burial of Jacopo de' Pazzi in retribution for his sons' plotting indicates that exemplary corpse abuse was thoughtfully performed and intended to shock future generations, in order to ensure the continued posthumous defamation of the worst criminals. Machiavelli noted, "that this event might not be lacking in any extraordinary example, Messer Jacopo [de' Pazzi, the paterfamilias] was entombed first in the sepulcher of his ancestors, then dragged from there as excommunicated, and buried along the walls of the city." From there he was "dug up again, he was dragged naked through the whole city by the noose with which he had been hanged." After that, "since no place

Goff, *History and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 73.

²⁸ Varner, "Punishment After Death," 55-7.

²⁹ Harold Acton, *The Pazzi Conspiracy: The Plot Against the Medici* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979); Martines, *April Blood*; Niccolò Machiavelli, *La congiura dei Pazzi e l'età di Lorenzo il Magnifico: libro VIII delle Istorie fiorentine*, ed. Olga Mugnaini (Florence: Nerbini, 2009).

³⁰ Jacopo Nardi, "Breve discorso fatto in Vinegia dopo la morte di papa Clemente VII," in *Vita di Antonio Giacomini*, 209-210. "Il prefato Lorenzo fu capo dello stato con maggior' autorità che alcuno de' suoi passati, perché, mediante la morte del suo fratello emulo della sua grandezza e per la rovina de' Pazzi ed altri nobili, rimase libero più che mai da ogni opposizione de' grandi cittadini a maggiore altezza."

³¹ Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, 326.

³² Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, 327.

on land had been found for his tomb, he was thrown, by the same ones who had dragged him, into the Arno River, whose waters were then at their highest.³³ This punishment could be viewed as brutal and primitive, but it was instead a sophisticated condemnation of Pazzi memory drawing on several thousand years of culture. The crowd initially took Jacopo de' Pazzi's body down from where it hanged and placed him in the tomb of his ancestors, as if to allow him an honorable Christian burial. But they seem to have done this precisely to drag his corpse back out to pantomime the Church's excommunication practices, which involved disinterring bodies and burying them outside the sacred civic and religious space. After performing a pseudo-Catholic damnation, the crowd then reenacted the *poena post mortem* of disgraced Romans such as the Emperor Commodus, who the people and senate of Rome demanded to be dragged by a hook like a common criminal after his death by poison and strangling.³⁴ Finally, the crowd threw the body of Jacopo de' Pazzi into the Arno river, as had crowds who wished to symbolically cleanse Rome of the portraits, statues, and corpses of hated Emperors.

Crowds likewise subjected Savonarola to a type of corpse abuse that combined an actual Catholic excommunication with the civic *damnatio memoriae*.³⁵ Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498), a Dominican friar eventually based at the Church of San Marco in Florence, gained considerable influence by preaching his prophetic visions for the coming last days. Following the death of Lorenzo de' Medici in 1492 and the invasion of Italy by French King Charles VIII in 1494, the Florentines overthrew the government led by Lorenzo's son Piero and acknowledged Savonarola as the leader and priest of the republic. In 1497, Savonarola himself threatened to

³³ Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, 326-7.

³⁴ David Magie, ed., *The Scriptores historiae Augustae* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 305-313.

³⁵ For details of Savonarola's execution see Martines, *Fire in the City*, 265-281; Roberto Ridolfi, *The Life of Girolamo Savonarola* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976), 269-272; Dall'Aglio, *Savonarola and Savonarolism*, 57-67.

raze the Strozzi, Nerli, Valori, and Giugni palaces for their opposition to his regime.³⁶ In the same year, Savonarola and his supporters organized the famous Bonfire of the Vanities, in which items associated with moral laxity were burned in the *piazza della Signoria*, itself created by the *damnatio memoriae* of the Uberti. Among the items burned were books, paintings, cosmetics, and fine clothing. Pope Alexander VI (1431-1503, r. 1492-1503) ordered Savonarola's excommunication and arrest in the same year. Following long periods of torture, on the 23rd of May 1498, Savonarola was slowly burned alive for heresy on the spot where he had once burned books and criminals. According to Jacopo Nardi, Savonarola was "publicly degraded, hanged and burned in the *piazza*, and the ashes [were] thrown in the Arno."³⁷ Scholars have typically identified the disposal of Savonarola's ashes in the Arno River as a measure intended to prevent his followers from collecting relics around which a cult might survive.³⁸ In this case, I argue that the civic ritual of *damnatio memoriae* assisted in the practical concerns of the Church, and the two practices of civic condemnation of memory and Church excommunication mutually reinforced each other to punish Savonarola for his usurpation of Church and government power.

Reports of cannibalism and corpse abuse from elsewhere in Italy show that crowds most often practiced cannibalism and *poena post mortem* when rejecting tyrannical lords and assassins of accepted and established princes, which accounts for its absence from the many republican conflicts in Florence. In April 1488, the Orsi brothers murdered tyrannical Count Girolamo Riario (1443-1488) in Forlì's government palace and threw his naked body down into the central

³⁶ Nardi, *Istorie della città di Firenze*, 1:110.

³⁷ Nardi, "Breve discorso," 222. "...a dì 23 di Maggio 1498, essendo stati pubblicamente digradati, furno impiccati ed arsi sulla piazza, e la cenere gettata [this is correct] in Arno."

³⁸ Throwing remains of religious figures into bodies of water to prevent the collection of relics appears to have been fairly standard practice. See Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (New York: Knopf, 1981), 13. Concerning the effect of scattering Joan of Arc's ashes in the Seine: "When the body of Joan of Arc was burned and her ashes gathered up and scattered into the first reaches of the Seine estuary at Rouen on 30 May 1431, its lineaments were blotted from the collective memory."

square, where crowds abused it for several days. Following Riario's assassination, the mood quickly turned and the assassins escaped the city, leaving their father Andrea to witness the rapid leveling of his house by 400 men before being dragged facedown by a horse around the public square.³⁹ Soldiers then quartered the elderly Orsi, spilled his entrails in the piazza, and one reportedly cut out the man's heart and bit into it.⁴⁰ What seems like the product of momentary rage was actually an extreme *damnatio memoriae* attack in line with ancient Greek and Roman punishments, intended to surpass the *poena post mortem* inflicted in Count Riario.

In Rome, turning against the rule of the former tribune crowds captured Cola di Rienzo (1313-1354) as he tried to flee the city in disguise.⁴¹ An anonymous Roman commented that angry citizens punctured Rienzo's body with so many holes from swords and other instruments that it was like a sieve, with the perpetrators joking that they were at "the ceremony of remission of sins." Although his head and part of a thigh was missing, the crowd jested as Rienzo hanged by his feet that he "was so fat that he seemed like a big buffalo or cow in the slaughterhouse." After two days, Rienzo was dragged to the Jewish quarter, where "he was burned and reduced to ashes; not a bit remained."⁴² In 1476, crowds also hanged by one foot the body of Andrea Lampugnani, one of the men who attempted to assassinate the Duke of Milan, Galeazzo Maria Sforza. Youths dragged Lampugnani through the streets, cut his body to bits, "with their teeth bit

³⁹ Martines, *April Blood*, 11.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ For more on Cola di Rienzo see Andreas Rehberg and Anna Modigliani, *Cola di Rienzo e il commune di Roma*, 2 vol. (Rome: RR Inedita, 2004); Ronald G. Musto, *Apocalypse in Rome: Cola di Rienzo and the Politics of the New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Amanda Collins, *Greater than Emperor: Cola di Rienzo (ca. 1313-54) and the World of Fourteenth-Century Rome* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002); Petrarch, *The Revolution of Cola di Rienzo*, trans. Mario Emilio Cosenza, ed. Ronald G. Musto (New York: Italica Press, 1996).

⁴² Anonymous, "La Vita di Cola di Rienzo," in *Cronica*, ed. Giuseppe Porta (Milan: Adelphi, 1981), 193-8, translated and cited in Sergio Bertelli, *The King's Body* (University Park, Penn.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 238-9.

heart and hands,” and finally fed his remains to pigs.⁴³ Although extreme acts of violence happened throughout Italy during the Renaissance, they seem to have been reserved for the people who most threatened cherished forms of government and the stability of the state.

Evidence from Venice and Siena shows that another *damnatio memoriae* strategy, “depainting,” or painting people out of portraits, very publicly condemned traitors and tyrants by using eye-catching azurite paint to draw attention to erasures. To punish the doge Marin Falier, who had staged a coup to name himself Prince of Venice in 1355, a court consisting of 36 government officials, including the Council of Ten, ordered the decapitation of Falier on the staircase of the ducal palace, mutilated his body, and buried him without honors. In 1366—eleven years after the conspiracy—the Council of Ten decreed that his portrait in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio be painted over specifically with azurite paint.⁴⁴ In addition to painting Falier out of the portrait, the Council of Ten ordered that a phrase in Latin stating, “In this place is the site where Marin Falier was decapitated for the crime of treason,” explain his absence from the portraits of doges in the Great Council Hall.⁴⁵ In Siena’s Palazzo Pubblico, the fresco of Guidoriccio da Fogliano contains a figure whose image was initially defaced by objects thrown against it, and then also covered by a layer of azurite paint.⁴⁶ This suggests that Renaissance Italians covered disgraced figures with azurite paint for a reason. Although ultramarine paint cost more at the time, azurite was the most important blue pigment in the medieval period. Viewers of Falier’s infamous and memorable portrait now see a coat of black paint in the shape

⁴³ Gabriel Paverus Fontana, *Gabrielis paueri fontanae Placentini de uita et obitu Galeaz Mariae Sfortiae Vicecomitis Mediolani ducis Quinti* (Milan, n.p., 1476) translated and cited in Bertelli, *The King’s Body*, 239-40.

⁴⁴ Molmenti, *Venice*, 1:86.

⁴⁵ Ibid. “1366 (Cons. X). “Die XVI mensis decembris. Capta. Quod figura ser Marini Faletro posita in Sala nova Maioris Consilii amoveatur in totum et remaneat locus vacuus in colore azuro, et in campo scribantur litere albe, ‘Hic fuit locus Ser Marini Faletro decapitate pro crimine prodicionis.’”

⁴⁶ Michael Mallory and Gordon Moran, “New Evidence Concerning ‘Guidoriccio,’” *The Burlington Magazine* 128, no. 997 (1986): 251.

of a drape where he was once depicted, but this could have been the product of either another layer of paint or the fact that azurite turns black when heated to a high temperature or when exposed to sulfur fumes.⁴⁷ The use of azurite by republics in earlier periods suggests that Renaissance depainting with bright blue paint could have been used to publicly shame people condemned to a *damnatio memoriae* in a very prominent and eye-catching way, whereas the Medici Dukes used black paint to silently erase their disobedient family members and courtiers.

In the 1520s, the Florentine republic, then under the control of a future Medici pope, performed a legal and secular *damnatio memoriae* curse on the memory of a usurper.⁴⁸ Following the fall of Savonarola, the Florentine republic returned, but citizens hoping for greater stability elected Piero Soderini *gonfaloniere*, or standard-bearer, for life in 1502. The Medici family seized power from Soderini in 1512, and their party controlled the republic once again from 1512 until 1527 as Medici popes Leo X and Clement VII ruled in Rome. In the early 1520s, several members of the Soderini family attempted a coup to regain the power they had once had during the rule of Piero. In response to the failed coup attempt, the Florentine republic condemned Piero Soderini's memory and confiscated his possessions for supposedly participating in the plot, although he had already died of natural causes when the government handed down the punishment.⁴⁹ In the condemnation of Soderini, the Florentine council called

⁴⁷Rutherford J. Gettens and Elisabeth West Fitzhugh, "Azurite and Blue Verditer," *Studies in Conservation* 11, no. 2 (1966): 54-5.

⁴⁸ Patricia J. Osmond, "The Conspiracy of 1522 Against Cardinal Giulio de' Medici: Machiavelli and 'gli esempi delli antichi,'" in *The Pontificate of Clement VII*, 55-72; Niccolò Tommaseo, *Il duca d'Atene*, ed. Fabio Michieli (Padua: Antenore, 2003 [1837]); Cesare Paoli, *Della Signoria di Gualtieri Duca d'Atene in Firenze* (Florence: Cellini, 1862).

"Documenti della congiura contro il cardinale Giulio de' Medici nel 1522," ed. C. Guasti, *Giornale storico degli archivi Toscani* III, no. 1 (1859): 121-150.

⁴⁹ Nerli, *Commentari*, 145. "E i Soderini ritornarono ne' medesimi tempi e in più gravi pregiudizii che non furono nel 1512, perché incorsono tutti, dal cardinale e il vescovo in fuori, in bando di ribello, eccetto però messere Giovan Vettorino, che si restò in Firenze, senza dare di sé sospetto alcuno. E, perché, nel tempo che si travagliava la guerra sopradetta, passò a miglior vita il già gonfaloniere Piero Soderini, però, fu anche dannata la sua memoria e, così, morto, fu dichiarato ribello, come i suoi nipoti e a tutti furono i beni publicati."

the Eight on Security reasoned that because Piero “committed high treason it is possible, although afterwards he was dead (and one cannot punish the dead)”...“to damn the memory of him, and confiscate his goods and deny him his rights” and because of this, posthumously sentence him to the “damnation of his memory and the confiscation of his honors.”⁵⁰ The law lifts whole phrases from a declamation by Quintilian, indicating—unsurprisingly—that a government controlled by a Medici cardinal and eventual Pope consciously drew on ancient texts when performing *damnatio memoriae*.⁵¹ More stunning in the fact that the Florentine government officially damned the memory of Piero although he was already dead, suggesting that the law was intended to cast a form of curse in order to attack Soderini’s memory.

Following the siege of Florence in 1530, the provisional Florentine government that preceded Alessandro ordered a “damnation of the memory [*memoria dannata*] of five banished and imprisoned citizens.” For their role in burning down villas owned by the Medici and Salviati families, the citizens, “because of that which they had taken part...their memories were damned and their assets seized.”⁵² This passage by the historian Benedetto Varchi discusses two instances of Renaissance condemnation of memory, or *damnatio memoriae*. The first is the legal curse cast by the provisional government of Florence on the memories of five citizens. The

⁵⁰ “Documenti della congiura contro il cardinale Giulio de’ Medici nel 1522,” *Giornale storico degli archivi Toscani* III, no. 1 (1859):133-4. “Magnifici et spectabiles viri domini Octo custodie et balie civitatis Florentie, animadvertentes quod Pierus domini Tommasi de Soderinis, post citationem de eo factam et termino citationis predicto, emigrasset; et cum eis per legitimas probationes liqueat, dictum Petrum in vita sua dictum tractatum fecisse, illumque scrivesse et non revelasse, et in effectu durante eius vita commisisse crimen lese maiestatis, et tractasse subvertere ac mutare presentem pacificum statum: et animadvertentes, quod, cum in vita sua fecerit dictum tractatum, et non revelaverit, et crimen lese maiestatis commiserit, licet mortuus postea fuerit, et mortuus non possit damnari; tamen potest eius memoria damnari, et bona et iura eius confiscari: et intendentes contra eius bona et alios pro eo affectos ad ipsius memorie damnationem honorumque confiscationem procedere...”

⁵¹ Quintilian, *M. Fabii Quintiliani declamationes minores*, ed. David R. Shackleton Bailey (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1989), 162. “An non possit quisquam mortuus damnari; etiam ut alius nemo possit, an is utique potuerit qui in reatu periit. Ultima [pelagi] qualitas, in qua totius controversiae vires sunt: quale huius factum, utrum venia dignum an damnatione sit; in qua tractatione patheticos pro re republica indignandum.”

⁵² Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 452. For more information about the incident see Luigi Zangheri, *La villa medicea di Careggi e il suo giardino: storia, rilievi e analisi per il restauro* (Florence: Olschki, 2006), XX; Benedetto Varchi, *Errori del Giovio nelle Storie* (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 2010), 132 n. 50.

second example is the destruction of the Medici (at Careggi) and Salviati villas—supposedly instigated by the leader of the previous republic—that provoked the punishment. When the Savonarolan republic declared the Medici and Salviati families rebels, five citizens performed an extra-legal *damnatio memoriae* by destroying the villas. When the Savonarolan republic fell, those same five citizens faced a *damnatio memoriae* of their own in retribution for their actions. Paolo Giovio claimed in his *Historiarum sui temporis libri* that the initial attacks on the Medici and Salviati villas were ordered by Gonfaloniere Carducci, but Varchi disputed this assertion in his *Errori del Giovio*.⁵³ This dispute over the instigator of the *damnatio memoriae* demonstrates the continued importance of house razing in Florence in the months leading up to Alessandro’s rule.

The Renaissance recovery of ancient ideas concerning fame and immortality allowed *damnatio memoriae* punishments to extend beyond the political realm. The “cult of fame,” discussed by Jacob Burckhardt, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and others,⁵⁴ inspired many Renaissance writers, artists, and public figures.⁵⁵ Record of past people and events were purposefully inscribed in order to transmit them to posterity for fear that time would obliterate all memories

⁵³ Varchi, *Errori del Giovio nelle Storie*, 131-2.

⁵⁴ Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 87-93; Paul F. Grendler, “The Rejection of Learning in Mid-Cinquecento Italy,” *Studies in the Renaissance* 13 (1966), 245; Paul Oskar Kristeller, “The Immortality of the Soul,” in *Renaissance Thought and its Sources* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1979), 182-183; Piero Boitani, *Chaucer and the Imaginary World of Fame* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 1984), 72-158; Rosa Prieto Gilday, “Politics as Usual: Depictions of Petrarch’s *Triumph of Fame* in Early Renaissance Florence,” (PhD Diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1996); Hilla Zmora, “A World Without a Saving Grace: Glory and Immortality in Machiavelli,” *History of Political Thought* 28, no. 3 (2007): 449-468.

⁵⁵ Dante, *Inferno*, 209; Boccaccio, *Life of Dante*, 9, 15, 40, 55; Pius II, *Commentaries*, ed. Margaret Meserve and Marcello Simonetta (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), I: 3, 5; Palmieri, *La vita di Niccolò Acciaiuoli*, 2. Thinkers appear to have pursued earthly fame because they believed that it could do no less than liberate the dead from the bonds of time and space. See Petrarch, *Letters on Old Age*, trans. Aldo S. Bernardo, Reta A. Bernardo, and Saul Levin (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 2: 672; Petrarch, *Letters on Familiar Matters*, 3:317, 321; Boccaccio, *Life of Dante*, 15; Niccolò Machiavelli, *Machiavelli and His Friends: Their Personal Correspondence*, trans. James B. Atkinson and David Sices (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996), 264.

not recorded in or on tangible objects such as histories, poems, sculptures, and paintings.⁵⁶ Historians envisioned themselves fighting the force of time to preserve or rescue the past from oblivion.⁵⁷ Humanists debated which disciplines would confer the longest lasting memory—giving the greatest endorsements to those fields in which they worked.⁵⁸ Immediately preserving the more recent past was important because of a very particular, quasi-pagan belief system in which a positive and sustained posthumous memory could allow a person to literally live on earth eternally after the death of their body while their soul simultaneously lived in the Christian Heaven, Hell or Purgatory.⁵⁹ The promise of immortal life on earth inspired many writers and political actors, yet they saw fame as a limited resource that they needed to fight to protect and win.⁶⁰ These beliefs combined with political condemnation to make *damnatio memoriae* a particularly weighty punishment.

The practice of *damnatio memoriae* played a key role in Florentine history from the advent of the republic in the early Renaissance until Duke Alessandro's accession to power in the sixteenth century. Condemnation of memory was used not only to punish those who had broken the sacred laws of the republic, but to maintain the stability of the government by serving as a warning to would-be traitors. Nearly two centuries before Duke Alessandro's accession, the condemnation of Walter of Brienne, the Duke of Athens, served as a powerful deterrent to those who considered usurping power in Florence.

⁵⁶ Boccaccio, *Life of Dante*, 3, 21, 50; Petrarch, "On His Own Ignorance and That of Many Others" in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Paul Oskar Kristeller and John Herman Randall, Jr., trans. Hans Nachod (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 56.

⁵⁷ Palmieri, *La vita di Niccolò Acciaiuoli*, 4-5; Flavio Biondo, *Italy Illuminated*, trans. Jeffrey A. White (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), I:3 and 5; Bruni, *History of the Florentine People*, 3, 5.

⁵⁸ Petrarch, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime sparse and Other Lyrics*, trans. and ed. Robert M. Durling (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 207; Nardi, "Trionfo della fama e della gloria," 496.

⁵⁹ Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture*, trans. and ed. Cecil Grayson (London: Phaidon, 1972), 61; Nardi, "Trionfo della fama," 496-7; Benedetto Varchi, *L'Ercolano* (Florence: Agenzia Libreria, 1846), 7-8..

⁶⁰ Petrarch, "On His Own Ignorance and That of Many Others," 63, 71, 118.

THE *DAMNATIO MEMORIAE* OF WALTER OF BRIENNE IV, THE DUKE OF ATHENS

In 1343, a conspiracy ousted Walter of Brienne from office and he fled the city to save his own life. Citizens who sought to perform a *damnatio memoriae* cannibalized his henchmen, burned archival documents from his reign, and destroyed images of him. After claiming power, the Duke of Athens performed a *damnatio memoriae* on the Florentine republic by removing the symbols associated with it. Merchants resisted his reign, Machiavelli claimed, in part because “the [government] palace was sacked by the family of the duke, the standard of the people torn apart, and his ensign raised above the palace.” The gesture of destroying the symbols associated with Florence’s self-government “was received with the inestimable sorrow and affliction of good men, and with great pleasure by those who either in ignorance or out of wickedness had consented to it.”⁶¹ In his *Discourses on Livy*, Machiavelli referenced similar large-scale *damnatio memoriae* performed on whole religions and governments in the ancient period. “Records of past times are destroyed for many different reasons,” Machiavelli wrote, citing the example of St. Gregory and other early Church leaders, who stubbornly “pursued every record from ancient times, burning the works of poets and historians, destroying images, and ruining everything else that retained any sign of antiquity” so that “nothing is left for the survivors but what he has wished to set down in writing and nothing else.”⁶² Machiavelli’s assertion that as the Duke of Athens was losing power, he “had his own ensigns taken down from the palace and raised those of the people” in an attempt to quell a possible revolt against his rule further demonstrates the centrality of public symbols to politics and public anger at the Duke of Athens’

⁶¹ Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, 94.

⁶² Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, 168-9.

attempt to erase the memory of the republic.⁶³

Enemies of Duke Alessandro imagined Walter of Brienne VI, the Duke of Athens (1304-1356, r. 1342-3), to be his predecessor, because Brienne had condemned the memory of the Florentine republic and was then condemned himself.⁶⁴ Members of the leading Florentine families had asked Walter of Brienne in 1342 to come and act as the Lord of the city in order to restore order during a time of economic and political trouble. The lower classes proclaimed him *signore* for life shortly thereafter. As the Duke of Athens attempted to flee Florence a crowd of citizens also cannibalized two of the former's supporters, Guglielmo d'Asciesi⁶⁵ and his son Gabbriello, in a particularly brutal form of bodily *damnatio memoriae*. The Duke of Athens handed over Guglielmo and Gabbriello to the crowd in order to hold them back from entering the government palace and assassinating him. Villani, the fourteenth-century chronicler, observed, "in the presence of the father, and to his sorrow, the son pushed outside was dismembered and cut into little pieces." After the dismemberment of the son, the crowd murdered and cut up the father, "and some carried bits on lances, and some on swords through the city; and some were so cruel and animated by bestial fury that they ate their flesh raw."⁶⁶ Villani describes the cannibalism as a punishment worse than dismemberment and more bestial than parading around the city with bits of flesh on sword points. The leaders of Florence had Guglielmo and Gabbriello "depainted" from the *pittura infamante* of the Duke of Athens and his henchmen;

⁶³ Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, 98.

⁶⁴ Villani, *Cronica*, 4:30-7; Cesare Paoli, *Della Signoria di Gualtieri Duca d'Atene in Firenze* (Florence: Cellini, 1862); Cesare Paoli, "Nuovi Documenti intorno a Gualtieri VI di Brienne duca d'Atene e signore di Firenze," *Archivio storico italiano* 16 (1872), 22-62; Becker, "Florentine Popular Government (1343-1348)," 360-382; Becker, "Church and State in Florence on the Eve of the Renaissance (1343-1382)," 509-527; Najemy, *A History of Florence*, 135-142; Amedeo De Vincentiis, "Politica, memoria e oblio a Firenze nel XIV secolo. La tradizione documentaria della signoria del duca d'Atene," *Archivio storico italiano* 2 (2003), 209-248.

⁶⁵ Asciesi's first name is spelled "Guiglielmo" in some editions of Villani's Chronicle, but I use the modernized spelling here.

⁶⁶ Villani, *Cronica*, 4:35-6.

Samuel Edgerton attributes this to the shame Florentines felt when remembering their cannibalistic fury.⁶⁷ While instances of cannibalism viewed in isolation appear to be the products of extreme rage pushing crowds to do irrational things, evidence from elsewhere in Italy during the Renaissance and ancient Rome demonstrates a pattern of cannibalism linked to the erasure or mutation of memory.

Following his downfall in 1343, the Duke of Athens suffered a more comprehensive *damnatio memoriae* than those inflicted in Florence before his rule. As the ancient Romans had done to a few hated Emperors, the Florentine republic that replaced the Duke of Athens ordered all memory of him and his rule erased, and all images and mementos of him destroyed immediately.⁶⁸ But exactly one year after the Duke of Athens' fall, the Florentine government paid for a public *pittura infamante*, a defaming painting, which depicted the Duke and his supporters.⁶⁹ Instead of uniformly enforcing the ban on all images of Walter of Brienne, the Florentine government created a new image of him, suggesting that they believed it may have been more effective to remember to dishonor his memory after a short period of punitive erasure than to forget it entirely. The city also celebrated the Duke's expulsion yearly on Saint Anne's Day,⁷⁰ much as the Romans celebrated the overthrow of their hated Emperors on special holidays.⁷¹ In addition to the official, legal punishments, a crowd of citizens stormed the government palace in order to burn archival documents, including those that provided for the incarceration of their family members.⁷² The crowds destroyed far more than just the documents attesting to their families' disgrace; few documents from the time of the Duke of Athens rule

⁶⁷ Edgerton, *Pictures and Punishment*, 84.

⁶⁸ Paoli, *Della Signoria di Gualtieri Duca d'Atene in Firenze*, 125-135.

⁶⁹ Edgerton, *Pictures and Punishment*, 80-5.

⁷⁰ Villani, *Cronica*, 4:37.

⁷¹ Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation*, 1.

⁷² De Vincentiis, "Politica, memoria e oblio a Firenze nel XIV secolo," 209-248.

remain in the Florentine archive due to the crowd's vengeance.

The condemnation of memory of the Duke of Athens provided a notable precedent for how Florentines could condemn perceived tyrants. As with other examples of *damnatio memoriae*, it seems that the Duke's erasure of the symbols of the republic provoked a retaliatory condemnation. Following the Duke of Athens' condemnation, the Florentine government resumed its republican form, at least nominally, until the accession of Duke Alessandro in 1530. It is perhaps no accident that Florence maintained its republican form for so long; one function of *damnatio memoriae* was to serve as an example to people in posterity what would happen to those who threatened the stability of the state. The process by which the government and crowds annihilated the Duke of Athens' memory would have overshadowed, or haunted the minds of those who considered usurping power or changing the government's structure after 1343.

ALESSANDRO DE' MEDICI'S OFFICIAL ERASURE OF THE FLORENTINE REPUBLIC

Like Walter of Brienne two centuries earlier, upon taking power Duke Alessandro attempted to erase the memory of the previous republican government, his enemies charged. Alessandro's *damnatio memoriae* of the republic so infuriated Florentine exiles that in 1535 they included it in their list of reasons why Duke Alessandro's overlord, Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, should have deposed him. The exiles bemoaned the loss of the "supreme magistrate [the *gonfaloniere di giustizia*, or Standard-bearer of Justice] in whom resided the defense and the insignia of liberty. Because of this his title was *Priores libertatis*, but under Alessandro that "ha[d] been extinguished, so that with the name is extinguished the form and essence of liberty [*si estingnesse la forma e la essenza della liberta*]." ⁷³ Duke Alessandro and his supporters

⁷³ ASF, CS, serie prima, filza 95, Galeotto Giugno, "Narrazione fatta per M. Galeotto Giugni del processo della

dismantled the traditional republican government and appointed only pro-Medici officials to the new positions, but his critics also accused him of systematically destroying all imagery associated with the prior republic. According to the Duke's enemies, Alessandro "changed the shape of the coins,⁷⁴ and removed the people's sign,⁷⁵ and in place of it in one part put up his family arms," and "in the other where there had been carved the image of the precursor to Christ, St. John the Baptist," patron saint of Florence, "there he had stamped the image [they are a pair] of Saints Cosmo and Damiano, the patron saints of the House of Medici, so that no memory remains of the ancient republic or of freedom."⁷⁶ The complaint by the exiles shows that the memory of the republic and the "form and essence of liberty" was transmitted by the existence of these sacral things: a supreme magistrate [the *gonfaloniere di giustizia*], the Florentine money, the patron saint of Florence, and the people's emblem—and that without them, "no memory remains" of the previous republic. Duke Alessandro compounded the bitter feelings by triumphantly replacing the insignia of the republic with his own family's emblems.

The reaction of exiled citizens to Duke Alessandro's redesign of the Florentine *scudo d'oro* and *grosso* further illustrates how memory, symbols, and *damnatio memoriae* were understood.

causa agitala appresso la Cesarea Maestà e suoi Agenti per la ricuperazione della libertà di Fiorenza, per li Reverendissimi Cardinali Salviali e Ridai fi, e fuorusciti fiorentini, e altri amatori della patria nobili fiorentini," 75v.-76r. Also printed in Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 550. "E ancora che sia tanto noto al mondo che noi conosciamo non aver bisogno di probazione, che la città nostra non sia oggi libera ma tiranneggiata, nondimeno lo dimostrano molte ragioni evidentissime: e prima che il supremo magistrato, nel quale risedeva la difesa e l'insegna della libertà, e per questa causa era il suo titolo *Priores libertatis* [*Priori di Libertà*], é stato estinto, acciocché col nome si estingnesse la forma e la essenza della libertà, siccome ha ancora mutato la forma delle monete, e levato il segno pubblico, e in luogo di quello messo da una parte l'insegna della casa sua, e da l'altra dove si solea scolpire l'immagine del precursore di Cristo San Gio. Batista protettor della nostra città, \i ha fatto scolpire e porre l'immagine de'Santi Cosmo e Dannano, particolari avvocati della Casa de' Medici, acciocché non resti memoria dell' antica Repubblica."

⁷⁴ Duke Alessandro replaced the silver *grosso* and gold *scudo d'oro* coins with new *scudo d'oro* and *testone* coins bearing his image, arms, name, and patron saints, as discussed in the next paragraph. Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi, *Monete fiorentine dalla repubblica ai Medici* (Florence: Museo Nazionale del Bargello, 1984), 55-59.

⁷⁵ The Florentine people's sign was a red cross in a white field, carried since the early Renaissance in battle and public ceremonies.

⁷⁶ ASF, "Narrazione," 75v.

In March 1535, Alessandro issued the decree that regulated the entire Florentine monetary system, including the replacement of the silver *grosso* with a coin called the *giulio*, commonly called the *testone*, which bore his portrait (see Fig. 3.1).⁷⁷ The goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini received the commission to strike the dies for the coins, which had the Duke's head on one side and Saints Cosimo and Damiano on the other.⁷⁸ The significance of the change is shown by the fact that minor chronicles and *ricordi* treat the change in the money at length, alongside battles and major diplomatic events.⁷⁹ In his autobiography, the self-aggrandizing Cellini wrote that Francesco Soderini, who had been exiled in 1530, gloated after Alessandro's assassination, "You wanted to immortalize those dukes; we don't want any more dukes!"; while another friend named Baccio Bettini quipped, "We've 'unduked' them, and there will be no more dukes—and you wanted to immortalize them!"⁸⁰ The self-important Cellini never disputes the notion that his coin would immortalize the Medici Duke—possibly due to his promotion of his own work.

⁷⁷ Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 476.

⁷⁸ Benvenuto Cellini, *My Life*, trans. Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter E. Bondanella (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 134.

⁷⁹ Luca Landucci, *Diario fiorentino dal 1450 al 1516* (Florence: G.C. Sansoni, 1883), 371. "E a dì 25 d'aprile 1535, si cominciò a stanpare monete di soldi 40 l'uno con la testa del Duca Alessandro, un lato, e dal'altro San Cosimo e Damiano." Ughi, "Cronica di Firenze," 173. "Cominciò il detto duca Alessandro a battere monete non più con il giglio et arme o insegne del popolo Fiorentino, ma con l'arme et insegne della casa de' Medici, e da un lato con la testa sua e circumsritte lettere: ALEX. DVX FLOR. PRIMUS: e battè scudi d'oro; et una moneta chiamata Ricci, d'argento, di valuta di carliui Quattro; e chiamaronsi Ricci perchè vi era dentro la testa del duca Alessandro, ricciunta." Recent scholarship treats the change in currency, as well. See Paolozzi Strozzi, *Monete fiorentine dalla repubblica ai Medici*, 55-59; Carlo M. Cipolla, *Money in Sixteenth-Century Florence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 7-12, 14-17.

⁸⁰ Cellini, *My Life*, 152.

Duke Alessandro recognized document destruction as an aggressive act done to punish one's enemies, and that the Medici family—Pope Clement VII most likely—may have been responsible for creating the gap in archival documents from the Florentine republic preceding Alessandro's rule.

Duke Alessandro may have looked to Julius Caesar as a model of successful memory erasure, but he seems to have forgotten that Caesar was assassinated for his usurpation of the republic. In the wake of his mutation of the money and symbols of Florence, Duke Alessandro and his advisors lived in fear. Critics of the Medici dukedom alluded to the violent end of the Duke of Athens' regime when they nicknamed Francesco Guicciardini "ser Cerretieri", the arch-henchman employed by Walter of Brienne.⁸³ To secure his regime, Alessandro ordered the construction of a fortress to guard principally against a rebellion of the Florentine citizenry.⁸⁴ The Duke also disarmed his citizens, including close family members.⁸⁵

THE *DAMNATIO MEMORIAE* OF DUKE ALESSANDRO DE' MEDICI BY FLORENTINE CITIZENS

Upon Duke Alessandro's assassination, his enemies proceeded to condemn his memory, as earlier generations of citizens had imposed *damnatio memoriae* on those who had threatened Florentine liberty: Walter of Brienne, the Uberti, and Piero Soderini. Condemnation need not have come from a legal sentence, nor involve attacks on existing objects, but could include the creation of new objects of memory—such as poems—that served the same purpose. That some Florentines wished to condemn Alessandro and his supporters as the government and crowds had

⁸³ Najemy, *A History of Florence*, 462. For more on Alessandro's takeover see Pansini, "Le 'Ordinazioni' del 27 aprile 1532," 761-785; Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries*, 3-10; Hale, *Florence and the Medici*, 109-143.

⁸⁴ Hale, "The End of Florentine Liberty," 501-532.

⁸⁵ Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, 8.

3 flagitiosissimo Florentiae Tyranno
 4 Cuius in ipso iuuetutis suae
 5 flore maximae que libi
 6 dinum initio
 7 inopinata quidem sed expectatissima omnibus
 8 cede universus orbis gavisus est.
 9 Resp: Floren'
 10 crudellissima efferatissimi monstri
 11 Tyrannide Laure Medices
 12 vi ac virtute liberata
 13 letissima · P ·

The second epitaph still commemorates Duke Alessandro, but commemorates him as an inhuman [*immanissimo*], infamous [*flagitiosissimo*], and bestial monster [*efferatissimi monstri*] who was a “pseudo Medici” tyrant while celebrating the efforts of his assassin, Lorenzino.

Whereas the first poem mostly situates Duke Alessandro within his networks and kin groups, the second poem recounts his negative qualities. Although the poems are presented as a pair, the first may have been written by Alessandro’s friends, while the second was probably composed by an enemy of the Duke to mock the original epitaph.

For the study of *damnatio memoriae*, the physical form of the poems and how they were collected are as important as the content of the poems. The poems appear in the *Carte Strozziane*, which contain many items collected by Carlo Strozzi (1587-1681) relating to Florentine history, and the Strozzi family in particular. Given the Strozzi involvement in the attempts to remove Duke Alessandro from power, as discussed in chapter one, the collection is

among the best sources for archival documents on Alessandro and his enemies. The poems are bound in volume 95 of the *Carte Strozzi*, a book relating almost entirely to the actions of the Florentine exiles against Duke Alessandro. Other documents in the volume include the satirical sonnets Varchi sent to the Strozzi that damned Alessandro and lauded his assassin, letters by the leaders of the *fuorusciti*, and copies of the orations delivered by the exiles before Emperor Charles V. Unlike re-copied collections, many of the items appear to have been original autograph documents—or at least copied by different people on different types and sizes of paper using different color inks. Previous transcriptions only printed and mentioned the poem that portrays Duke Alessandro unfavorably,⁹² but the physical presentation of poems suggests that they were intended to operate as a pair, with the unfavorable second poem mocking the original. The paper on which the poems are written, much smaller than the others in the volume, is folded to create two sheets. The favorable poem appears on the recto side of the 34th sheet of paper in the volume (fig. 3.2); the verso side is blank. The unfavorable poem is written on the recto side of the 35th sheet of paper in the volume (fig. 3.3) and the verso side is similarly blank. Both poems are written in the same hand.

⁹² Most publications use one article as the intermediary source for the epitaph: C. Cantù, “Spigolature negli archivi toscani,” *Rivista contemporanea* 20 (1860): 324.

34

D . M .

Alexandro Medice' primo Reip: Floren' Duci,
Clementis Vy. Pont. Max. Pronepoti,
Caroli V. Imperatoris Genero
Propinquoꝝ armis
crudely interfelto

Hieronymus à Carpis Episcopus Martius, ac
Cibus Cardinalis cum Fratriſ, ſuaqꝫ
Coniuge' Thadea' Malespina'
Compotoni atqꝫ Confutu-
tori Liberalis

Mulantes Posuere !

Figure 3.2: The favorable, first epitaph memorializing Duke Alessandro. (Photograph of folio 34v. in Carte Stroziane volume 95, Archivio di Stato di Firenze.)

35

D - M.

Alexandro Pseudomedice' immaniss', atq3
 flagitiosiss' Florentia' Tyranno
 Cuius in ipso inuictus sua'
 flore' maximazq3 libi
 diuum initio
 inopinata quidem sed expectatis' omnibus
 cede' Vniuersus orbis gaudis est.
 Resp: Floren'.
 crudeliss' effrenatissimi monstri
 Tyrannide' Laure' Medices
 ui ac uirtute liberata
 Letissima P.

Figure 3.3: The unfavorable, second epitaph damning Duke Alessandro. (Photograph of folio 35v. in Carte Stroziane volume 95, Archivio di Stato di Firenze.)

The epitaphs evoke ancient and Renaissance carved stone commemorative plaques despite the fact that we have no evidence that they were ever displayed publicly. Both poems are written so that they are centered on the page, as an epitaph would have been centered on a stone tablet. Other poems mocking Duke Alessandro in the *Carte Stroziane* volume are aligned on the left side of the page. The “D. M.” that appears at the head of each poem reproduces the style

of ancient Roman, pre-Christian epitaphs. A “D. M.” at the head of a Renaissance epitaph carved in stone, painted on a temporary structure (as poems had been painted around the city during the entrance of Charles V), or printed on paper most likely referred to the gods [*diis manibus*], in the pagan style.⁹³ The “D. M.” at the head of the second poem could also refer to the gods, but possibly *damnatio memoriae*, a term certainly known by the sixteenth century as evidenced by the use of it in the law that condemned the Strozzi in 1522. The second poem’s parody of the first and use of epitaphic tropes known by the ancients and contemporaries demonstrates that it was intended to serve as more than an inside joke among exiles. As one of a pair, the second poem served as the negation of the first, favorable poem and commemorated Duke Alessandro’s infamy in an attempt to damn his memory.

Alessandro’s memorial epitaph was not the only commemorative object to be altered by his enemies; a diary written by Agostino Lapini suggests that Duke Alessandro’s tomb may have been defaced by crowds. When recounting Alessandro’s death and burial, Lapini wrote that Alessandro’s tomb became “filthy and black because of his body.”⁹⁴ As art historian Gabrielle Langdon has pointed out, the trope of the blacked tomb or blacked body was not uncommon in this period—it was mainly used to describe people who were known sinners, including Duke Cosimo’s murdered daughter Isabella.⁹⁵ While some would attribute the blackening to supernatural forces judging the bodies of sinners as they lay in their tombs, others would have suspected that people had gained entrance to the church and defaced the tombs to insult the memory of the corpse inside. The tomb of Alessandro’s own patron and possible father, Pope

⁹³ Kajanto, *Classical and Christian*, 15. Although epitaphs retained classical allusions such as “D. M.”, Kajanto argues that “the overall impression is genuinely Christian.”

⁹⁴ Lapini, *Diario fiorentino*, 101. “Fu sepolto detto duca Alexandro in Santo Lorenzo, in Sagrestia nuova, nel sepolcro a man sinistra: quale è sudicio e nero per causa del suo corpo.”

⁹⁵ Langdon, *Medici Women*, 166.

Clement VII, was supposedly smeared with dirt and the inscription was changed from “Clemens Pontifex Maximus” to “Inclemens Pontifex Minimus.”⁹⁶ Whether these events actually happened or not, the rumors of them served to create records that influenced how people remembered controversial figures. As seen in the accounts of *poena post mortem* and cannibalism, attacks on the corpse and funerary monuments were the most serious condemnations of memory reserved for those tyrants and assassins who threatened the stability of a state. The Pazzi’s family’s emblems were obliterated from funeral monuments at some point before the mid-seventeenth century, possibly as a result of their conspiracy to assassinate Lorenzo de’ Medici.⁹⁷ Marin Falier’s tomb and body were desecrated, and his sepulcher became a water tank at a hospital in Venice.⁹⁸ These attacks on the honor of families through their commemorative imagery upholds John Paoletti’s assertion that in the Renaissance honor was linked to visual representation, especially in funeral monuments.⁹⁹

A painting of Alessandro by a follower of Bronzino¹⁰⁰ likewise suggests that some people may have—at any point following Alessandro’s death—purposefully destroyed or altered images of the Duke. The painting in question is a copy likely produced from an original by Pontormo, who was commissioned by Alessandro himself. The inferior copy features Alessandro with azurite eyes, which sources do not mention the duke having. In an article on the painting, Massimo Firpo and Salvatore Lo Re include an image of the painting before restoration, reproduced here (Fig. 3.4).¹⁰¹ The photograph shows deep scrapes over and around Alessandro’s eyes; when the scrapes were made is unclear. The difficulty in dating the mutilation of Duke

⁹⁶ Vaughan, *The Medici Popes*, 342.

⁹⁷ Paoletti, “Medici Funerary Monuments,” 1129.

⁹⁸ Molmenti, *Venice*, 1:86.

⁹⁹ Paoletti, “Medici Funerary Monuments,” 1117-1163.

¹⁰⁰ School of Bronzino, “Alessandro de’ Medici,” Turin, private collection printed in Firpo and Lo Re, “Gli occhi azzurri di Alessandro de’ Medici,” 422.

¹⁰¹ Firpo and Lo Re, “Gli occhi azzurri di Alessandro de’ Medici,” 413-426.

Alessandro's portrait makes drawing firm conclusions about the identity and motives of his attacker virtually impossible. The portrait could have been attacked soon after his death or in any of the five hundred years since. Yet it is improbable that the gouges crossing over Duke Alessandro's eyes happened as a result of a natural process. Scholarship on beliefs in image magic and the targeted destruction of sensory organs in images suggests that the scrapes on the Bronzino copy were a sign of deep hatred for Alessandro, whether as a result of personal experience or due to the Duke's posthumous legacy. The possibility that the portrait's mutilation could have been conceivably carried out long after Duke Alessandro's assassination by an individual who felt a strong hatred of Alessandro due to his depiction in histories and plays demonstrates the lasting power of the Duke's overwhelmingly negative posthumous memory.

A scene from a seventeenth-century English play depicts the mutilation of a portrait of Duke Alessandro and gives possible motivations for the scratches on the Bronzino copy. In James Shirley's play, *The Traitor* (1631), written in England one hundred years after Alessandro's assassination, Lorenzino de' Medici stabs a portrait of Duke Alessandro to prepare for the attack. Lorenzino supposes, "the duke should feel me now...can he less than tremble, [w]hen I lift my arm to wound his counterfeit," attributing his ability to "wound his heart" using only the portrait due to the same force witches use when sticking "waxen model[s] full of pins."¹⁰² This in no way suggests that Lorenzino actually stabbed a portrait of Duke Alessandro, yet it does demonstrate one early modern understanding of what the scratches over Alessandro's eyes were supposed to accomplish. In the fictional Florence of the 1530s, Lorenzino aims to not

¹⁰² Fredson Thayer Bowers, "The Stabbing of a Portrait in Elizabethan Tragedy," *Modern Language Notes* 47, no. 6 (1932), 382-383.

only murder Duke Alessandro, but also to injure Alessandro from afar using the portrait.¹⁰³ The character Lorenzino likens his stabbing of the portrait to the practice of *envoûtement*, commonly known as voodoo, related to belief in image magic.

Religious symbols and images of Renaissance political leaders faced destruction and mutilation due to beliefs in image magic. Image magic describes the sometimes unconscious belief that the destruction or mutilation of depictions of a person can magically harm their body or soul.¹⁰⁴ Anthropological research traditionally focused on image magic and *envoûtement* in non-Western cultures.¹⁰⁵ Historians and art historians demonstrated in the 1970s and 1980s that image magic happened in the West throughout the past, and not just among the superstitious and primitive. Historian Natalie Zemon Davis argued that sixteenth-century Protestants and Catholics destroyed each other's images, the Host, and vernacular Bibles in ritualistic ways intended to show that they did not hold the powers ascribed to them—while symbolically killing the images as if they still did believe them to hold special properties.¹⁰⁶ Art historian David Freedberg explained that although “people who assail images do so in order to make clear that they are not afraid of them” they “thereby prove their fear.”¹⁰⁷ Anthropologists including Hans

¹⁰³ Thayer Bowers, “The Stabbing of a Portrait in Elizabethan Tragedy,” 382-383. The author rejects calling Lorenzino's speech evidence of beliefs in “witchcraft” related to the destruction of images, yet this discomfort seems to indicate more about the rejection of such beliefs in the early twentieth century than in the seventeenth (or sixteenth, for that matter).

¹⁰⁴ Scholars have sought to distinguish between juridicial punishments such as *pittura infamante* and *damnatio memoriae* and beliefs in image magic because the primary purpose of the images was to attack the legal status of the person depicted. Yet the great care given to reproducing accurate likenesses of those condemned, the precise labels identifying the people depicted, and the terror the punishments provoked suggests that legal punishments derived at least some of their power from beliefs in image magic. When discussing the debates about the influence of image magic on juridicial punishments involving images David Freedberg argues, “. . . what we cannot escape is the one belief that underlies all the phenomena we have described; that the use of an image in a certain prescribed way can affect the person it represents one way or another.” David Freedberg, *The Power of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 270-1.

¹⁰⁵ Sylvia M. Schomburg-Scherff, “The Power of Images: New Approaches to the Anthropological Study of Images,” *Anthropos* 95, no. 1 (2000), 190-191.

¹⁰⁶ Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Rites of Violence,” *Past and Present* 59 (1973): 51-91.

¹⁰⁷ Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 418.

Belting have since produced their own studies on the cross-cultural power of images.¹⁰⁸ Most recently, the field of neuroarthistory has emerged, allowing the universal human response to images to be described in scientific terms using neurology.¹⁰⁹

Attacks on images of hated people tended to center on the sensory organs—the eyes, nose, ears, mouth, and hands were most commonly disfigured. Anthropologists and historians find that images were often attacked in the same locations as the actual bodies of criminals condemned to capital and corporal punishment. Ancient *damnatio memoriae* practices in which people attacked the sensory organs of sculptures or paintings mimicked the *poena post mortem* inflicted on common criminals.¹¹⁰ In other cases, punishments from the Bible directly inspired the mutilation of images. God cut off the head and hands of a false idol in the first book of Samuel, which inspired sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English reformers to perform similar mutilations on Catholic statues.¹¹¹ Drawing the pattern for mutilating images from the Bible does not reduce the likelihood of belief in image magic in early modern England; two-dimensional paintings often had their head and hands scraped off before being covered with whitewash.¹¹² Freedberg claims that mutilation often centered on the eyes, since “to deprive the image of its eyes, in particular, is to deprive it effectively of life.”¹¹³ The attack on Duke

¹⁰⁸ Hans Belting, *Bild-Anthropologie: Entwürfe für eine Bildwissenschaft* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2001); Hans Belting, *Pour une anthropologie des images*, trans. Jean Torrent (Paris: Gallimard, 2004); Hans Belting, *An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

¹⁰⁹ Semir Zeki, *Inner Vision: An Exploration of Art and the Brain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Semir Zeki, “Neural Concept Formation & Art: Dante, Michelangelo, and Wagner,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 9 (2002): 53-76; John Onians, *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

¹¹⁰ Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation*, 3, 4.

¹¹¹ I Samuel 5:2-4. Cited in C. Pamela Graves, “From an Archaeology of Iconoclasm to an Anthropology of the Body: Images, Punishment, and Personhood in England, 1500-1660,” *Current Anthropology* 49, no. 1 (2008), 39. John Knox cited the passage from I Samuel specifically when performing the same action on a statue of St. Giles in 1558.

¹¹² Graves, “From an Archaeology of Iconoclasm,” 39.

¹¹³ Freedberg, *The Power of Images*, 415.

Alessandro's eyes in the Bronzino copy could have stemmed from a desire to harm his soul after death, but also from a fear of his powerful image that could only be negated by extinguishing the light from his eyes.



Figure 3.4: A photograph of the damaged School of Bronzino painting of Duke Alessandro before restoration. (From Massimo Firpo and Salvatore Lo Re, “Gli occhi azzurri di Alessandro de' Medici. Note su una copia di un celebra ritratto di Iacopo Pontorno,” *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* XLIX, no. 3 (2005): 422).

Duke Alessandro's azurite eyes in the painting could have provoked the attack or have served as a reminder of an earlier attack on the painting. Since Duke Alessandro is never described or depicted elsewhere as having blue eyes, the painting has been analyzed as evidence of posthumous attempts to either play up or cover up Duke Alessandro's possible African ethnicity.¹¹⁴ It is possible that a viewer of the painting, aware of Alessandro's actual appearance, could have attacked the eye region of the painting due to its erroneous representation of the Duke, but that seems unlikely because the attack seems not to have removed all of the blue paint and the gouges extend far beyond the eyes. Given the other examples of damage done to portraits of hated figures, including evidence of eye-gouging and objects being thrown against their depictions,¹¹⁵ it is possible that Alessandro's painting could have been attacked simply because it depicted a reputed tyrant. Another possibility is that the painting could have been attacked multiple times, for the same or different reasons, and the blue paint was intended to both cover and bring attention to the initial attack. As seen in the case of Marin Falier and in a figure attacked then covered with paint in Siena's Palazzo Pubblico, azurite paint seems that have been linked to damned images. Duke Alessandro's blue eyes may be evidence of an earlier, currently invisible attack on the painting.

The three examples presented above of the alteration of objects intended to memorialize Duke Alessandro demonstrates a process of erasure and manipulation that scholars have thus far neglected. The effect of the *damnatio memoriae* on objects that serve as sources for writing the history of Alessandro's life and reign cannot be overstated. By altering objects that commemorated Alessandro, the manipulators both created new evidence of hatred for Alessandro, and destroyed, manipulated, or mocked proof of support for his rule. As a result,

¹¹⁴ Firpo and Lo Re, "Gli occhi azzurri di Alessandro de' Medici," 413-426.

¹¹⁵ Mallory and Moran, "New Evidence Concerning 'Guidoriccio,'" 251.

when historians find sources that laud Duke Alessandro, they regard them warily, expecting that a favorable view of Alessandro could only be expressed as a result of a lucrative commission paid to a begrudging artist or writer. Due to the critical examination of primary sources by nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians, the *damnatio memoriae* inflicted on a few objects and sources contributed greatly to the unfavorable view of Duke Alessandro in modern works of history and the popular imagination.

CONCLUSION

The problem of identifying the motive and identity of the people who attacked Duke Alessandro's memory illustrates the difficulty of identifying memory condemnations in the past with certainty. Whereas people punished officially by *damnatio memoriae* are mentioned in legal records, the vast majority of people punished were not officially sentenced and objects associated with them were ritually destroyed in ways associated with memory condemnation in earlier times. Outside of the law, Alessandro erased memory of the Florentine Republic by replacing the symbols of the leading families and the people of Florence with his and his family's own emblems and images. Alessandro alluded to Julius Caesar's extra-legal destruction of Pompey's documents in murals in the Medici Palazzo. When Alessandro attempted to further cement his image in Florentine iconography, the friends of Benvenuto Cellini threatened to destroy the dies for a beautiful coin so that Alessandro could not become "immortal" via an object.

The condemnations outside of the law continued after Alessandro's assassination, when his commemorative epitaph was parodied, his tomb tampered with in fact or fiction, and a school of Bronzino painting was damaged. While the individual incidents do not bear proof of their

authors, together they suggest an effort on the part of some citizens to purposefully condemn Alessandro's memory by making, altering, and destroying durable objects intended to transmit his memory to posterity. Interestingly, the clearest instance of *damnatio memoriae* following Alessandro's death, the ruin of a part of Lorenzino de' Medici's house, seems to have been the result of crowds of citizens acting with only vague official sanction.¹¹⁶ The effect of wide literacy and learning on the knowledge of *damnatio memoriae* and manipulation of objects in Florence deserves more study, since it seems that many citizens acted unilaterally or at least without explicit instructions on how to condemn memory in a pattern based on the crime of the offender and the political structure of the state. Such actions had a profound impact on how Alessandro de' Medici and other condemned political figures have been viewed by posterity.

¹¹⁶ Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 2:147-8. "Le quali condizioni furono osservate tutte dappoi dopo due giorni in quel modo, nel quale i maggiori potenti ed armati l'osservano a chi non ha nè forze nè armi. Comparve quivi allora subito Cosimo, e fu salutato da tutti i Quarantotto e da Alessandro Vitelli, che di già nella strada armate con cinquecento fanti faceva gridare *Palle, Palle*; per onor del quale nuovo Signore, e per vendetta del morto Duca, e più per soddisfare alla sua infinita voglia dell' oro, fece mettere a sacco la casa di Cosimo, dicendo; che egli aveva acquistato un Palazzo ed un imperio in cambio d'una casa e d'una privata possessione, e quella altresì di Lorenzo, che gli è contigua, e successivamente la villa sua, delle quali ritrasse masserizie di gran valuta, che ascesono alla somma di diecimila scudi. Fece ancora stracciare uno spazio della Casa di Lorenzo dal tetto infino alla strada con tanta apertura, con quanta teneva la camera, nella quale era da lui stato morto il Duca . L'altro giorno, che fu il mercoledì, non contento il Vitello di aver fatto il NUOVO Signore senza saputa d'alcuno, messe l'animo ad impadronirsi della fortezza, pel cui mezzo stimò di poter trarre grandissima preda della guardaroba del Duca morto ridotta in quel luogo, la somma de' denari, e la signoria di quella fortezza, acquisto atto a farlo ricchissimo e di più potenza."

Chapter Four: “Cleaned and corrected by your hand”: The Archive of Alessandro de’ Medici

Scholars seeking to study the career of Duke Alessandro find few traces of his career in the otherwise vast collections of the *Archivio di Stato di Firenze*, the principal repository for documents concerning the government of Florence and the Medici family. The archive contains only a few of Alessandro’s autograph letters and other documents scattered among the *Mediceo avanti il Principato*, *Mediceo del Principato*, and *Miscellanea Medicea* sub-archives, while most of the documents concerning him are in fact multiple copies of the same work, such as Lorenzino de’ Medici’s *Apologia*. The absence of records from the time of Duke Alessandro’s rule in the State Archive of Florence can be attributed to the systematic manipulation and erasure of their disfavored predecessor by the Medici Grand Dukes, starting with Duke Cosimo I, who carefully constructed the archive to minimize the importance of Alessandro’s rule. Most scholars use the Medici archives as repositories of documents concerning individuals; here the structure and composition of the archive itself is studied to show how the Medici family distorted the historical record so as to protect the future of its dynasty.¹

This chapter shows, first, that while Duke Alessandro kept an archive that was partially maintained into the seventeenth century by the Medici Granducal archivists, significant portions of his documents were lost in the fifteen years following his death. I then show that although the destruction or loss of Duke Alessandro’s archival documents has been blamed on nervous

¹ Arrighi and Klein, “Strategie familiari e competizione politica alle origini dell’Archivio mediceo,” 83-85.

advisors, angry crowds, or opportunistic soldiers in the days following his assassination, we lack significant evidence linking any of these groups to the theft or destruction of Alessandro's documents. This chapter next demonstrates that the Medici Grand Dukes constructed the family archives with care, and in a way that excluded and minimized Alessandro's rule. The chapter concludes with new evidence detailing how members of the Medici Granducal family appear to have manipulated a well-known chronicle to protect the reputation of Duke Cosimo I, which demonstrates how Alessandro's honor was indirectly suppressed by efforts to establish Cosimo's branch of the Medici family.

PROOF OF DUKE ALESSANDRO'S ARCHIVE

Duke Alessandro is not responsible for the lack of documents from his reign because he did keep an archive. In a letter from 1535, Alessandro wrote to the Bishop of Nocera and asked him to give Giovanni Menchi family papers once owned by Alfonsina Orsini-de' Medici. The Duke knew enough about the papers and had his own records of their contents because he included an inventory of what Menchi should receive, and alluded to some papers not mentioned in the inventory concerning a Medici property.² As head of the Medici family, Alessandro would have been officially in charge of the archive of Medici family documents now known as the *Mediceo avanti il Principato* collection, which includes not only documents that would support legal cases, but also autograph letters written by important family members. Alessandro himself must have had an archive for legal documents pertaining to his own reign, since the

² ASF, MdP, filza 118, folio 235, 14 August 1535, Alessandro de' Medici to Favorino Varini [Doc. 112 in MAP]. "[...] Mando da V. S. el Ven. Ms. Giovanni Menchi antiqua creatura di casa mia, come V. S. R. meglio di me sà et lo conosce, per pregarla in nome mio la si compiacci consegnarli tutte le scritture le furon date in custodia doppo la morte della Illustrissima madonna Alfonsina [Orsini] di bona memoria, et perciò le mando copia dell'inventario d'esse sotto scritto di mano propria di V. S. R. l'originale del quale tengo appresso di me. Dicendo le oltra alla consignatione delle scritture predecete mi sarà gratia singular diffusamente illuminarlo di quel più l'ha notizia delli beni et ragioni antique et moderne di casa mia et precipue di Castel Sto. Agnolo [Castel Madama]. Quello vi ha di più oltre le scritture anotate in detto inventario [...]"

fuorusciti bemoaned the fact that Francesco Guicciardini wrote his successful defense of Alessandro after spending weeks in Alessandro's archive, studying the documents that surrendered the city to the Emperor and gave Alessandro power.³ While Alessandro does not seem to have been a bibliophile like Cosimo I, he did manage to maintain the Medici family archive while it was in his care and kept copies of the letters he sent.

Evidence drawn from two continents demonstrates both that Alessandro kept an archive of some sort, including an archive of his official letters, and that archivists and copyists did competent work with Alessandro's documents. The majority of the letters in existence today that were written by Alessandro can be found in a single volume, number 181 in the *Mediceo del Principato* archive—which contains recopied letters—covering the years from February 1534 to January 1536.⁴ Comparing four original letters sent by Alessandro to a member of the Spinelli family,⁵ now held in the Yale University archives, shows that all appear in the volume of letter minutes.⁶ Closer examination of the Florentine volume of minutes and the Spinelli letters shows that the copyist, Antonio da Sangallo, had access to copies of the original letters prepared by Alessandro's staff and kept by the Grand Dukes until he began the project in the 1620s. A copyist attempting to reconstruct an archive without having any documents at all could have written to families in contact with Alessandro nearly 100 years before and requested copies of the items he sent them, and then compiled a volume of minutes from those copies he received. But this is not the case with the volume of Alessandro's letters. For example, an original letter sent to Spinelli that matches one in the *Mediceo del Principato* volume identifies only Spinelli as

³ Roberto Ridolfi, *Vita di Francesco Guicciardini* (Rome: Belardetti, 1960), 370-80.

⁴ ASF, MdP, filza 118.

⁵ Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (BRBML), Spinelli Family Papers I, General Collection, letters from Alessandro de' Medici to Capitano di Marradi Spinelli, box 131, file 2713.

⁶ ASF, MdP, filza 118, 87v.-88r.; 93v.; 93v.-94r.; 98r.

the recipient of the letter (Fig. 4.1 and Fig. 4.2), while the volume of minutes lists 80 other recipients (Fig. 4.3). This shows that it would have been highly unlikely to impossible for Sangallo, busy copying 26 other volumes at the time, to have constructed the volume of minutes of Alessandro's letters without access to records kept by Alessandro's staff as to the identity of all of the recipients. Despite the speed at which Sangallo must have worked, the minutes faithfully replicate the original Spinelli letters now held in Yale and contain minutes of all four of the original letters.

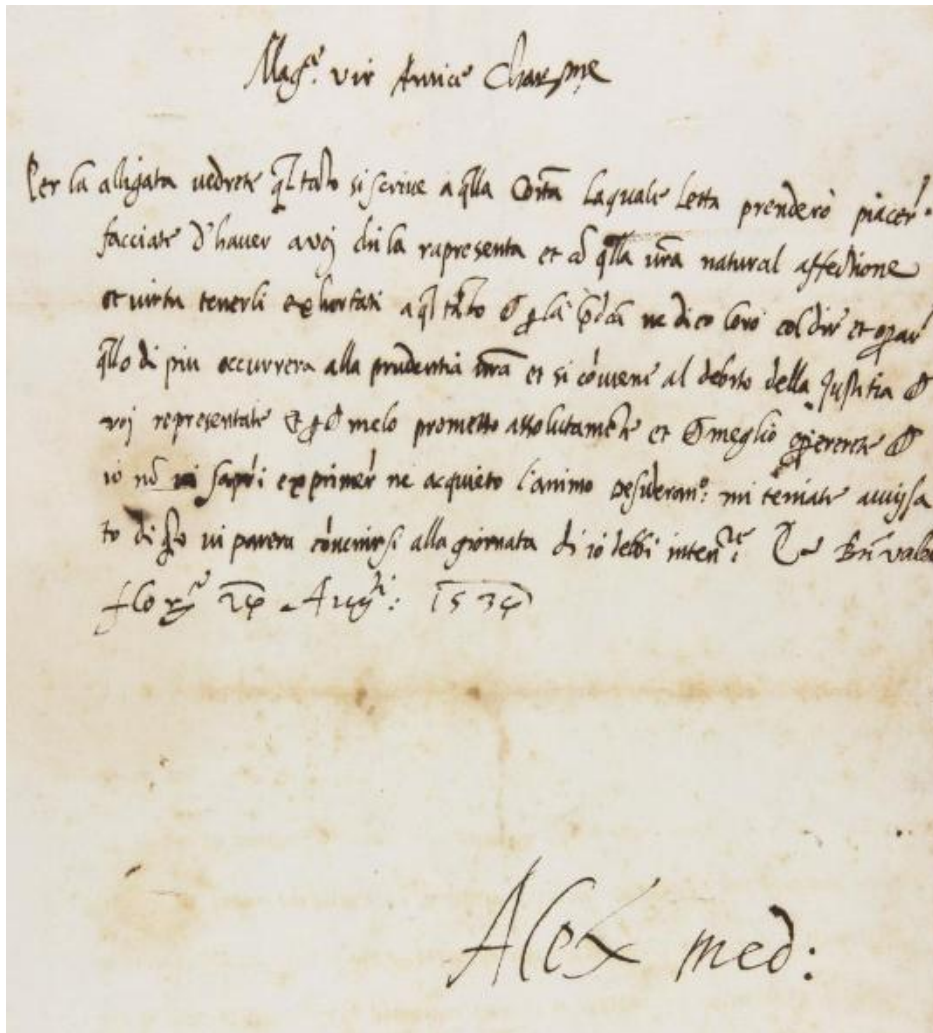


Figure 4.1: A letter from Alessandro de' Medici (autograph signature) to the Capitano di Marradi on 24 August 1534. Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Spinelli Family Papers I, General Collection, letters from Alessandro de' Medici to Capitano di Marradi

Spinelli, box 131, file 2713.

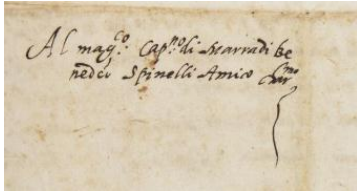


Figure 4.2: The reverse of the same letter, showing that it is addressed to the Capitano di Marradi with no mention of the other recipients. Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Spinelli Family Papers I, General Collection, letters from Alessandro de' Medici to Capitano di Marradi Spinelli, box 131, file 2713.

Questa tra si scrisse a tutti li Commissarij
 vicarij et podesta infra scritti sotto il di
 24 d'Agosto 1534

Per l'alligari uederen qd tato si scrisse a qlla Corta la qlla letta qndero piacer
 facciano d'hauer a voj da la repenta et ad qlla um natura affezion
 et uirtu tenuti ehortati a q tato q la qda uedico loro col dir et
 opari qlo q piu occurrera alla prudha umi et si conuierm al debito dlla
 iustitia q voj repentat et p et melo pmento assoluta mch' et q meglio
 operer d'io nd ui saprei eprimer n'acqer l'auto desiderm' mi temiate
 amissari di q lo mi pareua conuenirsi alla giornata di io delbi interi.

Al Commiss: di Lisa	Capo di valla bag?	Podesta di san liom:	Podesta di fighina
Comiss: di arezzo	Capo di vici? sca	Podesta di colli	Podesta di Aldeuardin
Comiss: di litta	Capo di rudi pulciano	Podesta di Barga	Podesta di valdambr
Comiss: di caprocato	Vic: di san lio:	Podesta di modigliana	Podesta di Labrona
Capo di volterra	Vic: di Scarperia	Podesta di Cortico	Podesta di terminona
Capo di cortona	Vic: di Certaldo	Podesta del monte san giuino	Podesta di castel franco di sop.
Capo di Livorno	Vic: di Pescia	Podesta di Soriano	Podesta di diacceto
Capo di Luorno	Vic: di san Miniato	Podesta di san Casciano	Podesta di Cascia et Anaja
Capo di borgo san sepolc:	Vic: di Anghiari	Podesta di san Piero in mercato	Podesta di Valdigrana
Capo di Fiesole	Vic: di Carr	Podesta di san m' imprometa	Podesta di Vinci
Capo di Montepulciano	Vic: di Loppo	Podesta di Empoli	Podesta di Sucecedino
Capo di Campiglia	Vic: di Arezzo	Podesta di Chiusi	Podesta di Castel franco di sotto
Capo di Vignona	Vic: di via pisano	Podesta di san donato in paggio	Podesta di Zeccadi
Capo di Marradi	Podesta di Livorno	Podesta di Radice di nazi	Podesta di Calara
		Podesta di Barbiata	Podesta di Ruggiano

Figure 4.3: A portion of a page from the volume of the minutes of Alessandro's letters showing a copy of the letter and a partial list of recipients. From the Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, volume 181, 87v.

Historians since 1550 noted the dearth of documents relating to Alessandro's life and rule, indicating that a significant portion of the Duke's documents were lost or destroyed in the

first 15 years after his death. In 1551, Paolo Giovio wrote to Benedetto Varchi, stating that Duke Cosimo had told him to obtain information about Duke Alessandro's death and the accession of Duke Cosimo from Varchi, presumably due to a lack of information in the archive and elsewhere.⁷ Varchi, in his own proemio, acknowledged generally the absence of certain documents from the government archives. According to Varchi, Pope Clement was said to have demanded that certain volumes of government records from the time of the siege be sent to him in Rome from the moment he regained control of the city in 1530. Failing to find "a few public books" from the period, Varchi detailed the painstaking research he did in the secret archives of government committees such as the "Ten of Liberty and Peace," then held in the Florentine Signoria building in the care of "ser Antoninaria Buonanni." Varchi also alludes to the less formal accounts he acquired from those already dead or by speaking to those still alive.⁸ The statements by Giovio and Varchi demonstrate that events from the moment of Alessandro's death until the mid-sixteenth century must be investigated in order to learn how many of the

⁷ Paolo Giovio, *Opere* (Rome: Istituto poligrafico dello stato, Libreria dello stato, 1958), 2: 192-3. "Molto Ecc.te Signor Varchi, Con la grazia di Dio ho fatto un gran lavoro circa l'Istoria e un compito discorso circa la morte del Duca Alessandro e la creazione del Duca Cosimo; e spero che vi doverà piacere, e servirà ancora voi in qualche cosa [193] perché il tutto ho di bocca del Duca; il qual vi comanda che mi vogliate servire d'una informazione in scritto dell'impresa di Sestino, della quale dice Sua Ecc.za niuno può essere meglio informato di voi, perché vi gli trovaste in persona. E di grazia non mancate di servirme bene, e presto, acciò che io possi, come Sua Ecc.za desidera procedere alla volta di Monte Murlo."

⁸ Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 9. "Conciossiachè, oltre l'altre cose, non ritrovandosi nella Segreteria alcuni libri pubblici, ne' quali erano le cose dello stato e della guerra più segrete e più importanti notate; perciocché furono, secondochè coloro dicevano a cui la cura di esse toccava, a papa Clemente, il quale instantissimamente gli chiedeva, dopo l'assedio in diligenza mandati subito; fui costretto non pure a leggere, ma notare e intavolare, per l'ordine dell'alfabeto, e poco meno che trascrivere, non solo molti libri de' signori Dieci di Libertà e Pace, e molti delle Riformagioni, e d'altri magistrati, e infinite lettere, e registri d'ambasciadori, di commessari, di vicari, di podestà e d'altri ufficiali, che di tutto il contado, distretto e dominio fiorentino nel Palazzo già de' Signori e oggi del duca, in numero quasi innumerabile, parte in filze, e parte in libri ridotte, sotto la custodia di ser Antoninaria Buonanni, cancelliere de' signori Otto di Pratica, meno diligentemente che fare non si dovrebbe, si guardano; ma volgere eziandio, e rivolgere non pochi parte zibaldoni, che così li chiamano, e parte scartabegli e scartafacci di diverse persone, le quali in vari tempi le cose, che nella città, o si facevano, o si dicevano, o si dicevano in giorno più tosto con molta diligenza e curiosità (del che non poco si debbe loro obbligo avere) che con alcuno ordine o studio andavano in su detti stracciafogli notando; e sopra esse alcune fiato, ma bene spesso più secondo le passioni, e cotale alla grossa, che secondo la verità, o giudiziosamente discorrendo; senzachè m'avvenne infinite volte il dovere ora favellare e ora scrivere, quando a questo cittadino e quando a quel soldato per avere informazione d'alcuna cosa, o per la certezza intendere d'alcun'altra, la quale essere stata diversamente, o detta, o fatta, o nelle bocche de' vivi, o nelle scritture de' morti si ritrovava."

Duke's documents disappeared.

ARCHIVAL DESTRUCTION BY ADVISORS, CROWDS, AND SOLDIERS

Historians typically blame the clearing of the Medici palace by Alessandro's advisors after his death and the sack of the Medici *palazzo* by crowds and soldiers for the relatively small number of remaining documents from Alessandro's reign. This section casts doubt on that explanation, which cannot fully account for the loss and destruction of the documents.

In 1992, Vanni Bramanti connected the lack of scholarly interest in Alessandro at that time to the relative paucity of documents from the Duke's rule.⁹ To explain why there were so few documents, Bramanti cited the nineteenth-century historian Antonio Virgili, who blamed the scarcity on the post-assassination removal of valuable items—presumably including documents—from the Palazzo Medici by Alessandro's advisors combined with the sack of the palace, when crowds and soldiers could have destroyed any remaining documents.¹⁰ Amedeo De Vincentiis' work on the destruction of the Duke of Athens' archive,¹¹ as well as those throughout Italy during the fourteenth century,¹² has shown that crowds regularly destroyed archival documents, and did so carefully so as to erase evidence of some periods but not others.

As seen in the previous chapter on condemnation of memory, crowds of citizens routinely attacked objects—including archives and documents—associated with hated leaders, traitors, and assassins. When the Duke of Athens was forced from office, government records note, “the

⁹ Bramanti, “Il ‘cartolaio’ Ceccheregli e la fortuna del duca Alessandro de’ Medici,” 278.

¹⁰ Antonio Virgili, *Francesco Berni* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1881), 483-4, 484 n. 1.

¹¹ De Vincentiis, “Politica, memoria e oblio a Firenze nel XIV secolo,” 209-248.

¹² Amedeo De Vincentiis, “Memorie bruciate. Conflitti, documenti, oblio nella città italiane del tardo medioevo,” *Bullettino dell’Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo* 106, no. 1 (2004), 167-198.

archive was burned.”¹³ Self-taught poet Antonio Pucci, using Giovanni Villani’s chronicle as a source, commemorated the event in verse. After burning several other buildings associated with the Duke’s supporters, citizens: “burned next the archives /And all the books [listing] the banished;/So that, without having to defend themselves, without official pardons /They are now exiled no longer.”¹⁴ The destruction of documents in the revolt against Walter of Brienne inspired the Florentine government to dictate that copies of important items should be made to protect against the massive loss of information in a similar revolt. Crowds performed similar attacks on archives and documents in other moments of crisis: the revolt of the Ciompi; the exile of the Medici family in 1494; Savonarola’s execution in 1498; and the return of the Medici to power in 1512.¹⁵ Alessandro’s own reference to Caesar burning Pompey’s papers alludes to the understood history of document destruction in Renaissance Florence. The same citizens who could have smeared Alessandro’s tomb with dirt or circulated mocking epitaphs about the Duke could very well have wanted to destroy documents from the time of his rule.

Despite the precedent for destroying documents and archives, the attack on the Medici houses in 1537 did not result in the loss, destruction, or theft of Alessandro’s records. Many sources attest to the damage done to Lorenzino’s home and the theft of Cosimo’s books and art, but they do not mention a sack of the main Medici *palazzo*. Giovanni Battista Adriani suggests

¹³ ASF, Priorista di Palazzo, 88v. cited in de Vincentiis, “Politica, memoria e oblio a Firenze nel XIV secolo,” 211-212 n. 7. “Die vero sabati vigesimosexto, mensis julii, dicto anno millesimo trecentesimo quadragésimotertio, dictus dominus Gualterius dux predictus, potestate quorum sibi presumpserat, Christi nomine invocato, exautoratus fuit, carceris rupti, archivium crematum.”

¹⁴ Antonio Pucci, “Canzone,” in Paoli, “Nuovi documenti intorno a Gualtieri VI di Brienne Duca d’Atene e Signore di Firenze,” 60. “Ed arse poi la Camera degli atti,/E tutti quanti i libri di banditi;/Si chè, senza vantarsi senza patti/A questa volta son di bando usciti,/Per si fatti partiti,/Che mai non si ricorda che più fosse;/Ma da Dio cre’ che mosse,/Perchè molt’era di nicissitate.”

¹⁵ Demetrio Marzi, *La cancelleria della repubblica fiorentina* (Bologna: Casciano, 1910), 462, 304. Pre-modern mobs demonstrated considerable consciousness of the symbolic and practical importance of the written word and archives. First-century ancient Greeks burned city archives during a democratic revolution; French Revolutionaries burned documents with fancy scripts and seals; and the Islamic conquerors of Constantinople threw 120,000 Christian manuscript books into the sea in 1453. See James M. O’Toole, “The Symbolic Significance of Archives” *The American Archivist* 56, no. 2 (1993), 253-5.

that soldiers guarding the main Medici palace abandoned their posts in order to join crowds sacking the smaller neighboring houses of Cosimo and Lorenzino, the assassin.¹⁶ Segni blames the attack on Alessandro Vitelli's lust for gold.¹⁷ Varchi claims that soldiers guarding the city and crowds chanting "Palle, Palle" in support of the Medici sacked Cosimo de' Medici's house and stole valuable art and books.¹⁸ Jacopo Nardi wrote that soldiers sacked the house of Cosimo out of joy at the news he would rule, while they divided Lorenzino's house from top to bottom into two structures with a road between, "as they used to do in ancient times to those that were condemned by public decree."¹⁹ This road, christened "Traitor's Alley," was sixteen *braccia*,²⁰ or arms—lengths wide. The nearly 31-foot opening was intended to broadcast to all observers the consequences of crimes against the state.²¹ An anonymous chronicle also notes that the mob

¹⁶ Giovanni Battista Adriani, *Istoria de suoi tempi* (Prato: Giachetti, 1822), 31. "I soldati, che erano alla guardia della casa de: Medici, e i servidori del Duca morto, allegri di cotal deliberazione, gridando il nome de' Medici, corsero alla casa del Signor Cosimo e di Lorenzo, che insiuo dal tempo di Lorenzo fratel di Cosimo il vecchio nella medesima abitavano."

¹⁷ Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 2:147. "...per onor del quale nuovo Signore, e per vendetta del morto Duca, e più per soddisfare alla sua infinita voglia dell' oro, fece mettere a sacco la casa di Cosimo, dicendo; che egli aveva acquistato un Palazzo ed un imperio in cambio d'una casa e d'una privata possessione, e quella altresì di Lorenzo, che gli è contigua, e successivamente la villa sua, delle quali ritrasse masserizie di gran valuta, che ascensono alla somma di diecimila scudi."

¹⁸ Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 600. "Intesasi questa deliberazione per Firenze a un tratto per tutto, fu salutato come Principe da infinita moltitudine di Cittadini con grandissima frequenza, ma non con quell'Allegrezza, che mostravano i soldati, i quali subitamente per ordine segreto del Signore Alessandro, secondochè confessarono poi essi medesimi, corsero alla casa del Signor Cosimo, e seguitandogli alcuni plebei, i quali secondo il consueto gridavano *Palle, Palle, e Duca, Duca*, la saccheggiarono insieme con quella di Lorenzo tutta quanta, portandosene infino agli aguti, senzachè la madre, e i parenti, e gli amici potessero nè colle buone, nè colle cattive, ora pregando, ed or minacciando, raffrenargli in parte alcuna. Erano in queste due antichissime, e ricchissime case, oltra una gran moltitudine di rarissimi libri in penna, così Greci, come Latini, e un numero grandissimo di statue antiche, parte di marmo, e parte di bronzo, tanti mobili, e così preziosi, che la voluta loro ascendeva a un prezzo, che non si sarebbe così agevolmente potuto stimare, e tutte le migliori cose, come si vide allora, e come s'intese poi, furono portate, qual palesemente, e qual di nascoso, in casa il Signor Alessandro."

¹⁹ Nardi, *Istorie della città di Firenze*, 2:287-8. "Ma aperta la stanza nella quale era ragunato il senato, fu raccolto e abbracciato il signor Cosimo con allegrezza di ognuno, e per la letizia che n'ebbero i soldati e la plebe, fu saccheggiata la parte della casa del signor Cosimo, e quella di Lorenzo de' Medici, la qual parte in dispregio di lui fu divisa e partita da alto a basso, come si usava di fare anticamente alle case di coloro che per pubblico decreto erano condannati."

²⁰ The *braccio* was a variable measurement roughly equivalent to 23 inches today.

²¹ Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 612.

sacked Lorenzo's house and created a road where he had murdered the Duke.²² The sack of Medici houses was of interest to chroniclers and historians, which suggests that a plundering of the main Medici palace after Alessandro's death would not have gone unrecorded.

Was it then during the clearing of Alessandro's palace that his documents were lost? Fearing the sack of the palace, Duke Alessandro's advisors and top soldiers had cleared the Medici *palazzo* of its treasures, possibly including archival documents, in the days following the assassination. Numerous accounts mention the clearing of the principal Medici house on the Via Larga. Bernardo Segni recounts that the Holy Roman Emperor's general, Alessandro Vitelli, removed to the fortress Alessandro's *guardaroba*, or moveable belongings, money, and important members of government.²³ Vitelli "cleared the whole house, and even took away the benches," according to Varchi.²⁴ An anonymous manuscript suggests that Cardinal Innocenzo Cibo frantically accounted for the "best merchandise" in the house upon news of Alessandro's

²² University of Pennsylvania (UPenn), Rare Book and Manuscript Library (RBML), Ms. Lea 77, Ms. Codex 547, "Conguiria di Lorenzo de' Medici contro il Duca Alessandro seguita in Firenze alli 6 di Gennaio 1536," 43r.-v. "...e per satisfare alla voglia della Plebe fece mettere a sacco la Casa di Lorenzo dicendo, che haveva acquistato un Palazzo [43v] in cambio di una Casa, che gl'era contigua fù determinata sua, e fecero vendere le sue masserizia, che arrivono a scudi sette mila incirca fece ancora rovinare una parte della casa di Lorenzo dal detto fino alla strada con tanta apertina, quanto teneva la Camera, nella quale da lui era stato ammazzato il Duca."

²³ Segni, *Storie fiorentine*, 2:147-8. "L'altro giorno, che fu il mercoledì, non contento il Vitello di aver fatto il nuovo Signore senza saputa d'alcuno, messe l'animo ad impadronirsi della fortezza, pel cui mezzo stimò di poter trarre grandissima preda della guardaroba del Duca morto ridotta in quel luogo, la somma de' denari, e la signoria di quella fortezza, acquisto atto a farlo ricchissimo e di più potenza."

²⁴ Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, 602. "Ma poco di poi il medesimo Signore (tai sono le fedì di coloro che servono prezzolati) scrisse all'Imperadore, che per maggior sicurtà delle cose di Firenze, e sue, era entrato nella fortezza per nome di Sua Maestà, e ad istanza di quella la teneva e terrebbe infino che a lei piacesse, nè mai ad altri, fosse chi si volesse, la consegnerebbe, se non a colui, che da Sua Maestà comandato gli fosse. Quest'atto d'avere il Signore Alessandro occupato la fortezza dispiacque stranamente così alla maggior parte de' Paleschi, come a tutti i Piagnoni, e fu cagione che per tutto Firenze, tanto nel dì là quanto nel dì qua d'Arno si levò un gran bolli bolli, e si dubitò che non si corresse a furore di popolo al Palazzo de Medici; onde il Signore Alessandro, o per questo, o perchè avesse posto l'occhio addosso a tutte le ricchezze di quella casa, fece che madama Margherita, la quale, privata in sì poca età e tanto crudelmente del suo caro ed amatissimo consorte, non faceva dì e notte altro che piangere, si ritirò, ed il cardinale insieme con lei, nella fortezza, e ne portarono seco, non pur le gioie e tutti gli arnesi di più valuta, ma vi condussero ancora tutte le masserizie quantunque vili; ed egli fece poco di poi sgombrar tutta la casa, e portarne via infino alle panche."

death.²⁵ In each of these accounts of the clearing of the house, the authors cast doubt on the motivations of Vitelli and Cibo, suggesting that they may have acted to further their own power and enrich their own treasures by possibly keeping certain items after Alessandro's death. If Alessandro's personal and government records were stolen in the process of clearing the Medici house, that doesn't explain why more valuable records from earlier family members such as Cosimo il Vecchio and Lorenzo il Magnifico remain.

Documents could have been destroyed behind the scenes by Alessandro's advisors for their own protection or use. Alessandro's own advisors may have wanted to protect the family and themselves from evidence of tyranny in the documents, and therefore destroyed them strategically. Alessandro's advisors included Francesco Guicciardini, who may have been less (or more) interested in taking or destroying some sources that could serve as sources for the *Istoria fiorentina* that he was writing. Conversely, soldiers in the fortress or palazzo could have quietly taken the documents as keepsakes or to sell. If so, no evidence of these appropriations of the documents has been found. It is more likely that the documents survived the period immediately following Alessandro's death; in that case, it was most likely some person or persons associated with the Medici ducal family who destroyed, lost, or failed to adequately preserve documents relating to Alessandro's reign.

THE COMPOSITION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE MEDICI GRANDUCAL ARCHIVES UNDER DUKE COSIMO I DE' MEDICI

The Grand Dukes and those they charged to manage their possessions were diligent caretakers of manuscripts pertaining to Florentine governance and to the Medici family. Any

²⁵ UPenn, RBML, "Conguira di Lorenzo de' Medici contro il Duca Alessandro seguita in Firenze alli 6 di Gennaio 1536," Ms. Lea 77, Ms. Codex 547, 40r. "Il Cardinal Cibo per paura di se, si ritirò con la Duchessa nella Fortezza da Basso, fatto sgombrare a furia tutta la note il Palazzo delle migliori mercanzie, e dell'Armi."

documents from Alessandro's reign once in their care, therefore, following the chaotic days immediately after his assassination, would not have been lost, stolen, or destroyed due to a general lack of care for the archive.

From the start of his reign, Duke Cosimo I was remarkably interested in books and documents. As seen in multiple sources describing the sack of his house, Duke Cosimo collected numerous books, including rare volumes in Greek and Latin. At the time of his accession, Cosimo was just seventeen years old, yet he is described as a bibliophile who tracked down important volumes himself. Judging that the loss of his book collection figures prominently in several histories that Cosimo commissioned or otherwise sponsored, the loss of the books seems to have been a significant episode in his youth. Some books must have remained in his possession because they had been in the hands of acquaintances when his library was sacked. In 1539, Cosimo exchanged several letters with men in his employ concerning books he had loaned to Cardinal Ridolfi, and his attempts to recover them.²⁶ In the same year, Cosimo had a similar exchange with members of his staff, in an attempt to recover the will of Pope Clement VII and information about Duke Alessandro's protest concerning the settlement of Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici's inheritance. The documents had been in the possession of Rinaldo Brachino, who had died while he attempted to win a lawsuit on Cosimo's behalf concerning the inheritance.²⁷ Another courtier died the next year while Cosimo was involved in a lawsuit involving Alessandro's inheritance, resulting in Cosimo sending agents to quickly recover the documents,

²⁶ ASF, MdP, filza 3262, ins. 4, fol. 81, 8 November 1539, Giovanni di Filippo dell'Antella to Cosimo I de' Medici [Doc. 18919 in MAP]; ASF, MdP, filza 3262, ins. 4, fol. 207, 20 December 1539, Giovanni di Filippo dell'Antella to Ugolino Grifoni [Doc. 19265 in MAP]; ASF, MdP, filza 3262, ins. 4, fol. 225, 26 December 1539, Giovanni di Filippo dell'Antella to Cosimo I de' Medici [Doc. 18957 in MAP].

²⁷ ASF, MdP, filza 3262, ins. 4, fol. 151, 3 December 1539, Giovanni di Filippo dell'Antella to Cosimo I de' Medici [Doc. 18924 in MAP]; ASF, MdP, filza 3262, ins. 4, fol. 192, 16 December 1539, Giovanni di Filippo dell'Antella to Cosimo I de' Medici [Doc. 18942 in MAP]; ASF, MdP, filza 3262, ins. 4, fol. 232, 30 December 1539, Giovanni di Filippo dell'Antella to Cosimo I de' Medici [Doc. 18960 in MAP].

presumably before they could be stolen or lost. Before the courtier's death, Cosimo and his advisors had ordered an agent to track down documents held in Spain regarding the case, since his opponent was also aware of them and might use them to support her claim.²⁸ Cosimo seems to have been not only interested in books, but also in archival documents for their role in supporting his side in lawsuits. As seen in Guicciardini's successful defense of Alessandro before Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, access to official documents could allow those pressing a case a tremendous advantage over those who may have constructed their case without crucial documents.

By the end of his reign, Duke Cosimo maintained at least two archives containing Medici documents. Before the consolidation of the many archives of Florence into one massive repository of documents now called the *Archivio di stato di Firenze*, each document-producing group maintained its own archive. Cosimo charged Tommaso de' Medici with maintaining the archive of Medici documents. In 1543, Tommaso was given an office "halfway up the stairs" in a palazzo, possibly the Palazzo della Signoria, where Cosimo I lived with his family at that point.²⁹ Tommaso was among the most important courtiers serving Cosimo, still maintaining in 1563 "the secret office ... called the office of the Muses [*scrittoio delle Muse*]."³⁰ Duchess

²⁸ ASF, MdP, filza 3263, fol. 131, 22 July 1540, Giovanni di Filippo dell'Antella to Cosimo I de' Medici [Doc. 19104 in MAP]; ASF, MdP, filza 3263, fol. 141, 24 July 1540, Giovanni di Filippo dell'Antella to Cosimo I de' Medici [Doc. 19109 in MAP]; ASF, MdP, filza 638, fol. 45, 2 August 1540, Cosimo I de' Medici to Pier Francesco Riccio [Doc. 15268 in MAP].

²⁹ ASF, MdP, filza 1170, ins. 7, fol. 377, 3 November 1543, Lorenzo di Andrea Pagni to Pier Francesco Riccio [Doc. 2392]; ASF, MdP, filza 1170, ins. 7, fol. 382, 7 November 1543, Lorenzo di Andrea Pagni to Pier Francesco Riccio [Doc. 2393].

³⁰ ASF, MdP, filza 646, fol. 1, 21 June 1563, Register of Documents taken from and returned to the secret chancery of Duke Cosimo I [Doc. 9200]: 1563. "Questo libro è dello Illustrissimo Signore Duca di Fiorenza et di Siena sul quale si scriveranno tutte le scritture et contratti e privilegi che si caveranno et metteranno nello scrittoio secreto dj S. E. I. vocato lo scrittoio delle Muse cominciato questo di 21 di giugno 1563 dicendo a chi si daranno et chi le porterà et così quanto le riporterà con il giorno mese et anno."

Eleonora di Toledo's acquisition of the Palazzo Pitti in 1549³¹ seems to have resulted in some of the most important documents pertaining to Duke Cosimo I's own line moving to the new palace, used mainly for ceremonial occasions until several decades later, while those dealing with the affairs of the main branch of the family stayed in the Palazzo della Signoria. The Medici family name was shared by a number of different lines descending from Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici (1360-1428). The main family line, to which Duke Alessandro belonged, descended from Giovanni di Bicci's son Cosimo the Elder (1389-1464), who exerted so much influence over the Florentine state that he was named the *pater patriae* shortly after his death. Lorenzo il Magnifico, Pope Leo X, and Pope Clement VII also belonged to the main or elder branch of the family. In contrast, the cadet *popolano* branch of the family descending from Giovanni di Bicci's younger son Lorenzo the Elder (1395-1440) celebrated fewer triumphs while in the shadow of the dominant line—until the main Medici family died out with Alessandro, and Cosimo I came to power.

Letters from the *Mediceo del Principato* archive of the Medici ruling family and granducal government from 1532 demonstrate the meticulous care with which the documents were tracked and handled by a number of sixteenth-century archives. Several instances from the reign of the Medici Grand Dukes show that their archivists were aware of the fragility of documents, and took steps to ensure their preservation. Some books were damaged in the course of delivery, as was a finely bound copy of Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae* sent to the Holy Roman Emperor from Cosimo I in 1549 and damaged on the way to the Emperor's court.³²

³¹ Leon Satkowski, "The Palazzo Pitti: Planning and Use in the Grand-Ducal Era" *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 42, no. 4 (1983), 336-337.

³² ASF, MdP, filza 1175, ins. 7, fol. 3, 18 October 1549, Lorenzo di Andrea Pagni to Pier Francesco Riccio [Doc. 539 in MAP]. "[...] Inoltre perchè la Maestà Cesarea [Karl V von Habsburg] non s'è potuta valere di quella traductione che fece il [Lodovico] Domenichj di Boetio [Anicius Manlius Torquatus Severinus Boethius] de

The year before, men robbed a papal courier attempting to serve Cosimo I with legal documents from Caterina de' Medici concerning the settlement of Alessandro's inheritance.³³ Documents never removed from the archive could also be stolen. In 1566, Pope Pius V was attempting to win a lawsuit for the Church regarding land in Siena but discovered that the relevant documents were missing from the Apostolic Archive in Rome. Agnolo Niccolini warned Florentine officials that the Pope had ordered his agents to visit Sienese and Florentine archives to steal documents that would support his claim.³⁴ Under the reign of Cosimo II, the Pope threatened the

Consolazione [De consolatione philosophiae], perché Cencemmino nel portar quel libro lo bagnò et lo condusse mal conditionato, desidera d'haverne una copia in penna di buona mano et un'altra di quella traductione che ha fatto il [Benedetto] Varchi. Però S. Ecc.a pensando che alla ventura Ms. Lelio possi esser' partito, m'ha comandato vi scriviate diate ordine che senza intermission' di tempo si metta mano a copiar' in buona forma l'una et l'altra, et copiate, si leghino con qualche bella legatura che convenga alla grandezza di S. M.tà [Karl V von Habsburg] et si mandino qua, quanto prima sarà possibile. V. S. adonche sia contenta di usarci la sua solit diligentia et accuratezza, perchè S. Ecc.a desidera molto di poterle inviar' presto a S. M.tà. [...]"

³³ ASF, MdP, filza 187, fol. 67, 28 March 1548, Cosimo I de' Medici to Lelio di Giovanni Torelli [Doc. 8014 in MAP]. "[...] È capitato qua un cursore del Papa [Paul III, Alessandro Farnese], il qual dice che era destinato dall'Imbass.re francese che risiede in Roma per exequire una citatione in la persona nostra, nella causa che ha mossa la Ser.ma Regina di Francia [Caterina de'Medici-de Valois] sopra i beni hereditarij di ^nostra^ casa [cancelled: nostra]. Et che venendo a questa volta per trovarci di qua da Fiorenza non molte miglia li furono da alcuni incogniti levate tutte le scritture che haveva, il quale caso c'è dispiaciuto assai, sendo di mente nostra che a' cursori di S. Santità sia l'accesso sicuro et che le commissioni aplice [proposed reading: apostoliche] si possino nello stato nostro liberamente exequire. Ha bene errato lui come li habiamo detto, quando venne a non far capo ^a voi o^ a qualcun altro de ministri nostri prima che cominciasse a exequire le sua commissioni, percìo che quando si fusse saputo che le exequisse di nostra buona licentia, nissun haveria havuto ardire di farli [cancelled: qualche li] violentia alcuna. Et perchè noi ^non^ vogliamo che si manchi ^ancor per questo^ d'usare diligentia adi retrovare chi ha commesso questo fallo, ordinerete [...] che si faccino pubblici bandi, che chi havesse notitia alcuna venga a manifestarla, o chi [cancelled: le] havesse le ^dette scritture^ venga a restituirle sotto quelle pene che parranno a voi che convenghino [...]"

³⁴ ASF, MdP, filza 1871, fol. 231, 23 June 1566, Agnolo di Matteo Niccolini [Doc. 9502]. "[...] Non voglio dare molestia a V. S. [Cosimo I] nel mezzo delle feste di San Giovanni. Solo le dirò che qui è venuto un commessario o mandato di S. S.tà [Pius V] o del camarlingo, che ha fatto capo all'Arcivescovo di questa città, ricercando di scritture antiche, dove si potessi trattar di ragioni o memorie in qualunque modo appartenenti a la sede Apostolica, o altri privilegii d'Imperatori, di Rè o principi, che riguardassino al medesimo segno. Mandò l'Arcivescovo, come imprudente et ambizioso che è, senza farmi asapere nulla per Ser Giovanni Billò, che tiene cura dell'Archivio, domandandolo a requisitione del commessario se frà le scritture pubbliche si conteneva cosa alcuna di quella qualità che era chiesta. Li feci comandamento che non mostrassi, ne si ragionassi di nulla senza la commissione di loro Ecc.ze Ill.mo, sendo che il medesimo e venuto o verrà costà. [...] Si ricercava di quelle scritture per riordinare come dicevano, l'Archivio Pubblico Apostolico, et qualche volta pensare ala continuatione della hystoria, ma artificiosamente ricercare, et ritrovare il fondamento di oltre ragioni smarrite, o perdute, di terre spettanti al dominio ecclesiastico, così possedute di presente, come non possedute da S. B.ne [Pius V] [...]"

town of Sorano in Southern Tuscany with an interdict for supposedly stealing documents from the Papal community of Onano concerning their ongoing border dispute.³⁵

Since archivists and the Grand Dukes were well acquainted with the fragility and value of manuscripts, they made detailed provisions for their care and order. For a journey of less than two kilometers, an archivist moving important letters from the *scrittoio delle Muse* to the rooms of Cosimo I in the Palazzo Pitti placed them in a water-tight chest covered in leather and prepared a log of the box's contents.³⁶ Giovambattista Lupi wrote an apology to Duke Cosimo I himself to apologize for his brother's failure to replace records in the "Archivio," presumably the notarial archive.³⁷ By 1607, government officials gave detailed instructions for writing, copying, ornamenting, binding, and archiving official documents.³⁸

³⁵ ASF, MdP, filza 6081, fol. circa 44 (volume not paginated), 2 September 1615, Ottavio Saraceni to Cosimo II de' Medici [Doc. 15717 in MAP]. "[...] Venne hieri un mandato della Comunità d'Onano contro questa comunità di Sorano per far publicare una scomunica papale acciò si venghi in notitia delle scritture et libri che detti onanesi pretendono esser in mano de soranesi rispetto a confini de quali si tratta, et perchè io so che ne resulta l'interesse di Vostra Altezza Serenissima non ho voluto far publicare, se prima non gli ne davo aviso, mandandoli la copia di essa scomunica [...]"

³⁶ ASF, MdP, filza 646, fol. 58, 13 October 1566, Inventory of documents moved from the chancery of the Muses to the rooms of Cosimo I at Palazzo Pitti [Doc. 9257 in MAP]. "[...] S'è tratto dello scrittoio delle Muse l'apresso scritture et messe in una cassa coperta di cuoio [proposed reading: peloso] stagniata et mandata al Palazo de' Pitti in camera dj S. E. I. [Cosimo I] con lo intervento del Signore Montalvo Cameriere, et prima mazi novantadue di più lettere di più tempi. Uno stagnione di lettere del Re Filippo di Spagna [Felipe II de Austria]. Uno stagnione di lettere di Carlo 5.o Imperatore [Karl V Habsburg]. Uno registro di lettere scritte il Duca [Cosimo I] scritte di sua mano. Un mazo di lettere di mano propria di S. E. I. a Don Francesco di Tolledo. Uno mazo Parma negotij. Uno mazo sopra la tregua rotta. Lettere del Puccino che andò in galera. Inserto del'Ambasciatore Pandolfino. Mazi cinque di più scritture. Dua sacchetti di scritture. Una cassetta d'albero serrata di scritture."

³⁷ ASF, MdP, filza 4906, fol. 246, 23 March 1577, Giovambattista Lupi to Francesco di Cosimo I de' Medici [Doc. 16478 in MAP]. "[...] Non per altro scrivo a V.A. la presente che per accompagnar con essa l'inserto che mando in Cifera non lasciando però con questa occasione di non mi venire a ricordare che si degni farmi grazia di tener per raccomandata mia Madre con quella pocha di sustantia rimastaci alla morte di mio Padre, quale mi par vedere che se n'anderà in perdizione se con essa si ha da rimediare all'errore che tanto sciocchamente fece un mio fratello imprudentissimo [possibly Francesco di Pierantonio Lupi] in non rimettere certi contratti all'Archivio, per il quale riportò condennatione si grande [...]"

³⁸ ASF, MdP, filza 300, fol. 15, 1 February 1607, Belisario di Francesco Vinta to Lorenzo Mutii [Doc. 1846]. "L'ultima lettera che tengo di V.S. è stata de 19 et con essa ricevetti quel privilegio rescritto dal prete costà molto bene, et rimando costà tutte quelle dispositione, perchè quelle di S.A. [Ferdinando I] come Granduca di Toscana le faccia sottoscrivere dall'aud.re Vinta [Paolo di Francesco] mio fratello con il "Vidit", come faceva il S.r Cav.re Concino [...], mele rimandarà, perchè le soscriverò anch'io quà, et le lascerò poi in mano di S.A. [...] Il libretto contenente tutte le dispositioni si accommodorà come ella dice con la cordellina di seta, et con il sigillo del piombo

Given that the Medici archivists were such careful guardians of documents in their care, another explanation must be sought for the absence of documents pertaining to Alessandro from Florentine archives. It is possible, though not likely, that scholars with access to Alessandro's documents may have destroyed or failed to return them. For example, while writing his *Storia fiorentina*, Benedetto Varchi borrowed several volumes of archival material and had not returned them by 1564, the year before his death.³⁹ In 1550, Filippo Nerli needed access to the documents that Varchi had borrowed, and he was ordered to return them immediately. At that time, Varchi bemoaned the numerous demands the Medici family placed on him, which prevented him from returning the documents more quickly.⁴⁰ It is entirely possible that Varchi was busy or disorganized, with no intention of keeping or destroying the documents in his care. The scholar was clearly trusted sufficiently that one year later a courtier was ordered to find papers in the ducal secretariat for Varchi.⁴¹ When Varchi died months later in November 1565, Tommaso de' Medici ordered the Podestà of Montevarchi, where Varchi lived, to send all of Varchi's writings

pendente nel modo, che dicitia V.S. Quanto poi agl'ornamenti, et colori, si rimette in tutto, et per tutto, nel buon parere et giuditio di V.S., et si approverà, che sia filettuto d'oro, et che habbia le fibbie d'argento et come sarà finito V.S. lo manderà quà subito. Li originale di detti dispositioni, et rescritti di S.A. si ponghino come V.S. ben considerà in una cassetta di ferro serrata a chiave per salvarla segretamente, et separatamente in un armario a parte di cotesto uffitio delle riformagioni, per maggiore cautela. [Proposed reading: Un'altro] al registrarle nel registro ordinario de privilegi, che stà costì nelle riformagioni, S.A. nostro signore si contenta, et vuole, che si registrino nel registro corrente et pubblica di detti reformagioni. [...] Il libretto nominato di sopra con quelli ornamenti non ha a rimanere nelle riformagioni, ma lo metterà S.A. nel suo proprio archivio segreto, et alle riformagioni resteranno, come si è detto, gl'originali nella cassetta di ferro, et quell'altre copie nel registro corrente, ma chiuse [...] Et quanto allo scrivere il medesimo libretto, che si ha a ornare et dare in mano si S.A. si approva che V.S. lo faccia scrivere dal medesimo prete, ma di carattere più corrente, purchè sia intelligibile, et che si pigli inchiostro così buono, che non si estingua [...] Piace che ella habbia salvato quel privilegio di quei versi estente tu la piegatura, et quando ci rimanderà quest'altre, potrà rimandare anche esso perchè S.A. risolva se lo vorrà rompere o serbarlo con gl'altri [...]"

³⁹ ASF, MdP, filza 503a, fol. 867, 22 February 1564, Francesco Riesci to Cosimo I de' Medici [Doc. 3535 in MAP]. "[...] Item, circa dieci anni sono e si prestorono tre libri di provisioni facte li anni 1527, 28 e 29 per polizza di ms. Lelio [Torelli] a un mandato di ms. Benedetto Varchi per scrivere le cronache et io ne presi dal mandato la ricevuta sotto la poliza di detto ms. Lelio, la quale io ho sempre preservata sonsi richiesti più volte et mai si son possuti rihavere parrebbe ragionevole che in X anni e' n'havessi cavato il nervo di quello che si fece in que' tempi [...]"

⁴⁰ Samuels, "Benedetto Varchi and Sixteenth-Century Florentine Humanism," 139.

⁴¹ ASF, MdP, filza 1177, ins. 4, fol. 80, 3 January 1565, Bartolomeo Concini to Antonio Serguidi [Doc. 17055 in MAP]. "[...] Richordatevi di trovare quelle scritte in secreteria per darle al [Benedetto] Varchi [...]"

to Florence by means of Varchi's secretary.⁴² It is not entirely clear if every document was returned to all of the Florentine archives from which they were borrowed, although records from the *scrittoio delle Muse* notes that documents concerning events in 1536 and 1537 were returned by someone working on a history between 1563 and 1572.⁴³ Unlike archives in republics, where members of important councils would view and borrow documents with little oversight, the Medici archives that would have held any documents remaining from Alessandro's rule seem to have been carefully organized, logged, and monitored by longtime professionals such as Tommaso de' Medici, director of the *scrittoio*. It seems unlikely that significant numbers of documents would have disappeared from the Medici archives without provoking a series of letters similar to those sent in 1539 and 1540 in order to recover documents from courtiers who had died while handling lawsuits. It is more likely that documents pertaining to Alessandro's reign were deliberately suppressed, as will be explored in the next section.

MANIPULATION OF THE MEDICI ARCHIVES BY THE GRAND DUKES

Recent scholarship suggests that Duke Cosimo I suppressed memory of Duke Alessandro in the interest of establishing his own rule. Stefano Dall'Aglio discovered that Duke Cosimo I's associate, Giovan Francesco Lottini, did not murder Alessandro's assassin, as was always assumed, raising questions about Cosimo's commitment to avenging Alessandro's murder.⁴⁴

⁴² ASF, MdP, filza 221, fol. 9, 19 November 1565, Tommaso di Iacopo de' Medici to Unknown [Doc. 4106 in MAP]. "[...] Sarà di questa apotatore [blank] di Gianpiero del Serra il quale è quello che scriveva per il [Benedetto] Varchi le storie. Et perchè il detto Varchi laborat in extremis, il Duca mio Signore [Cosimo I de' Medici] mi ha comandato che io scriva a V. S. che vegghiate le scritture che si truovono costì del detto Ms. Benedetto Varchi e le facci consegnare al sudetto che ha commissione portarle qui a S. E. I. [...]"

⁴³ ASF, MdP, filza 645, fol. 4, 15 January 1572, Archive Inventory [Doc. 9156]. "Inventario di più sorte scritture messe in questo scrittoio per mano di messer Thommaso de' Medici da di 21 di giugno 1563 a questo di 15 di gennaio 1571: ...Un legato di lettere et scritture et cifere del'anno 1536 et 1537 per servire alla Storia ..."; ASF, MdP, filza 646, fol. 58, 15 January 1572, Archive Inventory [Doc. 9258 in MAP]. "[...] S'è messo in detto scrittoio un legato di lettere et scritture del'anno 1536 e 1537 per servire alla Storia, et un legato di cifere di detto tempo messe per mano di messer Thomaso de' Medici.."

⁴⁴ Dall'Aglio, "Il presunto colpevole," 840-856.

Nicholas Scott Baker noted that a chronicle favorable to Alessandro was first printed in Venice not Florence, and that Benedetto Varchi's *Storia fiorentina*, which was very critical of Duke Alessandro, was dedicated to and commissioned by the latter's successor Duke Cosimo I, whose own prestige increased with the denigration of his predecessor.⁴⁵ When a group of Savonarolans gathered suspiciously on the anniversary of Alessandro's death, Duke Cosimo dismissed the frantic notification by his associate and stated that since Florentines are bound to be active, they may as well entertain themselves with this diversion rather than another, more dangerous activity.⁴⁶

The practice of silent, intra-family and intra-court *damnatio memoriae* under Duke Cosimo I and his sons has also been noted. In 1556, Cosimo murdered and condemned the memory of Sforza Almeni, a long-time courtier, who had criticized Cosimo's liaison with the young Eleonora degli Albizi. For his disobedience, Almeni had evidence of his role at court obliterated from official documents.⁴⁷ Art historians have declared the manipulated and missing portraits of disobedient Medici women evidence of several other official *damnatio memoriae* by Cosimo's sons, Grand Dukes Francesco and Ferdinando.⁴⁸

The Medici ducal and granducal bureaucracy under Cosimo and his descendants regularly destroyed documents by burning them, which raises suspicions that archivists were responsible for the destruction of Alessandro's letters. When several account books were found to be incorrect in 1540, a courtier was informed that they should either be fixed or burned.⁴⁹ In

⁴⁵ Baker, "Power and Passion," 456.

⁴⁶ Zanrè, "Ritual and Parody in Mid-Cinquecento Florence," 189-204.

⁴⁷ Charles Davis, "Frescos by Vasari for Sforza Almeni, 'Coppiere' to Duke Cosimo I," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 24, no. 2 (1980): 127-202.

⁴⁸ Karla Langedijk, *Portraits of the Medici* (Florence: Studio per edizioni scelte, 1981-7), 1: 128; Langdon, *Medici Women*, 166-8.

⁴⁹ ASF, MdP, filza 3263, fol. 116, 15 July 1540, Giovanni di Filippo dell'Antella to Ugolino Grifoni [Doc. 19317 in

the seventeenth century, a letter informed Sallustio Tarugi, Florentine ambassador to Spain from 1602 to 1609, that he should burn certain documents “without names and in capital letters,” which is probably a code referring to certain people or families.⁵⁰ Later in the seventeenth century, the ambassador to Spain was instructed to gather and burn certain letters under his personal supervision.⁵¹ As seen in Chapter One, even private citizens such as Jacopo Nardi requested that their friends burn letters after reading them to prevent retribution for their contents.⁵²

Despite regularly burning documents, archivists do not appear to have destroyed Duke Alessandro’s papers outright. Although the cases of document burning thus far discussed have involved maintaining correct records and protecting personal and state secrets, an inventory from 1541 demonstrates that Tommaso de’ Medici also destroyed unnecessary documents in the Medici archive.⁵³ The inventory contains a number of small notations indicating when and why

MAP]. “Giuliano Ardinghelli mi portò un foglio del quale vi mando copia, et vi troverete la risposta, che io ne ho renduta, perché veggo che il desiderio loro sarebbe di diminuire la quantità delle robbe consumate in quelle case, et date per elemosina, et ritrattare i prezzi di quelle, che voi havete vendute, et similmente diminuire la quantità dei denari spesi, et come ho detto loro a parole, questo sarebbe un dire, che su per quei libri, dove sono scripti questi conti, non vi fusse il vero, et che meritassino d’essere gitati al fuoco, et che se messer Gismondo havessi visto che non fussino state scripte giustamente, non l’harebbe acceptate, et portate, vederemo quello che di nuovo mi faranno intendere et saperete tutto...”

⁵⁰ ASF, MdP, filza 5052, fol. 136, 31 January 1605, Belisario di Francesco Vinta to Sallustio Tarugi [Doc. 618 in MAP]. “Circa le scritture date dal Signore Rutilio [Gaci] brucinsi pur tutte e massimamente le lettere senza nome, e quelle scritte a lettere maiuscole...La tapezzeria per il S. Conte d’Alva de Lista si farà fare, ma vi anderà tempo, se ben si farà sollecitare quanto più sarà possibile.”

⁵¹ ASF, MdP, filza 4962, unpaginated, 10 November 1635, Andrea di Giovanni Battista Cioli to Francesco di Giovanni de’ Medici [Doc. 11939 in MAP]. “[...] S.A. [Ferdinando II de’ Medici] ha sentito volentierissime le diligenze che V.S.I. ha fatte et è per fare acciò si risquota il residuo di quel credito di 300 mila scudi accomodatisi già da questa Ser.ma Casa, cioè dal Gran Duca Cosimo 2.o alla Maestà del re Filippo 3.o. Et haverà però caro che V.S.I. le vada continuando sino all’effetto della totale riscossione. [...] Mons.r Arcivescovo di Pisa [Giuliano de’ Medici di Castellina] ha havuto gusto d’intendere che il s.r [Bernardo] Monanni havesse già ordine da V.S.I. di scegliere e mettere insieme tutte le scritture e minute di lettere, che si conservano sotto la sua custodia, di Mons.r medesimo et del s.r Averardo suo fratello [de’ Medici di Castellina] per mettere poi nel fuoco et che V.S.I. sia per stare a vedere bruciarle. Et brucinsi pur con esse anche le lettere del s.r Curtio Picchena e mie perchè ne habbiamo qui le minute. [...]”

⁵² Samuels, “Benedetto Varchi and Sixteenth-Century Florentine Humanism,” 353-4.

⁵³ ASF, Miscellanea Medicea, filza 23, inserto 42, c. 1-48, Inventario di privilegio ed altre scritture conservate nell’archivio del duca di Firenze Cosimo I.

Tommaso destroyed documents on the list (Fig. 4.4). In total, of the 162 items Tommaso catalogued in 1541, he noted that he burned or destroyed 30 documents and gave away 13, which amounts to just over a quarter of the items in the inventory.⁵⁴ The archivist wrote that he destroyed some of the documents because they were incorrect. For example, an inventory of the Fortress of Florence—commonly known as the Fortezza da Basso—was burned because “non sta bene” on November 21, 1541.⁵⁵ Other documents were burned because they were not considered useful.⁵⁶ Yet the vast majority of the documents were burned without reasons given for the destruction. Among the 30 documents burned, none appear to have been important state papers from 1530 to 1537 or letters written by Duke Alessandro and his staff. In fact, privileges given to Duke Alessandro from Charles V appear to be some of the most important items on the list, since they involved rights inherited by Duke Cosimo I.⁵⁷ The careful preservation of those documents illustrates why Duke Cosimo could not destroy memory of Alessandro’s reign outright; Cosimo’s own legitimacy hinged on proving Alessandro’s legitimate installation by Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and Pope Clement VII.

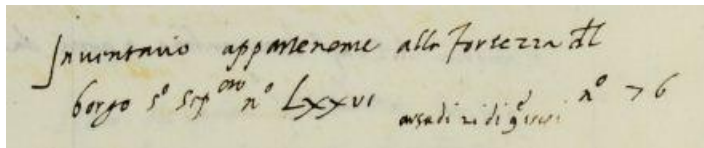


Figure 4.4: Small notation of “arsa di 21 di novembre 1541.” ASF, MM 23, insert 42, 8v.

If the disappearance of Alessandro’s documents cannot be explained by the sacking of his palace by a mob in 1537, nor the by the clearing of his palace by his agents in the same year, nor

⁵⁴ ASF, MM 23, ins. 42, 1v.-14v.

⁵⁵ ASF, MM 23, ins. 42, 7r. “essi arso perche non sta bene adi 21 di novembre 1541”

⁵⁶ ASF, MM 23, ins. 42, 8v. Two different documents were “arso per esser non utile” and “abrucciato per esser non utile.”

⁵⁷ See ASF, MM 23, insert 42, 1v., 3v., 4r.

by the neglect or destruction of the archivists of his successor Cosimo, another explanation must be sought: most likely, the Grand Dukes starting with Cosimo I organized the Medici archives in such a way as to exclude and minimize Alessandro's reign. The structure of the Medici archives began to coalesce in their present form under Cosimo I. The *Mediceo avanti il Principato* archive includes some documents from Alessandro's rule, but it technically ends in 1532. The *Mediceo del Principato* is supposed to begin in 1532, but it really begins in 1537 with the rule of Cosimo I, with the exception of one volume of Alessandro's letters, which will be discussed in chapter five. Some documents concerning Alessandro are held in the *Miscellanea Medicea* collection, but it contains items mostly only incidentally related to Alessandro. Thus, the documents of Alessandro—the archival memory of him—were dispersed among many collections, hindering scholars seeking to reconstruct his career and regime.

Positioning Duke Alessandro in an archival gap was not a result of decisions made by modern archivists or sixteenth-century courtiers, but the Medici Grand Dukes themselves. Duke Cosimo I, as early as 1547, began the process of dividing Duke Alessandro and the main branch of the Medici family from his own *popolano* branch of the family through the structure of his archives. Bernardo di Giovan Battista Gamberelli contacted Duke Cosimo I to ask if he would like him to assemble all of the contracts he had drawn up for him in a single volume.⁵⁸ Cosimo sent his response through courtiers only three days later. Cosimo wanted Gamberelli to make two registers: one with all contracts concerning the Medici family until the death of Alessandro, and the other containing all contracts starting with him. Cosimo stated that he wanted the

⁵⁸ ASF, MdP, filza 1175, ins. 2, fol. 13, 14 August 1547, Bernardo di Giovan Battista Gamberelli to Cosimo I de' Medici [Doc. 12964 in MAP]. “[...] Havendo apresso di me assai contratti e cose di che V.a Ex.a e sua posterì secondo le oportunità de' tempi si potranno servire e alsi havendo rogato più contratti come è noto a quella e de' quali contratti per me rogati colla presente ne mando nota a V.a Ex.a acio quella contrasegni quali gli pare facci summere e di che facci fare nota in uno libro di carta buona che di già per tal cosa ho preparato acio possi restare apresso a quella e sua posterì [...]”

registers to include documents relating to both the Medici family interests and State business. Moreover, all other notaries were instructed to systematically register and authenticate their contracts in the same way, and to continue to add to their volumes as they drew up new contracts in the future. The letter between ducal underlings concludes with the Duke giving his blessing for starting “this good work.”⁵⁹

This letter provides a view into the consolidation of the Medici ducal state and Florentine archives under Cosimo I. Just ten years after assuming office, Cosimo gave orders that tell us several things about how he envisioned the whole Medici family and the ducal state. As seen elsewhere, Cosimo quickly moved to merge Medici and state interests. Cosimo also wanted to expand and organize record-keeping in Florence on a grand scale, since he asked Gamberelli to not only include his own contracts in the volume, but also those drawn up for previous family members and for the state. Finally, Cosimo specifically requested two different volumes: one for all contracts drawn up before 1537, and another for all drawn up after. The decision was not based on practical concerns such as the number of contracts that each volume could reasonably contain, but on an imaginary dividing line between the assassination of Alessandro and his own accession. The division was not only between the rule of Alessandro and that of himself, but also between the rule of the main Medici branch of the family that dominated Florentine politics

⁵⁹ ASF, MdP, filza 1173, ins. 6, fol. 289, 17 August 1547, Cristiano Pagni to Pier Francesco Riccio [Doc. 8136 in MAP]. “[...] Mando a V. S.ria una nota di contratti che il Gambarello [Bernardo Gamberelli] ha rogati di Sua Ecc.a [Cosimo I] alla quale piace il modo che ditto Gambarello prepone di farne un libro, anzi la dice che vorria se ne facessi dua, uno di quelli che si son fatti dalla morte del Duca Alessandro [de' Medici] in qua, et l'altro di quelli da li indietro, intendendosi però di cose appartenenti alla Illustrissima Casa [de' Medici] così per l'interesse particolare et proprietà di essa come dello Stato, et che su detti libri si riducessino non solamente quelli del detto Gambarello, ma tutti li altri che hanno stipulati li altri notari, i quali si mettesse diligentia di ritrovare, et si tenessi poi un ordine di mano in mano che se ne rogherà di farli registrare, et autenticare, a detto libro. La S. V. potrà esserne co'l detto Gambarello et dare principio a questa buon'opera [...]” For more information on the creation of the Medici Granducal archives, please see Arrighi and Klein, “Strategie familiari,” 83-100 and Giuseppe Pansini, “Le segreterie nel Principato Mediceo,” *Carteggio universale di Cosimo I de Medici*, ed. Anna Bellinazzi and Claudio Lamioni (Florence: Giunta Regionale Toscana, 1982), IX-XLIX.

in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and his own *popolano* branch that was prominent, but secondary. Documents show that Cosimo had records on the Medici that distinguished between branches of the family.⁶⁰ He may also have been aware of how members of the dominant branch of the family moved to expunge and marginalize documents of the *popolano* family following the main branch's exile in 1494.⁶¹ As a result of Cosimo's move to establish his branch of the family as the rightful Medici line, archival memory of Duke Alessandro was tacked on to the earlier period in Medici history.

TEXTUAL MANIPULATION BY THE MEDICI GRAND DUKES

Clearly, the Medici Grand Dukes of in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries manipulated archives and texts in order to bolster the claims of Cosimo I and his *popolano* line of the family to the dukedom. Even when the manipulation was not done specifically to minimize or slander the memory of Duke Alessandro, aggrandizing and protecting the memory of Cosimo and his descendants had that effect.

The Medici Grand Dukes themselves often oversaw and manipulated documents and books. Grand Duke Francesco, the son and successor of Cosimo I, reported to Paolo Giordano I Orsini, Duke of Bracciano, that he was unable to immediately send Paolo certain requested documents. Francesco stated that the documents were kept in a secret cabinet, to which only he had access, and that he would retrieve and send them once he returned to the city.⁶² This

⁶⁰ ASF, MdP, filza 645, fol. 1, 1563, Inventory of documents from the 15th century pertaining to the Medici family [Doc. 9129 in MAP]. "Casa de Medici. Concessione de' Signori Venetianj fatta alla Casa de Medicj eleggendolj per gentil'hominj. Nota de' beni consegnati da Lorenzo di Piero de' Medicj a Lorenzo et Giovanni di Pierfrancesco de' Medicj. Lodo dato tra Cosimo et Pierfrancesco de' Medici. Un libro grande di contratti attenenti alla Casa de' Medici."

⁶¹ Arrighi and Klein, "Strategie familiari," 87-88.

⁶² ASF, MdP, filza 254, fol. 152, 2 November 1580, Francesco I de' Medici to Paolo Giordano I Orsini [Doc. 21282]. "[...] Io non posso mandare all'Ecc.za V. [Orsini] le scritture attenenti a Castel S.to Angelo se prima non ritorno a Fiorenza, perché sono in un mio scrittoino secreto con altre cose importanti che non le lascio maneggiare

statement confirms that at least some of the Medici documents transferred from the Palazzo Vecchio to the Palazzo Pitti were under the personal care of the Grand Dukes. Francesco not only maintained a cache of family papers, but intervened directly in the publication of works about the life of his father. Francesco thanked Aldo Manuzio the Younger in 1580 for sending drafts from parts of a forthcoming biography of Cosimo I that he planned to print in Venice, and sent him 300 scudi for his work.⁶³ Less than two months after receiving word that Manuzio was ready to print the biography, Francesco sent him a letter notifying him, “there are some things where you have been misinformed” which “need to be cleaned and corrected by your hand.” Upon receiving an amended copy of the book, Francesco committed to making a decision about the biography’s fate.⁶⁴ Francesco acknowledged receipt of the final version of the book just over two months later;⁶⁵ the book, *Vita di Cosimo de’ Medici*, was published four years later;⁶⁶ and

da persona, ma come ritorni alla città le ritroverò subito et glene manderò con ogni prestezza, acciò possa seguitare la sua lite [...].”

⁶³ ASF, MdP, filza 254, fol. 152, 2 November 1580, Francesco I de’ Medici to Aldo Manuzio (the Younger) [Doc. 21283]. “[...] Il mandato vostro m’ha portato non solo la lettera vostra de’ 27 del passato ma anco i quaderni della vita del G. Duca mio padre [Cosimo I] che sia in cielo, i quali io vedrò volentieri come fatica vostra, sendo sicuro che uscendo da voi sarà anco vista volentieri da ciascuno. Et harò caro che tiriate innanzi il restante, acciò apparisca quanto prima il volere et virtù vostra, et la satisfatione et contento mio. Et perché dal medesimo ho inteso nel bisogno che vi trovate, ho ordinato al mio depositario [Napoleone Cambi] che vi facci pagare costà trecento scudi per arra della molta volontà che vi teniamo, non sendo mai per lassare occasione d’impiegarci per farci beneficio [...]; ASF, MdP, filza 257, fol. 79, 17 November 1581, Francesco I de’ Medici to Aldo Manuzio (the Younger) [Doc. 14036]. “[...] Volentieri ho inteso che habbiate dato fine alla descriptione della vita et fatti del Gran Duca Cosimo mio padre, et del portarcela non occorre che veniate voi per questo in persona, ma aspetterete il commodo del potercela mandare per l’huomo vostro; et come l’haverò vista ordinerò quello si habbi da fare. Dell’ [Ottavio] Abbioso voglio io continuare, trovandomene ben servito, di valermene costù, si che intorno a ciò non accade altro, et massime havendo voi altra servitù, aggradendovi non di meno l’affetto et inclinatione che mostrate al mio servitio [...].”

⁶⁴ ASF, MdP, filza, 257, fol. 99, 13 January 1582, Francesco I de’ Medici to Aldo Manuzio (the Younger) [Doc. 14057]. “[...] Il Militia si è intertenuto qui di molti giorni perché mi son fatto leggere quanto havete scritto delle attoni, et vita del Gran Duca Cosimo mio padre; et veramente ne ho preso buon gusto et molta satisfatione veggendo l’amorevole diligente et giuditiosa opera che ci havete impiegata; solamente ci sono alcune cosette che per esser voi stato male informato, et per non havere intera pratica delli modi di qua, hanno bisogno di essere ripulite et corrette da vostra mano; et però rimandandovi per il medesimo Militia il libro, vi si manda ancora una nota di tutti li avvertimenti et considerationi che ci sovvengono; et voi come le haverete emendate mi invierete di nuovo il libro, et all hora piglierò l’ultima resolutione et ordinerò quanto si habbia da eseguire intorno ad esso. [...].”

⁶⁵ ASF, MdP, filza 269, fol. 13, 28 March 1586, Francesco I de’ Medici to Aldo Manuzio (the Younger) [Doc. 14201 in MAP]. “[...] Ho ricevuto il libro, et subito che io l’habbia visto, che si solleciterà, quanto più si potrà, vene risponderò l’animo, et parere mio per la publicatione, poichè melo chiedete [...].”

⁶⁶ Aldo Manuzio, *Vita di Cosimo de’ Medici, primo gran duca di Toscana* (Bologna: s.n., 1586).

Manuzio was named the humanities chair at Pisa around the same time.⁶⁷ Despite working with Francesco to revise the book, Manuzio still published it in Bologna, outside of Tuscany. Yet he obtained a prestigious post at Pisa on the direct order of Francesco I, signaling that he had the Grand Duke's support.

Francesco's successors carried on the tradition of personally altering published works. In 1588, Cammillo di Francesco Guidi suggested that Ferdinando I publish a biography of Cosimo I that his deceased uncle wrote. Guidi stated that Ferdinando could make the changes he wished in the book before publishing it.⁶⁸ The book appears to never have been printed, which might indicate its quality or the reticence of Grand Dukes Ferdinando and Francesco to publish authorized biographies of their father. Much later, in 1666, Antonio Grifoni asked Grand Duke Ferdinando II to review a text before having it printed, indicating that the oversight of the Grand Dukes continued into the seventeenth century.⁶⁹ Although the editing of the Grand Dukes could be seen as hindering the work of modern historians and tainting otherwise useful works with propaganda, modern scholars tend to accept that the alterations create a new text entirely. We rarely have the opportunity to follow a text through its alteration process, though. Scholars can

⁶⁷ ASF, MdP, filza 269, f. 127, 29 August 1586, Belisario di Francesco Vinta to Giovanni Battista di Ridolfo Carnesecchi [Doc. 14236]. “[...] Sua Altezza Nostro Signore [Francesco I] ha deputato Ms. Aldo Manucci alla lettura di humanità in luogo di Ms. Piero Angoli da Barga, con la medesima provisione, et emolumenti; gli ha anco fatto gratia di accomodarlo anticipatamente della provisione et salario d'un anno a scontarlo poi a cento scudi l'anno [...]”

⁶⁸ ASF, MdP, filza 4919, fol. 200, 2 April 1588, Cammillo di Francesco Guidi to Ferdinando I de' Medici [Doc. 8225 in MAP]. “[...] È morto, per quanto intendo, il Vescovo [Iacopo] Guidi mio zio [...]. Ha il detto vescovo lassata in buon termine quella opera della Vita del Granduca Cosimo [I de' Medici], gloriosa memoria, non mai pubblicata da lui per giuste et compassionevoli cagioni, le quali, perchè oggi cessano, devesi da noi adempiere quello che in ciò a V. A. piacerà dire, che sia di suo piacimento, potendo senza iattanza dirle che, sebbene egli fu il primo a scriverne et è dagli ^altri^ che hanno poi scritto stato veduto, gli sia però rimaso luogo tale, che egli non sarà forse tenuto peggior dichiaratore de' gloriosi fatti di quell'Alt.za di quel ch'egli stia in giusta opinione di leale ministro delle sue regie volontà. Intanto scrivo alli miei, che mene mandino una copia, sendone più instrutto d'ogni altro, per poterla havere a ordine et in ultima mano a ogni disposizione dell 'A.V. [...]”

⁶⁹ ASF, MdP, filza 1082, ins. 3, fol. 1169, 10 July 1666, Antonio Grifoni to Ferdinando II de' Medici [Doc. 1082 in MAP]. “[...] Stimerei di mancar troppo a me stesso [...] se non ricorressi alla sua generosità come Gran Maestro di questa Sacra e Ill.ma religione di S. Stefano, di humilmente pregarla di farsi leggere l'annessa scrittura inviatami da un amico per darlo alla stampa. [...]”

usually compare texts and deduce where changes have been made, but evidence of another hand in the process is implied yet rarely seen. A long-neglected copy of the chronicle reveals precisely this process of textual alteration and destruction, suggesting that the Grand Dukes not only minimized Duke Alessandro's role in the formation of the Tuscan state through their organization of the archive, but also through more directly altered and erased texts.

A manuscript now held at the University of Pennsylvania serves as the missing source for two better-known versions of the same text, shedding light on the process of textual alteration under the Medici Grand Dukes. The chronicle covers events from after the death of Duke Alessandro until 1555. The identity of the author is uncertain, although the question has attracted interest.⁷⁰ We know that the author was most likely a Savonarolan and that he described public festivals and spectacles with apparent relish. Caroline Callard recently explored the practice of textual alteration using two versions of the chronicle in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (BNCF). My discussion of the text owes much to her book, *Le Prince et la République*, and attempts to continue the fine work she began.⁷¹

The overlooked Pennsylvania *Cronaca fiorentina* serves as the most authoritative version of the chronicle discovered to date, although it did not serve as the source for Enrico Coppi's critical edition, published in 2000.⁷² The Pennsylvania text shows proof of significant alterations that were intended to change the meaning of the chronicle—those changes appear to have been fully incorporated in the manuscript used by Coppi for the critical edition. These alterations are revealed by the differences between the manuscript copies and in actual written editing in the

⁷⁰ Enrico Coppi, "Introduzione," in [Marucelli], *Cronaca fiorentina*, ed. Enrico Coppi (Florence: Olschki, 2000), V-XIII; Callard, *Le prince et la république*, 310-327.

⁷¹ Callard, *Le prince et la république*, 310-327.

⁷² [Marucelli], *Cronaca fiorentina*.

Pennsylvania text itself.⁷³ My analysis of the University of Pennsylvania chronicle demonstrates that it most likely served as a draft for the BNCF chronicle that Coppi used as the source for the published transcription. Caroline Callard lists no fewer than eight manuscript versions of the *Cronaca* held by Italian libraries, yet she claims that the original manuscript has been lost.⁷⁴ It is entirely possible that the Pennsylvania manuscript, purchased by the university in 1960, is the “lost” source, or at least the oldest version still in existence. The focus of Renaissance scholars on Italian archives and libraries has allowed a number of manuscripts and documents purchased by American universities and research centers in the twentieth century to become “lost.” Images from the overlooked Pennsylvania text serve to reveal the process of textual alteration and demonstrate the significant distortion of meaning embedded in Coppi’s edition of the *Cronaca*, supporting my argument that the Pennsylvania text should serve as the source for a new critical edition of the text.

Both the BNCF manuscript that served as the source for Coppi’s edition and the Pennsylvania manuscript appear to have been copied by Antonio d’Orazio da Sangallo (1551-1636). Coppi identified Sangallo as the copyist of the published BNCF manuscript.⁷⁵ Sangallo was a descendent of the artist Antonio da Sangallo who designed, among other works, the *Fortezza da Basso* for Duke Alessandro in the 1530s. In the course of his career as the chief Medici archivist and later as a disgraced courtier attempting to win back official favor, Sangallo copied and conserved a number of important documents relating to the Medici dukedom. Among them was the volume of Alessandro’s letters discussed above that figures prominently in Chapter Four of this dissertation. The handwriting in the Pennsylvania manuscript seems to

⁷³ Coppi used BNCF II, IV, 19 for the critical edition.

⁷⁴ Callard, *Le prince et la république*, 318.

⁷⁵ Coppi, “Introduzione,” VII-XIII.

match the handwriting in other known sources written or copied by Sangallo.

A comparison of the two chronicle manuscripts shows that edits written in the Pennsylvania manuscript were incorporated into the BNCF manuscript, indicating that the Pennsylvania manuscript likely served as a draft for the BNCF copy. Most notable, as mentioned by Callard when comparing the manuscript used in the printed edition and another version of the chronicle once owned by Andrea Cavalcanti, is the systematic substitution of the word *duca* for *tiranno* concerning Cosimo I in the BNCF text.⁷⁶ Corrections of the word *tiranno* to *duca* in the text start from folio 3v. in the Pennsylvania manuscript. On folio 3v., “Maria Salviati, madre del nuovo tiranno” is corrected to “Maria Salviati, madre del nuovo ~~tiranno~~ D,” presumably *Duca* (Fig. 4.5).⁷⁷ In the printed edition, the phrase reads, “Maria Salviati, madre del nuovo duca,” with no notation of a similar correction in the BNCF manuscript.⁷⁸ Later on folio 3v., “del tiranno Cosimo” and “il tiranno Cosimo” were amended to read “del ~~tiranno~~ Ducha Cosimo” (Fig. 4.6) and “il ~~tiranno~~ Ducha Cosimo (Fig. 4.7).”⁷⁹ As in the previous example, the edition of the BNCF reflects the edited text only, with no record of the original use of “tiranno.”⁸⁰ The edits made in the Pennsylvania manuscript are frequent enough that they sometimes occur within a few lines of each other on the page, as on folio 4r. (Fig. 4.8).⁸¹

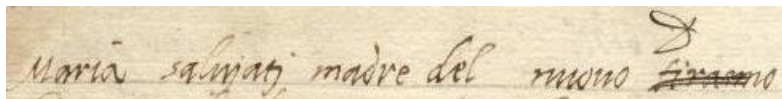


Figure 4.5: “Maria Salviati, madre del nuovo tiranno D.” University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Codex 564, 3v.

⁷⁶ Callard, *Le prince et la République*, 322-324.

⁷⁷ UPenn, RBML, Ms. Codex 564, 3v.

⁷⁸ [Marucelli], *Cronaca fiorentina*, 8.

⁷⁹ UPenn, RBML, Ms. Codex 564, 3v.

⁸⁰ [Marucelli], *Cronaca fiorentina*, 9: “...i soldati del duca Cosimo...” and “...onde il duca Cosimo.”

⁸¹ UPenn, RBML, Ms. Codex 564, 4r.

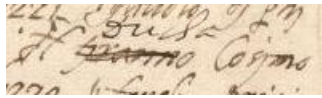


Figure 4.6: “del tiranno Duchu Cosimo.” University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Codex 564, 3v.

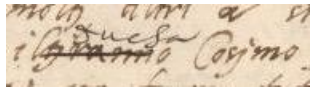


Figure 4.7: “il tiranno Duchu Cosimo.” University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Codex 564, 3v.

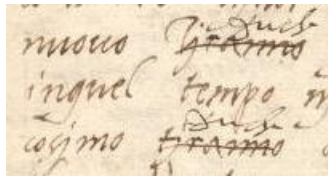


Figure 4.8: Two instances of Duchu replacing tiranno. University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Codex 564, 4r.

Comparing the hand and orthography in the corrections made to the Pennsylvania manuscript to the rest of the text demonstrates that a second person, someone other than the copyist Antonio da Sangallo, performed the edits. For example, comparing Sangallo’s boxy formation of a capital “D”⁸² (Fig. 4.9) to the script “D”⁸³ (Fig. 4.10) written when editing the text shows two distinct styles of writing. Examples of how Sangallo wrote the whole word “Duca”⁸⁴ (Fig. 4.11) and how the editor wrote the same word, “Ducha”⁸⁵ (Fig. 4.12) show not only continued differences in writing style, but also in orthography. Spelling “duke” as “Ducha” was not unheard of in seventeenth-century Florence, although “duca” was the more commonly used form. Additionally, the editor consistently spells the word with a capital “D”, even when Sangallo transcribes the word “duca” with a lowercase “d” in the BNCF manuscript. Capitalizing “Duke” could show that the editor had greater reverence for the title than Sangallo

⁸² UPenn, RBML, Ms. Codex 564, 1v.

⁸³ UPenn, RBML, Ms. Codex 564, 3v.

⁸⁴ UPenn, RBML, Ms. Codex 564, 4r.

⁸⁵ UPenn, RBML, Ms. Codex 564, 4v.

displayed via his copy.



Figure 4.9: A “D” written by Antonio da Sangallo. University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Codex 564, 1v.



Figure 4.10: A “D” written by the manuscript’s editor. University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Codex 564, 3v.

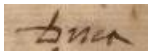


Figure 4.11: “Duca” written by Antonio da Sangallo. University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Codex 564, 4r.

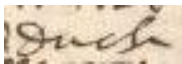


Figure 4.12: “Ducha” written by the manuscript’s editor. University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Codex 564, 4v.

These alterations to the Pennsylvania manuscript could have been ordered by Grand Duchess Christina of Lorraine (1565-1637) and carried out by her daughter, Princess Eleonora di Ferdinando I (1591-1617).⁸⁶ A letter sent by the copyist Sangallo to Christina of Lorraine on June 3, 1608, stated that he would remind himself to send Her Highness extracts from a handwritten history commencing in 1536 and continuing for twenty years, a description

⁸⁶ Grand Duchess Christina of Lorraine was a figure in her own right of great historical importance. See Galileo Galilei, *Lettera a Cristina di Lorena: sull'uso della Bibbia nelle argomentazioni scientifiche* (Genoa: Marietti, 2000); Lucia Meoni, *Gli arazzi nei musei fiorentini: la collezione medicea: catalogo completo 2 La manifattura all'epoca della reggenza delle granduchesse Cristina di Lorena e Maria Maddalena d'Austria, la direzione di Jacopo Ebert van Asselt (1621 - 1629)* (Livorno: Sillabe, 2007); Francesco Martelli, “Cristina di Lorena una lorenese al governo della toscana medicea,” in *Il granducato di Toscana e i Lorena nel sec. XVIII*, ed. Alessandra Contini and Maria Grazia Parri (Florence: Olschki, 1994), 71-81; James M. Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). Grand Duchess Christine of Lorraine was a supporter of Galileo’s work, and was also involved in a number of other patronage projects in the arts and letters.

matching the chronicle held in the BNCF.⁸⁷ A search of Christina of Lorraine's letters indicate that she consistently spelled Duke as *duca*, not *Ducha*, indicating that Christina herself did not likely make the alterations to the Pennsylvania text. In a search of the over fourteen thousand letters and documents transcribed by the Medici Archive Project, one person active at court while Antonio da Sangallo served as archivist spelled the word Duke as "Ducha": Princess Eleonora di Ferdinando I, daughter of Christina of Lorraine.⁸⁸ Eleonora wrote letters to her sister, Duchess Caterina di Ferdinando de' Medici-Gonzaga, indicating that she was literate in the vernacular.⁸⁹ In 1608, Eleonora would have been 17 years old; the unmarried eldest daughter of a Grand Duke living in her father's palace.⁹⁰ The possibility that Medici women took an especially active role in protecting the textual representation of the Medici dynasty from accusations of tyranny certainly merits further discussion, even if the conclusions here must remain extremely tentative.

Circumstantial evidence from Eleonora di Ferdinando's letters support the hypothesis that she served as the editor of the Pennsylvania chronicle. In the same letter in which Eleonora spelled Duke *Ducha*, she refers to "il licone" of St. Nicholas that she sends to her brother-in-law, Duke Ferdinando I Gonzaga, to aid his recovery from an illness. The word *licone* refers to a type of bird, although Eleonora likely means an *icone*, or icon of St. Nicholas, whose relics were held

⁸⁷ ASF, MdP, f. 5994, 3 June 1608, Antonio da San Gallo to Grand Duchess Christina of Lorraine cited in Callard, *Le prince et la République*, 321.

⁸⁸ ASF, MdP, 6108, f. 686, 26 September 1617, Eleonora di Ferdinando I de' Medici to Caterina di Ferdinando I de' Medici-Gonzaga [Doc. 6333 in MAP]. "Ho sentito travaglio per vedere che il Sig.re Duchà [Ferdinando I Gonzaga] si senta un po male ma spero in Dio che presto lo renderà sano come lo desidero et gliene prego. Gli mando il licone [icone] di San Nicolò per quel homo che è venuto qua da Mantova. Non gliene mando per hordinario acciò vadia più sicuro et non si rompesse et poi questo homo si parte domatina..."

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ In the same year, Eleonora was considered important and old enough to be asked to serve as godmother of the Marchese Castiglione delle Stiviere's newborn son. ASF, MdP 2957, unpaginated, 28 February 1608, Francesco I Gonzaga di Castiglione delle Stiviere [Doc. 5835 in MAP].

in Bari.⁹¹ The presumed mistake in Eleonora's letter may reveal information about the life and education of the princess that coincide with elements in the Pennsylvania manuscript.

Eleonora's misspelling of icon indicates that she may have been raised outside of the Medici Grand Ducal court, where the primary language was not Tuscan. If raised outside of the Florentine court, Eleonora could have been lived at the French court, where Marie de' Medici ruled as Queen from 1600 and regent from 1610.⁹² Eleonora might also have been raised in the Spanish royal family, which wore mourning upon news of her death, although the expression of mourning was likely due to the fact that a marriage between Eleonora and Felipe III of Austria was being negotiated around the time of her death.⁹³ Conversely, Eleonora's spelling may have stemmed from a lack of formal education, perhaps as a result of persistent illness or infirmity. If Eleonora were first educated in French or acquired most language by speaking to her French mother, this could account for the spelling of *licone*: she may have added the Italian article *il* to the French contraction *l'icône* without considering that the French term for icon already contained the article.

Eleonora's spelling of "Ducha" mirrors the Tuscan pronunciation of the word rather than the more common seventeenth-century spelling. As a possible non-native speaker, Princess Eleonora's Tuscan spellings would have derived from the inherently different ways she heard

⁹¹ ASF, MdP, 6108, f. 686, 26 September 1617, Eleonora di Ferdinando I de' Medici to Caterina di Ferdinando I de' Medici [Doc. 6333 in MAP]. "Ho sentito travaglio per vedere che il Sig.re Duchà [Ferdinando I Gonzaga] si senta un po male ma spero in Dio che presto lo renderà sano come lo desidero et gliene prego. Gli mando il licone [icone] di San Nicolò per quel homo che è venuto qua da Mantova. Non gliene mando per hordinario acciò vadia più sicuro et non si rompesse et poi questo homo si parte domatina..."

⁹² Substantiating these claims will require research beyond the scope of the current project. Eleonora di Ferdinando is virtually forgotten and seemingly the subject of no secondary research, having died unmarried at 27 years of age in 1617. A canon of San Lorenzo wrote a manuscript biography of Princess Eleonora following her death, but it appears to have been unpublished and I have yet to locate it in the archives.

⁹³ ASF, MdP 6113, f. 63, 23 January 1618, Claudia Coppoli d'Albon to Caterina di Ferdinando I de' Medici-Gonzaga [Doc. 18680 in MAP]; ASF, MdP 5080, f. 813, 18 September 1617, Unknown to Orso Pannocchieschi d'Elci [Doc. 10343 in MAP].

and studied the language. While presumably outside of the Florentine court, Eleonora would have been trained by tutors and diplomats familiar with older spellings. Instances of *ducha* in sixteenth century letters abound, but the spelling appears to have largely changed to *duca* after 1550. The other instances of the *Ducha* or *ducha* spelling in the Medici letters from the seventeenth century come from a letter written by an Italian diplomat living in Poland,⁹⁴ a German art dealer offering several objects for sale to the Grand Duke,⁹⁵ and a poor clair living in Bologna whose brother worked at the Imperial and Polish courts for many years.⁹⁶ By 1688, the premier Italian-English dictionary listed only *Duca* as an Italian word used for Duke.⁹⁷ The spelling *ducha* appears to have survived only in the far periphery of the Florentine Grand Ducal world. Upon Eleonora's return to the Medici court, the Florentine emphasis on the aspirated "h" in speech could have further provoked slightly odd spellings. On the other hand, Eleonora appears to have dropped the "h" from her spelling of the third person singular conjugation of *avere* [to have], resulting in *a* rather than *ha*.⁹⁸ Eleonora's slightly different conjugation of *avere* further supports the thesis that French served as Eleonora's primary language, since the third person singular of the French *avoir* [to have] would be *a*.

Eleonora serving as editor despite her lack of fluency in Tuscan would explain why negative stories about some Medici figures such as Eleonora di Toledo remain untouched in the chronicle and some instances of the word *tyranno* are not corrected in the Pennsylvania

⁹⁴ ASF, MdP 4294, f. 299, 1610, Ascanio Canacci to Grand Duke Cosimo II de' Medici [Doc. 24739 in MAP].

⁹⁵ ASF, MdP 4634, ca. folio 262, 18 January 1619, Philipp Heinhoffer to Cammillo di Francesco Guidi [Doc. 16178 in MAP].

⁹⁶ ASF, MdP 6081, ca. folio 942, 4 July 1623, Felice Riatti to Grand Duchess Maria Magdalene von Habsburg-de' Medici [Doc. 16032 in MAP].

⁹⁷ John Florio, *Vocabolario Italiano & Inglese* (London: Chiswell, Sawbridge, Wells, and Bentley, 1688), entry for *Duca* (unpaginated).

⁹⁸ ASF, MdP 6108, f. 567, 13 October 1617, Eleonora di Ferdinando I de' Medici to Caterina di Ferdinando I de' Medici-Gonzaga [Doc. 6304 in MAP]. "La Arciduchessa [Maria Magdalena d'Austria] mi [h]a comesso che io scriva a vostra Altezza che la ringrazia delle trote..."

manuscript. Instances of *tiranno* referring to Cosimo I were uncorrected before folio 3v. in the Pennsylvania manuscript, yet were corrected to *duca* in the BNCF manuscript. This suggests that the editor or Christine of Lorraine may have given Antonio da Sangallo general instructions to change *tiranno* for *duca* throughout the work, which he did regardless of missing line edits. On folio 2r. of the Pennsylvania manuscript, the phrase “Maria Salviati, madre del nuovo tiranno”⁹⁹ (Fig. 4.13) remains uncorrected, but the corresponding phrase in the BNCF manuscript is written, “Maria Salviati, madre del nuovo duca.”¹⁰⁰ The unannotated phrases “del nuovo tiranno” (Fig. 4.14) and “il novello tiranno Cosimo” (Fig. 4.15) on 2v. of the Pennsylvania manuscript¹⁰¹ become “del nuovo duca” and “il novella duca Cosimo” in the BNCF copy.¹⁰² The fact that the marked edits begin on folio 3v. and faithfully continue throughout the rest of the Pennsylvania manuscript hints that the editor intended to read and correct text relating to the rule of Cosimo I, but not Duke Alessandro. The mentions of Cosimo on the second folio occur within a discussion of Duke Alessandro’s rule and death. As a result of starting to read the text with Cosimo’s ascension, the editor missed cases of *tiranno* referring to Cosimo in the Pennsylvania manuscript that Sangallo changed when copying the BNCF manuscript. In the BNCF text, the only ruler still described as a *tiranno* is the overlord of Florence, Emperor Charles V, described “come tiranno di Italia,”¹⁰³ which corresponds to the uncorrected “come tiranno della italia” (Fig. 4.16) in the Pennsylvania manuscript.¹⁰⁴ Whereas references to Duke Cosimo as a *tiranno* on the same page merited correction to *duca*, the Emperor seems not to have warranted such attention, though references to him as a *tiranno* elsewhere in the text are changed

⁹⁹ UPenn, RBML, Ms. Codex 564, 2r.

¹⁰⁰ [Marucelli], *Cronaca fiorentina*, 5.

¹⁰¹ UPenn, RBML, Ms. Codex 564, 2v.

¹⁰² [Marucelli], *Cronaca fiorentina*, 5 and 6.

¹⁰³ [Marucelli], *Cronaca fiorentina*, 4.

¹⁰⁴ UPenn, RBML, Ms. Codex 564, 2r.

in both the Pennsylvania and BNCF manuscripts.

Lapses in the editing of the Pennsylvania chronicle suggest that the editor may not have been the most conscientious worker, a view that also emerges from Princess Eleonora's letter to her sister Caterina. While it would be expected that a non-native speaker might struggle with spelling Tuscan words in the generally accepted fashion, Princess Eleonora's letter could be said to demonstrate her disinterest in learning the standard spellings and producing polished letters. Eleonora would likely have been able, if interested, to secure the assistance of some person somewhere in the Palazzo Pitti who would have corrected her mistakes for her. Grand Duchess Christine of Lorraine appears to have written quite competently in Tuscan, whether due to the assistance of a secretary or through her own acquisition of the language. Letters by Princess Eleonora's younger sister, Caterina de' Medici-Gonzaga, appear to be free of similar errors. And as a member of the Grand Ducal family, Eleonora would have had vast quantities of paper, quills, and ink at her disposal if she should have wished to correct and re-copy letter after noticing her mistakes. The letter Eleonora sent to Caterina contains a few uncorrected words that suggest that Eleonora lacked discipline and pride in her learning.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, the Pennsylvania manuscript's several uncorrected instances of *tiranno* contrasted with Antonio Sangallo's scrupulous removal of all but one use of the word *tiranno* suggests that the editor of the work had far less scholarly training and far less at stake than did the copyist, supporting the thesis that a member of the Granducal family served as the editor of the text.

¹⁰⁵ If Eleonora was raised at the Florentine court speaking and writing Tuscan her whole life, one might be tempted to suggest that she could have had what modern people call a learning disability, not limited to dyslexia. Research suggests that bizarre spellings can be one signal that an undiagnosed learning disability may be present, although learning disabilities cannot be diagnosed based on writing alone, nor should they be retroactively diagnosed with any certainty in historical figures. Yet the marker of a language-based learning disability would be spelling errors that do not follow a logical pattern, whereas Eleonora's spellings appear logical if she were raised at the French court or at least speaking French as her primary language with little formal instruction in written Tuscan.

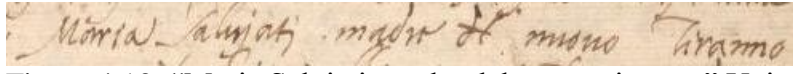


Figure 4.13: “Maria Salviati, madre del nuovo tiranno.” University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Codex 564, 2r.



Figure 4.14: “del nuovo tiranno.” University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Codex 564, 2v.

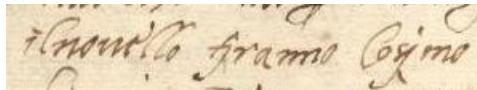


Figure 4.15: “il novello tiranno Cosimo.” University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Codex 564, 2v.

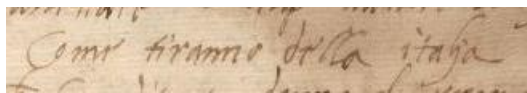


Figure 4.16: “come tiranno della italia.” University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Codex 564, 2r.

Whereas the unknown author of the Pennsylvania manuscript described Cosimo I and Charles V tyrants, Alessandro is always referred to as simply “Duke.” In both the BNCF and Pennsylvania manuscripts, in the few pages concerning Alessandro, he is referred to as “il duca”¹⁰⁶ (fig. 4.17), “Duca Alexandro”¹⁰⁷ (fig. 4.18), and “duca Alexandro”¹⁰⁸ (fig. 4.19) with no evidence of annotation. Since the Pennsylvania manuscript is missing pages included in the BNCF copy that describe Alessandro’s rule and the first part of his assassination, it is difficult to determine why Alessandro was referred to favorably while Cosimo I and Charles V were described as tyrants. The portions of the BNCF manuscript corresponding to the lost

¹⁰⁶ [Marucelli], *Cronaca fiorentina*, 2; UPenn, RBML, Ms. Codex 564, 1r.

¹⁰⁷ [Marucelli], *Cronaca fiorentina*, 4; UPenn, RBML, Ms. Codex 564, 1v.

¹⁰⁸ [Marucelli], *Cronaca fiorentina*, 5; UPenn, RBML, Ms. Codex 564, 2r.

Pennsylvania pages are missing or ripped, which prevents us from learning exactly what the author was attempting to convey about Duke Alessandro. The remaining portions of the BNCF text suggest that the missing information may not have been favorable. In an early passage from the BNCF manuscript, Alessandro is described as, “Duke Alessandro of the Magnificent Lorenzo de’ Medici the wise, that for having seen in him many crimes, nefarious and horrendous the righteous men were amazed, but among many considering that he was made not as a true Prince but as a vicious [Prince], I will show with as much certainty as possible, how the said Alessandro such that was among many,” before the words are missing or obscured by damage.¹⁰⁹ A similar passage from another copy of the same chronicle describes Duke Alessandro quite differently. Callard compared the BNCF manuscript copied by Sangallo to a BNCF manuscript copied by Andrea Cavalcanti (1610-1673) and found that what remains of the same passage in the Cavalcanti text reads differently. In the Cavalcanti manuscript, Alessandro becomes “the Tyrant Alessandro de’ Medici,” although lapses in the text prevent us from knowing more about the content of the passage.¹¹⁰

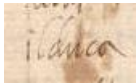


Figure 4.17: “il duca.” University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Codex 564, 1r.

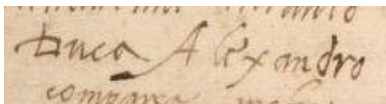


Figure 4.18: “Duca Alessandro.” University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Codex 564, 1v.

¹⁰⁹ Callard, *Le Prince*, 323. “...duca Alessandro del magnifico Lorenzo de’ Medici il savio, che per haver visto in lui molti viti, nefandi et orrendi si maravigliavano gl’huomini giusti, ma tra tanto considerando che egli faceva cose non da vero Principe ma da vitioso, dimosterò con più certezza che sarà possibile, come il detto Alessandro tale che era tra molti...”

¹¹⁰ Callard, *Le prince*, 323. “il Tiranno Alessandro de’ Medici e perchè [...] cosa sia Tiranno per haver visto in lui [...] homini giusti, ma hora me considerando [...] che fà le cose da Tiranni e così viziose [...] dimostrero con [...]”

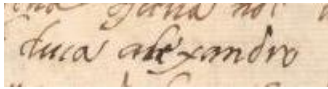


Figure 4.19: “duca Alexandro.” University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Codex 564, 2r.

The pattern of damage and lapses in copies of the chronicle deserves intensive study, but preliminary investigation suggests that the Pennsylvania manuscript may have served as the original source for both copies now held in the BNCF. The first folios of the BNCF manuscript that served as the source for Coppi’s edition are torn and missing words. Andrea Cavalcanti noted at the start of his copy that the source text—owned by Antonio d’Orazio da Sangallo—had been damaged by moisture [*humidità*] or for some unknown reason.¹¹¹ The text seems to be destroyed, remarkably, in the same area in two different manuscripts. As a result, information about the rule of Duke Alessandro is obscured. The first remaining folio in the Pennsylvania manuscript—roughly the third in the other versions—is worn and fragile, as though the preceding pages sustained some sort of damage (Fig. 4.20 and Fig. 4.21).

¹¹¹ Callard, *Le prince*, 232. “Copia d’un libro havuto da Antonio d’Orazio da San Gallo, nelle due prime carte del quale (che à me pare un Diario delle cose della nostra Città) o humidità, o che se ne sia stata la cagione non si puo leggere se non quello che qui sotto se legge.”

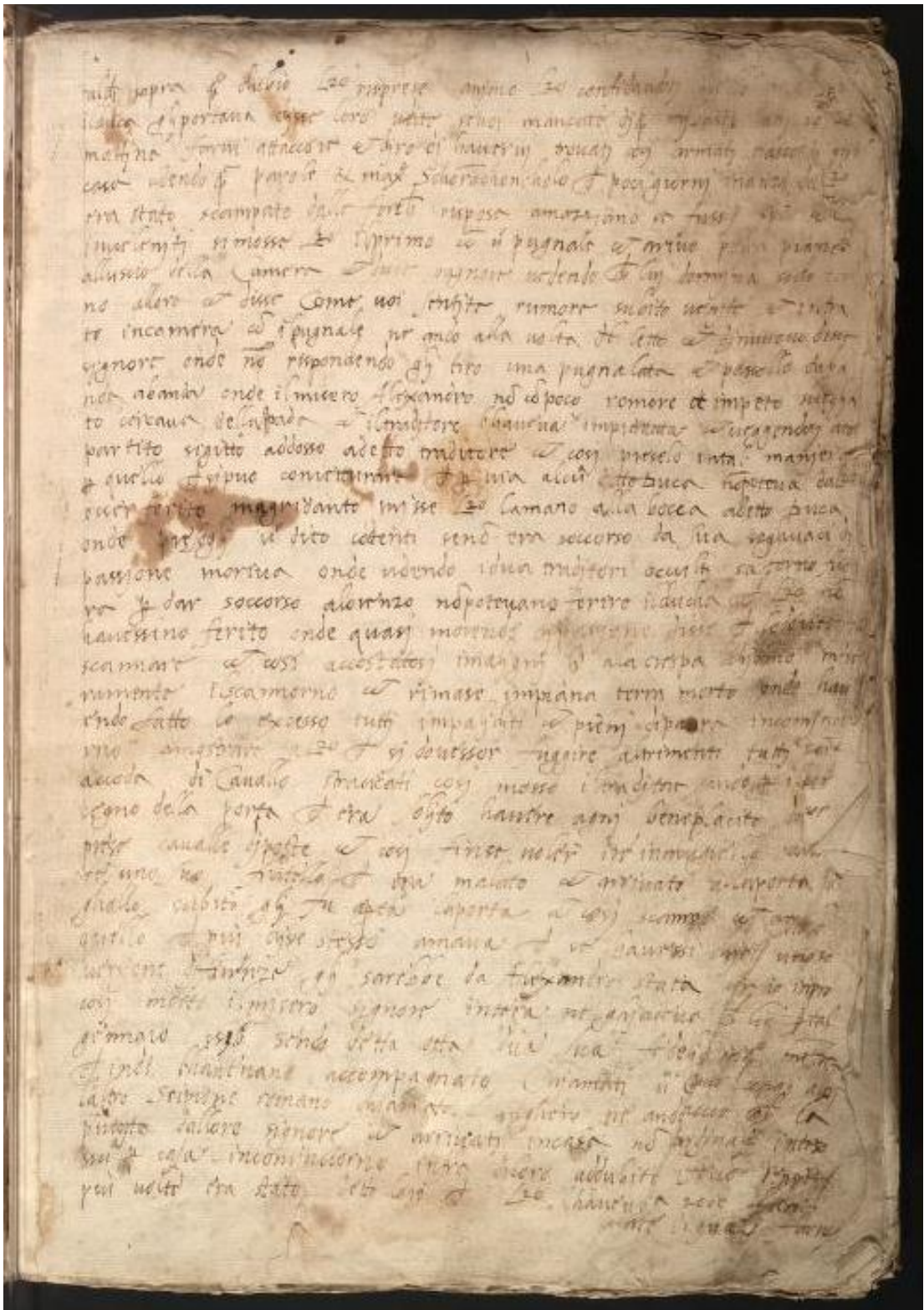


Figure 4.20: University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Codex 564, 1r.

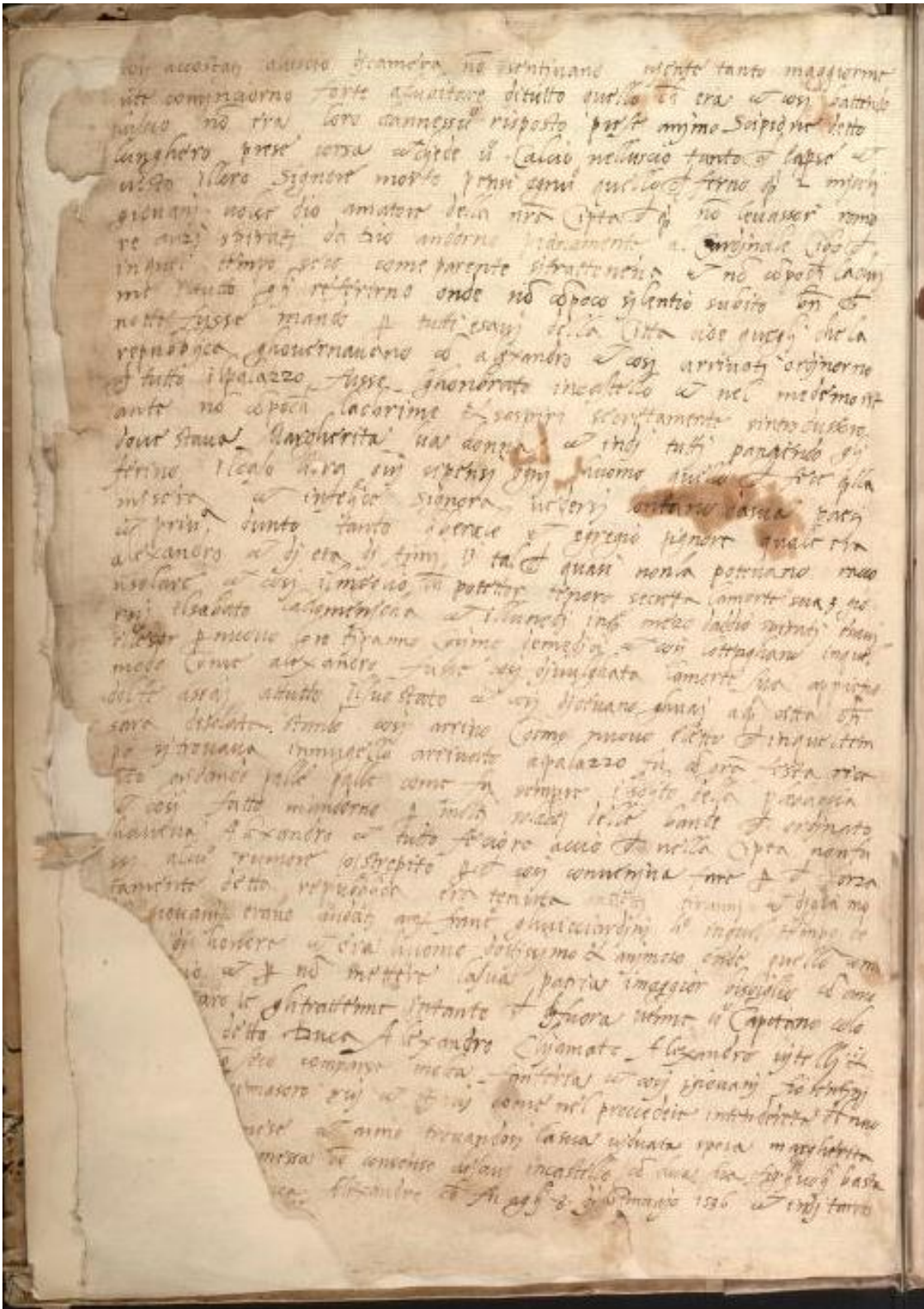


Figure 4.21: University of Pennsylvania, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Codex 564, 1v.

It is possible that the first pages of the Pennsylvania manuscript were ripped out intentionally.

Given the brittleness of the remaining first page, the first two pages could very well have been so damaged that they fell out or were thrown away. Conversely, the first pages might never have been copied in the Pennsylvania manuscript. This seems unlikely given the evidence presented above that the Pennsylvania text served as a draft for the BNCF manuscript used by Coppi in his printed edition. The likelihood that two versions of the same chronicle, both copied by Antonio da Sangallo and altered by someone attempting to protect Medici family memory, would be damaged in the same two-folio region due to natural causes seems slim, though still possible.

Duke Alessandro's memory and documents suffered deliberate destruction to make way for the counter-Medici myth that ensured the successful reign of the cadet line of the Medici family while condemning Alessandro's memory to defamation and rumor. The Pennsylvania chronicle suggests that there could have been other texts that were destroyed or altered to eliminate Alessandro's good memory and cast greater favor on the *popolano* branch of the Medici family. More insidious is evidence that Duke Alessandro's once-plentiful archive virtually disappeared on the watch of Cosimo I and his sons. The small number of documents from Duke Alessandro's reign and their haphazard placement in the archive has had enormous consequences for scholars. Because there were few archival documents, sixteenth-century historians such as Benedetto Varchi requested that their friends—often active in the *fuorusciti* movement to overthrow Alessandro—provide accounts of the period. These accounts served as some of the most important primary sources for the 1530s. The lack of archival documents has resulted in most modern scholars relying on the contemporary histories for primary evidence. Those contemporary accounts of Duke Alessandro's life that discuss him in a more favorable way tend to attract scrutiny and suspicion because they espouse a view so at odds with the other remaining sources. This circular problem has reinforced itself over the years, making the

fuorusciti view of Alessandro permanent and dominant—due to the memory manipulation perpetrated by the Medici Grand Dukes.

CONCLUSION

The Medici Grand Dukes exerted a far greater level of control over the memory of Duke Alessandro than previously imagined, which resulted in his minimization in the Medici archives, and the destruction and alteration of his documents. This chapter has demonstrated that Duke Alessandro kept an archive that could not have been entirely destroyed by crowds and soldiers, as previously believed. Instead, evidence of the suppression of Alessandro's memory in the Florentine archives by the Medici Grand Dukes and explicit proof of textual manipulation in the Pennsylvania chronicle suggest that Alessandro's successors explicitly sought to limit favorable memory of the founder of the Medici ducal dynasty, most likely to advance the interests of their own branch of the family. Manipulation of Alessandro's memory continued long after Cosimo I's rule. Alessandro became a trope used by the Medici dynasty, a foil representing bad leadership in contrast to the virtuous Medici dynasty beginning with Cosimo. The source record was not altered in a momentary fit of passion, but rather changed due to the careful and continuous manipulation by connoisseurs of documentary evidence.

Conclusion

The Dukes, historians, anonymous Florentines, and archivists who erased and manipulated Duke Alessandro's good memory, intent either on punishing him after his death or on aggrandizing their own reputations, have succeeded. In accepting the loss of vast portions of the actual Duke Alessandro to obliteration, we gain significant insight into Renaissance Florence.

Both the multiple regime transformations and the heightened interest in memory in the sixteenth century combined to inspire the attacks on Duke Alessandro's posthumous memory. Throughout the chapters of this dissertation, we see the hunger for immortal fame that inspired the assassination of Duke Alessandro; the assassin Lorenzino's otherwise-inscrutable *Apologia*; *damnatio memoriae*: the destruction and manipulation of documents and objects; and the falsification of history. For the elite Florentines who criticized his rule, it seems that Duke Alessandro's chief crime was a lack of awareness about fame and memory. They protested that Alessandro dishonored them through his sexual relations with protected women, illegitimate birth, and the low status of his mother. In favorable accounts, Duke Alessandro is often portrayed as a passionate sportsman with a kind streak toward his humble subjects. Alessandro's disinterest in solidifying his own fame left him vulnerable to the attacks mounted on his memory following his assassination, making him indirectly party to his own obliteration.

Duke Alessandro instead grappled with transforming the Florentine state into a stable dukedom. As seen in chapters one and four, the Medici rulers of Florence from Duke Alessandro forward attracted claims of tyranny. Duke Alessandro's ostensible method for

maintaining stability was to disarm his citizens, silence the bell that would signal an uprising, and build a fortress. In contrast, Duke Cosimo and his successors would not only continue those policies, but direct anger about Medici tyranny toward the dead Alessandro and allow the defamation of him to continue largely unchecked. In the early-seventeenth century, an unknown editor would remove references of Duke Cosimo's tyranny from the chronicle examined in the fourth chapter, thus artificially elevating the favorability of Cosimo's portrayal to that of Duke Alessandro's. As evidenced by the long period of stability under the autocratic Medici rulers, the systematic destruction of Duke Alessandro's enemy served as the later Medici Dukes' greatest tool for buttressing their rule without using excessive force or denying the citizens liberties.

Broadly examining what Duke Alessandro's critics claimed about him serves to illustrate significant problems in modern scholarship about Alessandro, which has largely focused on his racial identity. In contrast to the recent trends in scholarship concerning Duke Alessandro, the possibility that he was of African heritage appears to have merited almost no notice or concern in even the most critical sources that used every other conceivable rumor to defame him. Duke Alessandro himself seems to have continued the tradition—also practiced by Dante Alighieri and Milan's Duke Ludovico il Moro Sforza—of finding humor or pleasure in the few comments regarding his dark appearance. Using portraits to determine that Duke Alessandro would today be considered “black” according to current American ideas about race serves to do little more than reveal current preoccupations with racial identity and reinforce the notion that race is a transhistorical concept.

The vehement response to Duke Alessandro's illegitimacy, however, merits further investigation. Based on the statements and actions of Alessandro's enemies, being ruled by an

illegitimate son of a low-born mother produced enough anguish that some proud Florentines and former Medici allies—who initially helped to establish the Medici dukedom—abandoned their beloved city and actively campaigned against Duke Alessandro. This dramatic rejection of Alessandro on the grounds of his illegitimacy aligns with the conclusions of the thin scholarship on shifts in attitudes toward elite illegitimate children in Renaissance Italy.

In denying access to the actual Duke Alessandro, those who condemned him created new records that provide us with a wealth of information about the attitudes and practices of sixteenth-century Florence. The loss of information about Alessandro de' Medici, therefore, can be reimagined not as a negative event, but as a window to a much larger and overlooked world in the midst of a profound transformation.

Appendix 1

Venice, 1 April 1551

Jacopo Nardi to Benedetto Varchi

ASF, Carte Stroziane, prima serie, 95, 104r-106r.

[104r]

Magnifico et honorato

Con piacere singularissimo ho ricevuto, et letto la vostra, si per havere per essa inteso di vostro buono essere, si etiam per conoscere, che per la lunga assenza non vi sete dimenticato di me, ma vi conservate etiamdio interamente del medesimo animo. Bene mi son contristato, che in cotesta vostra laudabile impresa dello scrivere la istoria, per la quale molto con voi mi congratudo, et colla Patria, non vi posso dare qualche aiuto come desiderareste, col porgervi alteri lumi, che quelli; che havete havuti da Messer Silvio [Silvio Aldobrandini]. Il quale solo oltre alle domande, et risposte, date, et rendute, le quali scritte (come dite) sono quasi note ad ognuno, et per là qualita, et professione sua, et perche i, nostri maggiori assai confidavano in lui possette havere qualche notizia d'alcuni piu segreti trattamenti, come sarebbe di qualche promessa di danari, che si facesse in Napoli, et al Principe, et à particolari personaggi, casu quo, et cetera, ma non penso sene venisse molto alle strette, et massime, col Maggiore, per la contraria disposizione, che in quello si trovava, però voi n'havete tutta quella notizia che havere sene puo, havendo (come havete) havuto gli scritti di Messer Silvio siche io non saprei, che dirne piu oltre. Bene vi protrei dire quelle cose, che si fecero tragli fuorusciti, in Roma quel verno, et la state seguente dopo la morte di Papa Clemente, se non vi fussero note delle quali io hebbi qualche notizia essendomi tranferito, di questa terra à Roma il dicembre dopo la seguita della morte di Papa Clemente, et statovi infino allo altro Dicembre quando i Reverendissimi, et i, Fuorusciti

andarono à Napoli. Possovi pertanto dire con breuita, et per capita senza una ordinata, et esatta narrazione, quelle cose che vi seguirono consumando piu tosto il tempo quel verno, et la state in dispareri, et controversie, che alcuna azzione utile per la causa loro Le quali cose per la diversità degli humori, che vi apparivono, sarebbe meglio dimenticare et occultare, che mantenere vive nella memoria de' Futuri tempi conciosia [104v] cosa che si mostrasse in alcune persone piu tosto l'odio del Principe, che dal principato, et forse desiderio maggiore di mutarlo, che di levarlo. Onde si perse il tempo, et la reputazione appresso di chi conveniva acquistarla, et mantenersela, come fatto si sarebbe, se tra piccoli, et grandi si fusse veduta l'unione, che pareva, che discordassero nè primi principij. Credo che forse fusse bene, che chi ha à scrivere avesse notizia di cosi fatte cose, perche li farebbero lume, et meno si maraviglierebbe degli effetti che seguirono, ma non gia che si scrivessero per piu rispetti, et publici, et privati. Volendo adunque; ch'io vi narri tutta questa novella, cosi obiter, et curenti calamo, come faremo à boca insieme familiarmente (come si dice) alla Pancaccia, lo farò per mostrarvi, che harei carissimo di satisfarvi di molto porgendovi quello poco ch'io posso. Con speranza però, et ferma promessa, et fede vostra, che niuno altro che voi vegga questa mia lettereccia, et chè subito ne spegnete la memoria. Voi melo prometterete, et io vi crederrò come à me stesso et cominciando nella presente con un'altra /o/ due altre sole lettere espedirò la favola, la quale cierto non sarà bugiarda, né punto maligna, ma racconterà semplicemente, et candidamente, et senza alcuno artificio (come vedrete) che non mi voglio stillare il cervello, et à voi bastaranno, i, cenni soli à farvi intendere qualche cosa. Dico adunque, che uditasi la morte del Papa da fuorusciti, che si trovavano in Pesero, i, quali erano molti, subito furono creati sei Procuratori della università de' fuorusciti, che furono: Messer Galeotto Giugni; Messer Silvio Aldobrandini dottori: Lorenzo Carnesecchi: Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi: Luigi Alamanni: J:N: [Jacopo Nardi] benché si

trovassero in diversi luoghi; et questi furono confermati dagli altri fuorusciti, in qualunque luogo
trovaerono¹ con diversi contratti, et à Lorenzo Carnesecchi defunto fu poi sostituito Pagolantonio
Soderini, et Luigi che non venne in Italia fare suo procuratore J.N. Questi [105r] scrissero di
molte lettere à diversi personaggi, et [...] ² dello Imperadore, ch'erano in Italia, cosa di poco
momento, et lunga à dire. Ma trovandosi poi in Roma quelli che poterono, dove andai di
dicembrre 1534, et cominciando quegli maggiori che sapete à scoprirsi, et adoperare con uno al
Duca Alessandro, s'accozzarono con essi, et convennero, che si dovesse mandare oratori à sua
Maesta à chiedere, che dovesse rendere la libertà alla città, secondo, che si diceva di conservarla
ne' capitoli fatti nello accordo di Firenze, et questa era la domanda di tutti, perche altra [...] ³
querela non si poteva trovare, ne altra ingiustia allegare, che tale in osservaza de' capitoli non di
meno gli appetiti⁴ erano diversi perche gli spicciolati (che cosi gli chiamaro). Tutti volevano non
solo [...] ⁵ d'Alessandro, ma la restituzione del medesimo governo appunto che davanti
all'accordo, eccetti forse due o/ tre, che seguitavano l'autorita de' Maggiori, I quali oppugnavano
anch'essi Alessandro opponendo alle sue ragioni il medesimo scudo della libertà; ma quale fusse
il governo di questa libertà, che si domandava per tutti non convenivano. Di modo, che nella
contesa di dividere questa pelle dell'Orso non ancora preso, si consumo, il resto del verno, et
granparte della state seguente in molte controversie, et dispute, perche gli spicciolai non
havevono danari ne il modo di mandare à sua Maesta à domandare la preoccupata libertà, et
anche non pareva loro ben fatto à separarsi da quegli che usavano il medesimo titolo et⁶
volevono però consentire che essi mandassero eglino à domandare un governo secondo la

¹ A letter has been crossed out in the middle of the word.

² There is a space where a word should go and *agenti* has been written over the space in another hand.

³ Crossed out: *la*.

⁴ Crossed out: a letter mid-*appetiti*.

⁵ There is a space where a word should go and *La remazare* has been written in the space in another hand.

⁶ Inserted: *non*.

propria volonta, et Massimamente che essi volevano mandare una persona à lor modo, et determinatamente qualcuno nel quale havevano fede, come che fusse del numero de' fuorusciti si⁷ non si conveniva nella commessione ne nella persona, che si havesse à mandare. Dopo molti dibattimenti consentirono che i fuorusciti deputassero due per tale effetto, et cosi da quegli furono deputari per man- [105v] dare à Barzalona, Antonfrancesco delli Albizi, et Jacopo Nardi, i, quali poi non piacquero à Maggiori perche non erano per andare in poste, et la cosa richiedeva prestezza, perlo presto apparecchiamento, che faceva sua Maesta alla impresa di Tunisi. Onde i Maggiori volevano che andasse Antonio Berardisolo come persona atta al correre, et a l'operare: Gli Spicciolati vollero ch'andasse anche Messer Galeotto Giugni al quale i, Maggiori vollero alla fine che s'aggiugnse Pagolanton Soderini, et contanta bella concordia quanta havete udito furono deputati i, detti tre. La qual cosa mostrava che ei non fusse minore la diffidenza, che havevano gli spicciolati negli strumenti che si havevono ad'operare, che la differenza della opennione, o, vero del proposito de' maggiori da' minori. Perche gli minori volevano domandare la liberta, et il medesimo governo del tempo di quella, dicendo che Alessandro haveva prevenuto il giudizio di sua Maesta con la violenza, et col parlamento, senza aspettare la ordinazione del governo che doveva fare sua Maesta et desideravano che i loro Oratori esse guissero tale commessione, efficacemente, et fedelmente. I Maggiori vire verso volevano che in luogo d'Alessandro, fusse dato il governo ad Ipolito Reverendissimo Cardinal de' Medici: Allegando che cosi sua Maesta conservarebbe la fede data à la⁸ Papa Clemente di mantenere i, medici in firenze, sa diffarebbe circa alla liberta allo Universale, perche governerebbe Civilmente come havevano fatto i suoi antinati, et non quella violenza che faceva Alessandro ne scontentezza della Citta, et cosi furono

⁷ Inserted: *che*.

⁸ Inserted: *Santissima*.

deputati tre, che andassero à⁹ Barzalona conli Mandatti sopradetti da' fuorusciti, ma parlassero et negoziassero per lo effetto detto, et cosi furono elletti et mandati per conto, et in nome del Reverendissimo Salviati, Il Reverendissimo Prior di roma frater [...] ¹⁰ Salviati, et per il Reverendissimo Ridolfi, Messer Lorenzo suo fratello, et per Messer Filippo Strozzi, Messer Piero suo Figliuolo. Essendo pertanto i fini di queste parti diversissimi; le contese furono lunghe¹¹, et gandissima [106r] difficoltà nel fare le istruzioni, et dare le commissiooni [sic], et pensare come havessero à procedere sul fatto, perche non paessero contrarij come in fatto erano: Idio ci perdoni. Possovi mandarre in somma la istruzione che diederono à' lor mandati i, procuratori de' fuorusciti, et la copia della lettera scritta da queglii à sua Maesta, et simili cose. Perche in quel tempo l'amico vostro si trovava talhora à negoziare per due de' suoi compagni in loro assenza o/ come procuratore /o/ come per qualche tempo commessario, et à lui solo furono dati 400 florins, per mandare i mandati de' fuorusciti, che da loro non havevono un soldo, et però fu necessario d'acconsentire di mandare in quel modo che si mando per fare pure qualchecosa, et cosi di fare l'istruzione, che in somma, et con brevità vi manderò ma perche voi m'viutate dire un poco piu liberamente, et semplicemente non vi sarà fatica di mandarmi sotto la coverta di vostra lettera¹² per sapere, che elgli [sic] non possa restar vivo altrove se bene (come dissi di sopra) terrei per vero sempre quello, che voi diceste d'haverne fatto. Ma sara te contento di farmi questo¹³ piacere, et all'havuta vi manderò un altro foglio, che forse finirà questi disutili discorsi, iquali non essendo punto degnidi memoria, non sono intutto disuperflui, per farni ridurre in considerazione gli humori delle persone di quei tempi. Li quali per fare la loro Volontà forse piutosto secondo le propie passioni, che per il lume universale sono stati cagione

⁹ Crossed out: *alla*.

¹⁰ Lapse in the text with an indistinguishable word written above.

¹¹ Inserted: the "h" in *lunghe*.

¹² Inserted: *il presente foglio*.

¹³ Crossed out: a second *questo*.

che Idio ha fatto in ogni nostra cosa la sua giustissima volontà la quale senza mai alcuno rispetto della nostra propria sia fatta sempre. À voi me raccomando. Se questa prima fatica vi pare inutile rispiarmo temi la seconda, et accettate da me la buona volontà, con quello che adimtrato¹⁴ m'esce dello animo, et della penna. À voi mi raccomando, et idio vi guardi.

Di Vinezia il primo d'Agosto MDLI.

Tutto vostro

J: N:

¹⁴ The page is significantly worn here.

Appendix 2

Latin poems by Benedetto Varchi relating to Alessandro de' Medici and his assassination

ASF, Carte Stroziane, prima serie, 95, 119r-123v

I.

Si Patriam, ciuesque meos, sacrosque penates
Seruaturus eo, nec me, nisi publica tangunt
Damna, diu afflicta miseris tot cladibus urbis;
Si patrias tantum ut liceat defendere leges,
Si libertatem, nec quicquam querimus ultra;
Adsis omnipotens, Tuque o sanctissima Mater,
Et nata, quem coniunx, meque hoc concedite ferro
Impia crudelis transfigere corda Tyranni
Tam pia uota Deus coelo Letatus ab alto,
Et genitrix nostros pariter miserata labores,
Audiuere; iacet consternens corpore Terram,
Infelix horrendum, ingens, sine lumine monstrum.

Invisam hanc animam, qua non truculentior usquam

ulla est, aut unquam impurior ulla fuit

Pro dulci Patria, pro Libertate meorum,

Plutoni inferno doque, dicoque pius:

Dixit, et infesto Laurens necat ense Tyrannum:

Cede Tybri: maior gloria nostra tua est.

[119 v]

Cede recens altas Laurus dum pervolat Alpes,

Et celer astrictum frigore currit iter.

Ipsa videbantur letanti sydera Coelo,

Gaudere, quem tales veddere amica sonos:

I puer, i iuenum fortissime, quem optime; non sunt

Qua restant, homini, sed peragenda Deo.

Quae iuga Fesulei montis, quaque antra Morelli

Seuerides, quem quae Hymphoe habitatis aquas.

Cum Faunis, satyrisque bicornibus, quem sylvanis,

Intermissa diu gaudia vestra choros

Iam reuocate; iacet Laurentis cede Tyrannus;

Justitia in nostros quem remeavit agros.

Dum loquor, oppressam rursus cum cerneret urbem,

Ad Coelum tristis, sed reditura, fugit.

[120 r]

II.

Sub imagine Laurentij Medices

altero pede suspensi supra

portam Arcis Florentie

depicta

Quod Patriam iuvene occiso, immanique Tyranno,
 Ciuibus ab nimium ingratis, populoque timenti
Restituit; tali decoratur imagine Laurus.
Quae tamen, et priscas una omnes sic quoque vincit
Si facti meritum spectes, animosque viriles;
Hon rerum euentus, et vim praedonis auarj.

Diruta quod media est Domus haec, quem peruia facta,
 Que patuit populo semper aperta bonis;
Ne mirere Hospes, iuuenem hac, seuumque Tyrannum
 Stravit humi ferro, consilioque puer;
Hac illud gestum est semper memorabile factum,
 Cui par nulla unquam secla tulere prius:
Nulla ferent posthac, redeat nisi perfidus ille
 A stygia, rursus sic periturus, aqua.

[120 v]

Immitem, quem iuuenem Laurentius ense Tyrannum
 Pro Patria solus sustulit, atque puer.
Ipsa etiam iam Roma, Tibi Florentia cedit,

Glange hac nostra est gloria prisca minor.

Cum iuuenis destra iuuenem cecidisse Tyrannum

Immitem audisset Brutus in Clysij;

Et forte inciderat sermo de Cesare, victi

Tot viri ab uno (inquit) iam sumus, et puero.

III.

Sub statua ipsius

Quod libertatem Patriae, Patriamque Tyranno

Vi ceso, solus restituit populo.

[121r]

IV.

LAVR. MEDICE

LIBERATORI

Quod iuuenem, et seuum ferro bone Laure Tyrannum

Fortis pro patria dat tua destra neci;

Libera Te Patriae dicet Florentia Patrem,

Votaque, cum poterit, sanctaque thura dabit:

A equabit meritis nec Te tamen illa, sed uno hoc

Nil quicquam maius quod dare possit, habet.

Vix bene pubes adhuc iuuenemque ferumque Tyrannum

Audaci, mira perculit arte, manu

Vos o Pierides, quem Tu sanctissime Princeps

Pieridum aurata Phoebe superbe lyra;

Divino iuuenem diuinum extollite versu;

Cantari humano non decet ore Deum.

[121v]

V.

Voti solutio pro reditu Petri

Stroctij e Phrygia

Hympharum Neptunne pater, cui leta tridentem

Sors dedit, quem liquidi mollia regna soli,

Quod Thuscus, Phrygijs actus crudeliter undis

Aeneas, Patriae dum meditatur opem,

Adriacos tandem i socijs, quem classe recepta,

Intrauit portus sospes, et incolumis;

Medoaci ad ripas Damon nouus incola Terrae

Euganee, patria pulsus ub urbe volens,

Quam tamen illius sperat nunc ausibus iri

Ereptum indigno, servitio que graui,

Loetus inaurata cedit Tibi fronte iuuenicum,

Quaeque potest exul, dat pia dona pius.

[122r]

VI.

Petro Stroctio

Odecus eximium, nostri columenque salusque

Magne Heros, Thusci terror, qmorque soli:

Quod Duce Te optatos speramus uisere Colles,

Et patria, salvis legibus, urbe frui,

Ponimus Euganeis sancto tibi montibus aras,

Deuotasque pio fundimus ore preces;

Quas olim, quem plures laeti repetemus ad Arni

Flumina, Fesuleo Stroza sonante ingo.

VII.

De eodem

Si Patriam Stroza fuerit, mollique Tyranno

Eripere, quem populo reddere iura sua:

Hethrusco qui nunc vitulum pinguescit in agro,

Mactabit forti Mars tibi saeve manu.

VIII.

De Eodem

Stroctius cuasit, iam non uicistis; in illo

Et Patria quem nostri spesque, salusque sita est.

[122v]

IX.

Juliano Medice

Alme puer, puer alme, huius spes altera secli,

Et tantum inferior Fratre, minorque tuo:

Quale micat Coelo, gemino cum Castore Pollux;

Tale micat Terris cum gemino ipse tuo.

Felix quae tales produxit Leda Gemellos

Pene Dea, aquales quem paritura Deis.

[123r]

X.

Mariae Soderinae

Sancta, cui sacrum peperisse Laurum,

Liberatorem simul, quem parentem

Patriae, indigni pereuntis alto

Uulnere monstri,

Attulit quidquid decuit beatam

Affatim, quem quaecunque potest habere

Non minor multo Superis Deabus

Casta Virago:

Nulla praeferrī tibi, nulla debet

Mater aequari merito, nisi una,

Que patrem virgo genuit, parentis

Mater, quem Uxor.

Ille leteo, Stygioque ab Orco

Tam diu optatus, veterum Parentum

Victor extraxit proprio redemptos

Sanguine Manes.

Hic feri, immitisque iugo Tyranni

Tamdiu pressos Patriamque, quem ipsos

[123v]

Liberat victor propiō receptos

Sanguine ciues.

Fallore an Templis etiam Tibi olim

Liberæ Matres venientis æuſ

Vota suspendent pariter dicatis

Homine eodem?

XI.

LAVRENTIO MEDICE

PETRIFRANCISCI IVNIORIS .F. OB

PATRIAM
AB IMPVRO, ET TRVCVLEN =
TISSIMO TYRANNO
CONSILO ET ARMIS
LIBERATAM
S. P.Q.F.
.P.

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