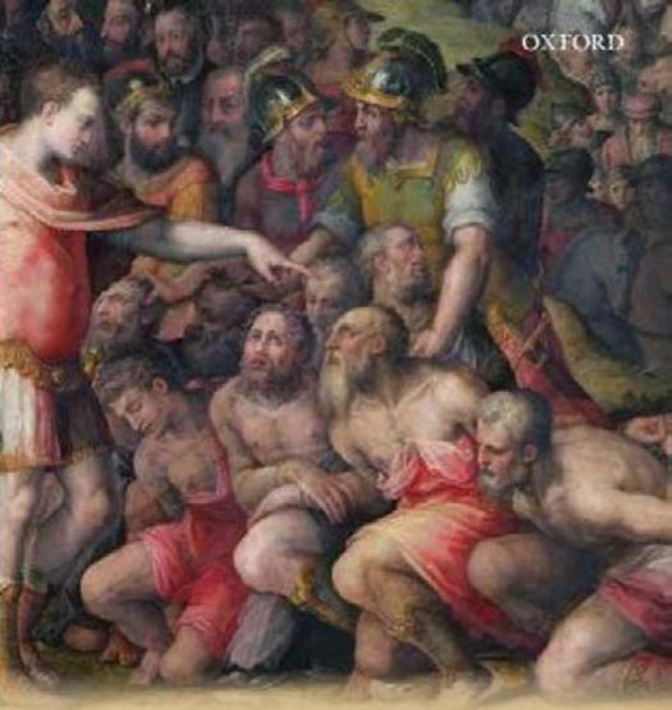

GUARDIANS OF REPUBLICANISM

The Valori Family in the Florentine Renaissance

MARK JURDJEVIC

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for my mother

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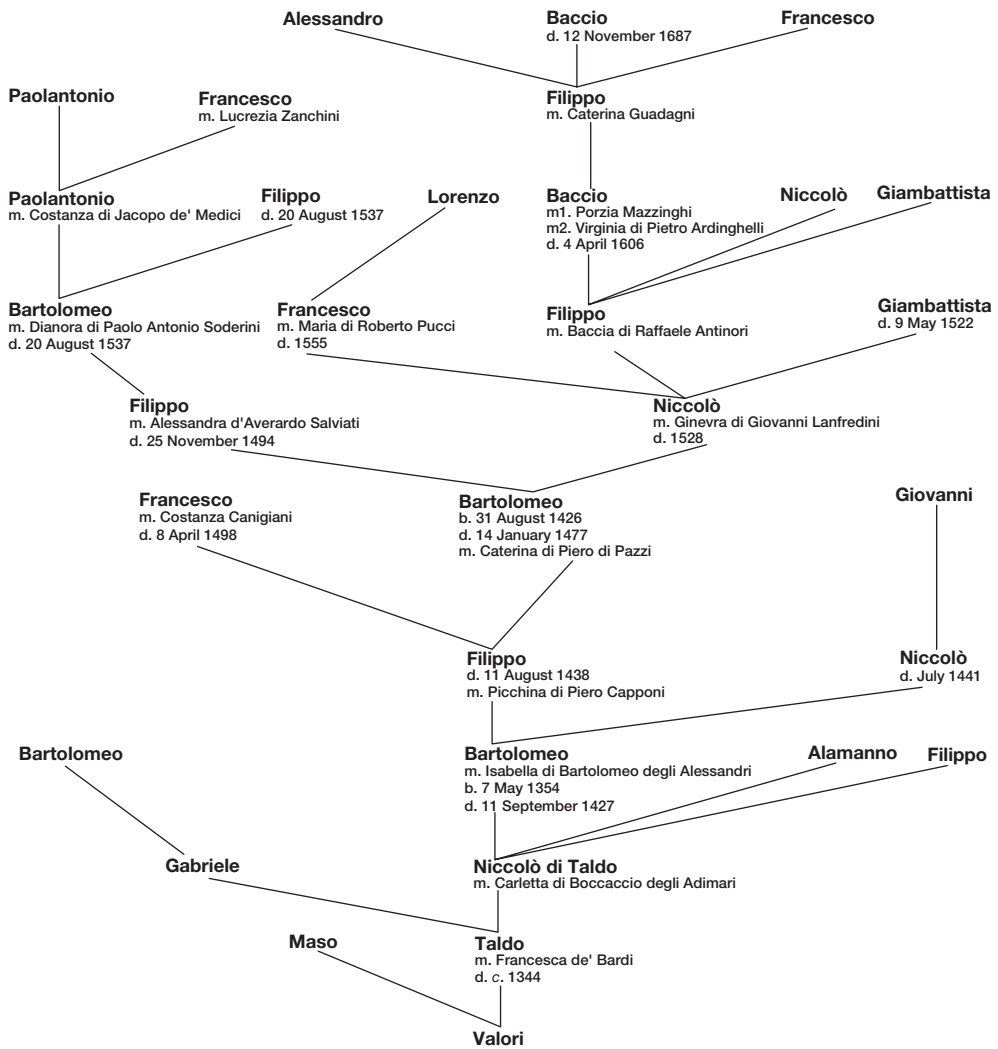
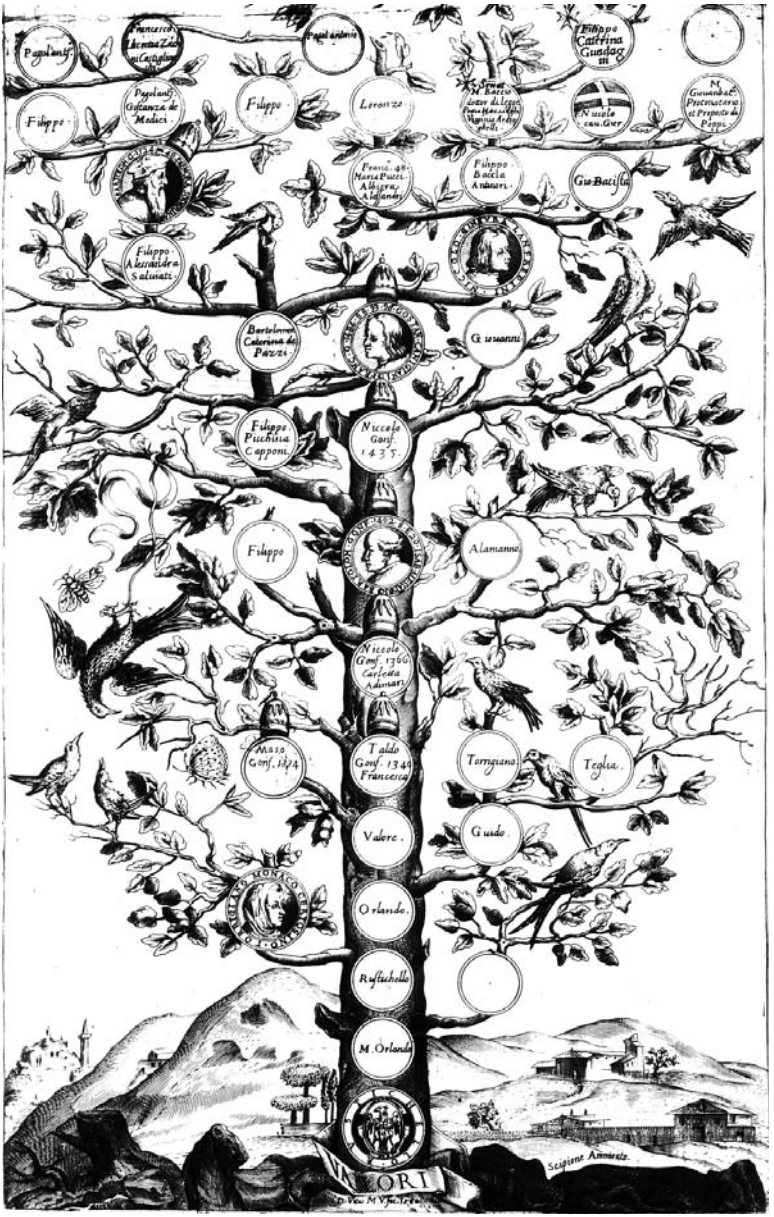
Abbreviations

ASF	Archivio di Stato di Firenze
BNCF	Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze
Capponi	Fondo Gino Capponi
CP	Consulte e Pratiche
DBI	Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani
Gonnelli	Raccolta Gonnelli
Lanfredini	Carteggio Lanfredini
Magliabecchi	Fondo Magliabecchiano
MAP	Mediceo Avanti il Principato
Palatino	Fondo Palatino
Panciat	Fondo Panciatichiano
Panciatichi	Dono Panciatichi
Passerini	Fondo Passerini
Riccardi	Carte Riccardi
Rinuccini	Filze Rinuccini
Strozziane	Carte Strozziane

VALORI FAMILY TREE
(partial: limited to the primary protagonists of this study)



The Valori family was initially a branch of the older and larger Rustichelli family.



Scipione Ammirato's Valori Family Tree

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Introduction: The Valori Family in the Florentine Renaissance

On 1 August 1537, the army of the new ruler of Florence, Duke Cosimo I, routed the forces of Florentine exiles intent on toppling the fledgling Medici regime. The future of Medici power in Florence hung in the balance that day. No one, Cosimo included, expected him to assume the ducal throne—the assassination of his cousin Alessandro in January 1537 had thrust him rather unexpectedly to the forefront of Florentine politics. He had been elected by the Florentine senate, led by old, aristocratic houses who hoped to establish an oligarchy in Florence with Cosimo as little more than a symbolic figurehead. In addition to weak internal support and the enmity of an increasing gathering of Florentine exiles in Bologna, Cosimo could count only on obstacles to his rule from abroad. The recent republican uprising of 1527–30 and yet more recent assassination of Alessandro had raised significant doubts about the willingness of Florentines to accept the Medici as princely rulers. Neither the French, nor the papacy, nor even Cosimo's ostensible ally, the Holy Roman Emperor, were inclined to provide any kind of support until Medici power in Florence appeared secure.[1]

In devastatingly unambiguous terms, Cosimo's victory at Montemurlo answered all questions about the permanence of Medici power in Florence. Throughout the previous century, the constitution and political culture of Florence had oscillated between a traditional republicanism, whether popular or oligarchic, and a more recent princely culture, whether hidden or overt, centred around the Medici family. The fundamentally unresolved tension between the republican and princely visions for Florentine government was the beating heart of the city's political history from 1434 through 1537. Although the Medici family

[1] On the assassination of Alessandro, Cosimo, and Montemurlo, see Cochrane (1973), 3–53; Coppi (2000), 1–13; Van Veen (2006), 8–31.

had dominated Florentine politics for much of that period, republicanism remained a powerful and influential political ideology for the Florentine elite, capable at times of coalescing into outright political opposition, as the republican uprisings of 1494 and 1527 demonstrated. But after 1537 and his victory over the exile army, Cosimo built a dynastic state more powerful and secure than that of any of his predecessors. The house of Medici never again faced an open republican challenge to their hegemony, though, as this book hopes to show, republican ideology persisted nonetheless in ducal Florence.

A gifted and capable dynast, Cosimo immediately set to work laying the foundations for his new ducal state, commissioning a series of portraits, sculptures, and frescoes depicting him as the natural and rightful ruler of an autonomous territorial state.[2] Particularly conscious of early doubts surrounding his competence as a military leader, he commissioned a number of martial works that connected him to famous generals from antiquity and that evoked his father, the *condottiere* Giovanni delle Bande Nere.[3] Cosimo's chief architect for the visual style of the newly triumphant Medici was Giorgio Vasari, who among many other works commemorated Cosimo's victory over the exiles in a fresco at the *palazzo della Signoria*, freshly renamed the *palazzo ducale*. Based on a Roman military victory, Vasari's fresco depicts a martial Cosimo, triumphant on the field of battle, gazing down on the bound and prostrate vanquished republican leaders, Bartolomeo Valori, Filippo Strozzi, and Anton Francesco degli Albizzi.[4] Vasari classicizes and naturalizes Medici rule, showing Cosimo engaged in two defining

[2] For the literary dimension of this patronage, see Menchini (2005).

[3] Van Veen (2006), 10.

[4] I am grateful for help identifying the prisoners to Dana Katz, Ryan Gregg, Stephen Campbell, Amy Bloch, John Najemy, and Henk Van Veen. It is difficult to identify the prisoners with precision. In his *Ragionamenti*, Vasari lists Baccio Valori, Filippo Strozzi, and Anton Francesco degli Albizzi as the principal prisoners—see Vasari (1588). Allegri and Cecchi (1980) identify Cosimo's soldiers, but not the prisoners. T. S. R. Boase (1979), 24, identifies the prisoners from left to right as Baccio Valori and his son, Filippo Strozzi, and Anton Francesco degli Albizzi. Though he does not provide a source for this identification, I am inclined to agree. These were the three crucial figures mentioned by Vasari himself, and the age discrepancy between the two figures on the left with the two figures on the right suggests that the Valori are the left-most two figures. Filippo Strozzi was the eldest of the exiles, and it would make sense that Cosimo is pointing to Filippo Strozzi. He does not identify Bartolomeo Valori's son, but I would guess that it is Filippo, rather than Paolantonio, since Filippo was beheaded along with his father in Florence, whereas Paolantonio, considered less guilty and less threatening by the Medici, was imprisoned in Volterra. On the battle and its aftermath, see Coppi (2000), 4–12; and on Cosimo's self-image in other works, see Van Veen (2006).

acts of monarchical rule—the pursuit of war and administration of justice—that in this case merge into a single act of condemning the exiles. Vasari's *Il trionfo di Cosimo a Montemurlo* attempted to put an aesthetically harmonious, classical, and fundamentally serene face on Cosimo's triumph.

This book deals centrally with the themes invoked by Vasari's fresco, particularly its stark contrast between ascendant monarchism and vanquished republicanism, and with the tensions and complexities of that moment that Vasari attempted to mask and obscure. In effect, it provides an against-the-grain, republican reading of Vasari's Montemurlo fresco and an examination of the political tensions—both before and well after 1537—that it implied the battle had thoroughly resolved. To sixteenth-century Florentines, the image of Bartolomeo Valori, one of the principal defeated republicans in the foreground of Vasari's fresco, would have instantly invoked the complex and conflicted question of the Florentine elite's relationship with the Medici and sparked memories of earlier, successful republican challenges to Medici rule. Bartolomeo had formerly been a key ally of the Medici, the leader of their military forces during the siege of the republic of 1527–30, and one of the chief architects of restored Medici power. His defection from the Medici camp to Filippo Strozzi and the exiles was a major blow to Cosimo's prospects, recalling to Florentine contemporaries the larger historical question of the degree of elite support for Medici rule. Bartolomeo's family history was inextricably connected to the history of Medici power in Florence: his ancestors had played significant roles in the first establishment of Medici power a hundred years earlier, were close supporters of the illustrious fifteenth-century Medici, Cosimo *il vecchio* and Lorenzo *il magnifico*, but had been among the handful of families that ousted the Medici from Florence in 1494, establishing the republic famously associated with Savonarola and Machiavelli. Hence, Bartolomeo's defection in 1537 echoed the pattern of his ancestors' early allegiance to the Medici followed by open challenges to Medici rule.

This book examines the history of that key family, the Valori, their long and complex relationship to the Medici, their intellectual patronage, and the various meanings in their private papers that they attributed to the oscillations of their family's loyalties. By doing so it reveals a hitherto hidden chapter in the history of Florentine republicanism. Vasari was as brilliant a propagandist as he was an artist and writer, fusing seamlessly an historical narrative of Tuscan artistic genius that was both

perfected and displayed to the world by the enlightened patronage of the Medici. Through Vasari's carefully crafted iconography and through his celebrated biographies of Tuscan artists, the Medici of the late Renaissance appropriated the *rinascita* of the arts as 'dynastic property', to use Edward Goldberg's term, a way of indirectly mythologizing Medici rule by celebrating Florentine cultural accomplishments.[5]

Of course, republicans also knew how to buttress political ideology with high culture, and by 1537 the Valori family had established a similarly Vasarian project of crafting a republican ideology that incorporated as defining features major dimensions of the culture of the Florentine Renaissance. Their patronage grew out of a conviction and instinct that Cosimo shared, that politics was in crucial ways legitimated by culture, though the Valori employed intellectual patronage to legitimate their republicanism whereas Cosimo deployed artistic patronage to legitimate his ducal identity. Cosimo's patronage, triumphant and triumphantly public, left a direct imprint on Florence that persists to this day. In contrast, the Valori family's republicanism is less easy to discern and requires closer scrutiny. They expressed it discreetly and indirectly, a political style and conviction that persisted through family papers, diaries, and public patronage of intellectual projects that had political implications but that were not in themselves inherently political. Nevertheless, they espoused their distinctive brand of republicanism with remarkable consistency and continued to promote it long after the battle of Montemurlo, in a court culture of uncontested Medici power. For this reason, I argue that the patronage patterns of the Valori family reveal a lost republican language of Renaissance Florence.

By the standards of the big Florentine aristocratic clans, the Valori were a small family—dangerously so from their perspective, since at several critical moments the lineage was in danger of dying out altogether.[6] In spite of their size, however, they were key contributors to Florentine history. Indeed, if one considers all the ways in which they affected the development of Florentine history during the Renaissance, they were second only to the Medici in their impact on the city's cultural and political life. The family entered the ranks of the political elite in

[5] Goldberg (1988), 5, and larger discussion in 3–10.

[6] On the genealogy of the Valori family, see BNCF, Passerini, 175, insert 3; see also Litta (1819), Disp. 17: *Valori di Firenze*, tavv. I, II; Ammirato (1615), 97–108; Ildefonso di San Luigi (1783), 261–73.

the communal period of the late Middle Ages, where they comfortably remained for most of the fourteenth century. They were early allies of the Medici family, and as that family rose to dominate Florentine political life during the fifteenth century, the status and authority of the Valori family in Florence rose commensurately. Two Valori were members of Cosimo *il vecchio* de' Medici's inner circle during the 1430s and 1440s; two Valori were members of Lorenzo *il Magnifico*'s inner circle during the 1470s and 1480s.

The family was also a central participant, however, in the expulsion of the Medici from Florence in 1494 and the republican revival that followed. The family split along political lines during the Florentine republic of 1494–1512. Most remained committed, active, and influential republican officials, while a junior member of the family joined the Medici exiles and ultimately played as central a role in restoring the Medici to the city as the earlier republicans had had in ousting the ruling family eighteen years earlier. Owing to the intervention of the young pro-Medicean Valori, most of the Valori returned to political life relatively unscathed following the Medici restoration.

In the wake of the 1527 sack of Rome that suspended the Medici pope Clement VII's temporal sway in Italy, the Medici were yet again ousted from Florence in the city's last republican uprising of the Renaissance. The senior member of the Valori family on this occasion was committed to the fortunes of the Medici rather than the republic, and was entrusted by Clement VII to lead the combined papal-imperial army that besieged the republic until its downfall three years later in 1530. This Valori's alliance with the Medici began to break down in the mid-1530s, culminating in his defection from the Medici camp to a growing army of political exiles in Bologna intent on ending Medicean rule in Florence. When the exiles finally marched on Florence, the forces of Duke Cosimo de' Medici annihilated their army at the battle of Montemurlo in 1537.

The Valori were nearly destroyed as a result: senior members of the family were executed, younger members were imprisoned, and the most junior member, although permitted by the Medici to remain free and in Florence, was a political outsider viewed by the Medici with considerable suspicion for many years. Eventually, however, he managed to regain the trust and confidence of the Medici and by adulthood had become one of the most energetic cultural patrons of late Renaissance Florence, a hub of the city's intellectual activity. The family died out, of natural causes, shortly after his death in the early seventeenth century.

The recurring structural question of Florentine political history during the Renaissance—should the city be governed by some variety of princely rule under the Medici or by some variety of republicanism, whether oligarchic, popular, or somewhere in between—was clearly inscribed on the Valori family's history and was inseparable from it. The Valori participated, almost always as primary actors, in every major conflict and expression of republican and Medicean power, and on several occasions paid with their lives for having allied with the losing faction.

The significance of the family for and their impact on Florentine history, however, transcends questions of politics and constitutional structure. In the late fifteenth century, just prior to the expulsion of the Medici in 1494 and the stubborn contest between Medici power and more traditional forms of Florentine oligarchic republicanism, the family became close friends and political allies of three of the most original, influential, and dynamic thinkers of the Italian Renaissance: the neo-Platonic philosopher Marsilio Ficino, the prophetic and charismatic Dominican reformer Girolamo Savonarola, and the pioneering political philosopher, playwright, poet, and historian Niccolò Machiavelli. Ficino was committed to a lifelong project of translating all of Plato's works into Latin and convincing the patrician elite of the Florentine republic that Platonic philosophy offered them something real, immediate, and invaluable for their public and political lives.[7] Savonarola believed himself—as did many Florentines—a true prophet and used his influence to urge moral reforms of a traditional, ascetic Christian variety, establishing laws against gambling, prostitution, and blasphemy, in addition to calling for a broad-based popular style of republican government.[8] During the formative years of their friendship, Machiavelli had not yet written any of his political and historical works. He was a chancery secretary, informal ambassador to the republic, and regular working collaborator with the Valori on matters of republican politics and diplomacy.[9]

The Valori were major supporters of all three thinkers, publicly and vocally defending them when the controversy, complexity, and the

[7] See Hankins (1994).

[8] See Weinstein (1970); Martines (2006); and the forthcoming study by Polizzotto.

[9] On Machiavelli's professional career see Rubinstein (1972); Black (1990); Najemy (1990).

politically charged nature of their ideas generated powerful enemies in Florence and Rome. And the memory of friendship with Ficino, Savonarola, and Machiavelli powerfully informed the development of the family's collective identity, pervading the family's private papers, diaries, and correspondence. By the mid-sixteenth century, the family's Savonarolan and Ficinian tradition had evolved into the central interpretive device through and by which they understood and made sense of their own actions, struggles, and relationship to their city. The city's intellectual and religious history was thus in critical ways intertwined with the history of the Valori family, and as inseparable from it as was the city's political narrative during the Renaissance.

More interesting still is the simple fact of their friendship to such a diverse and apparently contradictory trio of thinkers. Ficino, Savonarola, and Machiavelli were all republicans, but they differed substantially on the purpose of politics and the relationship between individuals and government. Savonarola articulated an ascetic, redemptive, theologically-informed vision of a republic whose foundations were civic religion, and he was a vocal critic of the fifteenth-century humanist movement because it sought a guide to conduct and outlook in pre-Christian pagan authors like Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero.[10] Ficino, who was also an ordained priest and a canon of the Florentine cathedral, agreed with Savonarola that the strength of the Florentine republic depended on a proper understanding of Christianity. Unlike Savonarola, however, Ficino argued that a particularly useful guide for that understanding was Plato, who Ficino believed was a divinely inspired philosopher. Ficino's recurring concern was the unification of religion and philosophical wisdom, the fusion of Christianity with the classical tradition of political thinking.[11] Machiavelli rejected the fundamental premises of the neo-Platonic philosopher and the Dominican prophet. For Machiavelli, classical authors were useful to a point for building a dynamic republic, but unlike his humanist predecessors he understood that times had changed and one could not expect classical writers to have real answers to sixteenth-century problems. On this topic, the Christian tradition was not only useless, but was actually damaging because its morality ran counter to the needs of a strong state. The strength of Machiavelli's republic lay in laws, political institutions, and military strength, and was based—unlike Ficino's and Savonarola's visions of politics—on a frank acceptance of the inevitability of evil in human

[10] Weinstein (1970). [11] Hankins (1994).

affairs.[12] Each of these thinkers advanced a brand of republicanism that afforded little conceptual space for the assumptions of their rivals, and much Renaissance intellectual history is an examination of the tensions between their ways of understanding the purpose and pursuit of political life.

The Valori family consistently maintained a republican tradition in their family papers that borrowed equally from all three styles of republicanism. Several members of the family particularly stressed the importance—for the family and for Florence—of the family's simultaneous patronage of and friendship with Savonarola and Ficino, particularly striking considering that during the early years of the post-1494 republic the two were rivals who denounced the impact of each other's intellectual traditions on the city. Savonarola condemned the neo-Platonism of the Florentine humanists and the paganism he perceived to be corrupting Florentine society, and in 1498 Ficino fiercely renounced his own earlier sympathies for Savonarola. He continued to insist, as Augustine and Ambrose had done, on the harmony between Christianity and neo-Platonism.[13]

In intellectual and ideological terms, the tension and rivalry between Ficino and Savonarola were hardly new—merely a personal embodiment of the inherent tension between the city's Christian, civic, and classicizing traditions. Florentine religion and faith had always had a strong civic dimension—Florentines assumed that communal politics, conducted correctly, would assist its citizenry in attaining salvation, in addition to its more immediate secular benefits. From the late thirteenth throughout the fifteenth centuries, Florentines were accustomed to viewing their city as endowed by God with a special divine destiny. Donald Weinstein has shown the process by which that earlier Florentine Christian vision of politics was superseded by the secular vision of politics championed by the humanists. The two narratives followed the same structure: in the former, politics informed by Christian virtue would lead to salvation; in the other, politics informed by classical virtue would lead to the secular version of salvation—that is, the birth, rise, and growth of liberty and freedom.[14] Seen from this perspective, Ficino's philosophy was a late variation on the humanist vision of politics, while

[12] Jurdjevic (2007a) and (2006).

[13] On Savonarola, Ficino, and Plato, see Ridolfi (1952), 146–50; Garin (1961), 201–12; Walker (1972), 50–5; Verde (1973), 1270–3.

[14] Weinstein (1968).

Savonarola's moral message from the pulpit was merely the restoration of the Florentine political narrative back to its Christian and millennial origins, and both were variations on a long-standing assumption that Florentine politics, secular or religious, had a special destiny.

But even in the midst of the most heated moments of mutual distrust, rivalry, and intellectual hostility, the Valori maintained a hybrid form of republicanism that insisted upon the compatibility of Savonarola and Ficino's reforming convictions. The family's style of republicanism thus also implicitly insisted upon the legitimacy and compatibility of those two long-standing languages of politics: the original and recently resurgent Christian language and the classical variation that had been superimposed over it in the fifteenth century. By insisting on the mutually reinforcing political implications of Ficino's neo-Platonism and Savonarola's millennial Christian vision, they were advocating a style of republican thinking that neither Ficino nor Savonarola had articulated nor would have accepted, but that point seems to have mattered little to the Valori themselves.

Their ability to maintain a foot firmly planted in the humanist and Ficinian camp and the Christian and Savonarolan camp was rare but not unique. Intellectuals from the Ficinian circle such as Domenico Benivieni and Giovanni Nesi also regarded favourably Savonarola's rise in Florence without renouncing their earlier loyalties to Ficino and Platonic philosophy.[15] The Valori were unique, however, in the scale and durability of their hybrid republicanism. No one in Florence maintained that double allegiance with the energy, consistency, and longevity of the Valori family. They cultivated that tradition from its emergence in the late fifteenth century until the family died out in the seventeenth century—indeed, the last Valori to make substantial contributions to the family's diaries and papers was more committed to the preservation of the family's hybrid republicanism than any member before him, and the family's double allegiance became an organizing principle in his cultural patronage under the Medici dukes.

And no other family during the Florentine Renaissance so carefully created, perpetuated, and deployed their collective memory and tradition for social and political purposes. Almost all of the family's substantial artistic and intellectual patronage for over a century was guided by a desire to celebrate and preserve their hybrid republicanism. The web of patronage they cast was substantial: it included in the first instance

[15] Celenza (2001).

Savonarola, Ficino, and Machiavelli, but over the next century it included Francesco Patrizi, Francesco de' Vieri, Luca Pinelli, Luca della Robbia, Silvano and Serafino Razzi, Vincenzo Borghini, and Benedetto Varchi. Perhaps the smallness and fragility of the family accounts for the intensity of their commitment to creating, fostering, and promoting a unified family memory. At any given moment, there was rarely more than one patriline of the family in existence, the result of a tendency towards female births, one murder, and two executions. As a result, there was a very real awareness of vulnerability for this family, an understanding that extinction could easily be the consequence for poor political decisions.

This study of the Valori family is thus as much about the social and political uses of family memory in a Renaissance city-state, how collective memory served as a guide to present action and future strategy, as it is a study of specific and historically discrete family.

I

The chapters that follow examine the Valori family's politics and patronage between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, and are loosely organized around major themes, introduced chronologically. Since there is relatively little written on the Valori in Florentine historiography, a synopsis and overview of the five generations in question is a necessary point of departure.

Despite the dramatic political changes in late fifteenth and early sixteenth-century Florence—from the veiled lordship of the Medici supposedly justified by Ficino's neo-Platonism, to the millenarian republic of Savonarola, to the restored republic that Machiavelli served as a diplomat and theorist, to a renewed Medici lordship that eventually became a Grand Duchy—the Valori were a continuous presence, revealing continuities and consistencies otherwise dimly perceived because of the external drama of political instability.

Renaissance Florentine families tended to mark the political arrival of families by the date one of their members first served a term as a prior, one of nine rotating elected officials who formed the highest executive authority in the republic. The first Valori to gain the priorate was Maso, elected seven times between 1318–1334;[16] his brother Taldo

[16] Najemy (1982), 100–1; Litta (1819), Disp. 17: *Valori di Firenze*, tavv. I.

was elected to the priorate four times. The family's public prominence increased sharply in the early fifteenth century. Niccolò had three sons, Filippo, Alamanno, and Bartolomeo, the last of whom was elected to the priorate in 1402 and was initially a prominent member of the Albizzi oligarchy.[17] By the 1420s and 1430s, Bartolomeo became a leading member of the nascent Medici faction and helped arrange the return of Cosimo de' Medici from exile, forcing the factional showdown that led to the first Medici hegemony. The Valori were rewarded shortly after the Medici victory of 1434.[18] Bartolomeo's son Niccolò was elected *gonfaloniere di giustizia*, the highest executive office of the republic, the following year and he remained a lifelong inner circle member of the Medici faction.[19] Niccolò's younger brother Filippo's public affirmation of loyalty to Lorenzo de' Medici during the Pazzi conspiracy of 1478 against the Medici affirmed publicly their position as dependable Medici allies.[20]

This book begins to pick up in detail the narrative of the family's history with Filippo's two sons, Bartolomeo and Francesco.[21] Both were loyal members of Lorenzo's inner circle until his death in 1492. Francesco's relationship with the ruling family soured, as it had done for several leading families, after power passed to the hands of Lorenzo's son Piero. Francesco was one of the principal collaborators in the first expulsion of the Medici in November 1494 and the dismantling of the Medicean system of shadow government, and hence one of the founding architects of the subsequent republic. Then and now, Francesco was the most famous and controversial member of the family, owing to his prominence in the Savonarolan movement. Shortly after the establishment of the republic, Francesco allied the family with Savonarola, with whom he collaborated closely, and was widely recognized and often resented as the political *capo* of the friar's following. Until his murder in 1498, Francesco was one of the most influential and dominant politicians of the

[17] His political service and contributions to government *pratiche* are discussed in the chapter on Luca Della Robbia's biography of Bartolomeo.

[18] See Kent (1978).

[19] See his extensive correspondence with the Medici family in ASF, MAP.

[20] See Niccolò Valori's account of the Pazzi conspiracy in his *Vita di Lorenzo* in Niccolini (1991); Martines (2003).

[21] Francesco's relationship to the Medici is discussed in Chapter 1. On Bartolomeo's friendship with and political service for the Medici, see his correspondence with Piero di Cosimo and Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici. ASF, MAP, filza 17, 357r; filza 20, 610, 649; filza 24, 55; filza 28, 660; filza 29, 137; filza 73, 399; filza 140, 10.

early republic, benefiting from his direct participation in the expulsion of the Medici as well as from the support of the Savonarolan faction.

His fame crossed over into notoriety after an aristocratic plot was uncovered in 1497 to smuggle Piero de' Medici back into the city and restore him to power.[22] The five primary conspirators were sentenced to death, but were entitled to appeal their sentence to the Great Council according to a law established in 1494 that had been strongly and publicly supported by Savonarola. In the end, the Great Council never heard their appeal and they were beheaded in the main square of the city government. Opinions were and remained divided about Francesco's precise role in that outcome, but he was perceived by many as having used all his formal and informal influence to cajole the government into denying the conspirators their right to appeal their sentence. The families of the conspirators blamed Francesco above all for the executions, and consequently saw him as a demagogic figure who proved the tyrannical ambitions of Savonarola and his followers. When Savonarola fell from public grace following the failed trial by fire in 1498, the city government sent soldiers to arrest Savonarola and Valori, who was assassinated by relatives of the conspirators en route to the Palazzo Vecchio. In spite of the fact that the family narrowly avoided extinction—after killing Francesco, the mob then slew his wife and young nephew and sacked and burned the Valori *palazzo*—the family interpreted Francesco's murder as his martyrdom for the Savonarolan cause and they remained even more firmly committed to Savonarolism during the following century.

In spite of Francesco's notoriety and considerable impact on Florentine events and the future course of his family, there is no reliable consensus regarding his various motives. Many people wrote about Francesco, but he rarely wrote about himself—at least nothing he wrote about himself has survived. The family kept a collective diary, a *ricordanze*, but Francesco was one of a very small number of Valori men who contributed nothing.[23] He seems also to have recorded nothing in

[22] Discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

[23] Although he did not contribute to the family diary, he does appear to have had his own diary, now lost, at least according to his nephew Niccolò. 'Memoria sia come havendomi qualche volta decto Cappone di Bartolomeo Capponi per conti vecchi havere da noi qualche R. [ducati], truovo per uno libro di Francesco Valori decto ricordanze . . . ' BNCF, Panciat. 134, fol. 14r.

the family account books, equally rich sources for the family's history.[24] We have no statements of his own regarding that year, but his nephew, who regarded Francesco as a father, described Francesco's actions in distinctly Savonarolan and idealistic terms: that he was a passionate lover of liberty and that he turned against the Medici the moment the family tended towards tyranny.[25]

The nature of Valori's conversion to the Savonarolan cause is a matter of debate.[26] I agree with Lauro Martines that he was animated by both moral and political concerns.[27] He believed in and worked for Savonarolan moral reform, but retained an independent sense of the political order that would best serve the republic. For Savonarola, the future of the republic depended on its adoption of a broadly-based and inclusive political base.[28] Francesco represented the more conservative and traditional view of the Florentine elite, articulated most persuasively and famously by Francesco Guicciardini: that the republic's fortunes waxed greatest when the regime was led by an old, elite, and narrow oligarchy of aristocrats.[29] In any case, Francesco's emergence as a major figure in the Savonarolan movement brought the rest of his family into contact with the reforming friar and there is no controversy about the commitment of Francesco's nephew, Niccolò, and subsequent members of the family.

Francesco's actions caused a seismic shift in the family's political allegiances and patronage orbit. Francesco ended the family's sixty year tradition of alliance with the Medici; he established them as leading figures in the new republic; and his dramatic emergence as one of the leading captains—and martyrs—of the Savonarolan movement left an indelible mark on subsequent generations of the family.

[24] The account books are preserved in the Archivio di Stato di Firenze. For Bartolomeo di Filippo, 1500–06, see ASF, Panciatichi (*Patrimonio Valori*), 1; for Niccolò di Bartolomeo di Filippo, 1498–1526, see ASF, Panciatichi, 2–4; for Filippo di Niccolò di Bartolomeo di Filippo, 1521–33 see ASF, Panciatichi, 8; Francesco di Niccolò di Bartolomeo di Filippo, 1514–27 see ASF, Panciatichi, 5–7; for Baccio di Filippo di Niccolò di Bartolomeo di Filippo: 1567–1606, see ASF, Panciatichi, 9–12; for Francesco di Pagoloantonio, 1587–1607 see ASF, Riccardi, 504, 522. Thanks to Richard Goldthwaite for providing me with these references. On *libri di famiglia* in general, see Connell (1990), 279–92.

[25] BNCF, Panciat. 134, fol. 17r.

[26] Polizzotto (1994), 16; Cordero (1987), III: 500–3.

[27] Martines (2006), 151–4.

[28] See Chapter 1.

[29] For just one example of this position, see Guicciardini's statements (made through the interlocutor Bernardo del Nero) regarding the *ottimati* elite, taxation, and the stability of the republic in Guicciardini (1994), 48–50.

In the years immediately following the 1494 coup against the Medici, the only dimension of the family's tradition and former commitments that survived the political transition to the republic was their friendship with and support of Marsilio Ficino. Prior to 1494, the Valori were second only to the Medici in their patronage of Ficino; after 1494 they became his principal patrons and became by far his most important political allies.

The family's friendship with Marsilio Ficino had begun with the two brothers, Francesco and Bartolomeo, both gifted students of Ficino and subsequent patrons and supporters, for which Ficino praised them on several occasions. Bartolomeo's son Filippo funded, among other works, Ficino's edition of the collected works of Plato, on at least one occasion spurred Ficino on and ensured he met his deadline with his publishers, as Ficino revealed in a letter to Lorenzo de' Medici, and occasionally directly assisted Ficino by copying Platonic texts for him. Filippo also came to Ficino's aid during Innocent VIII's investigation of Ficino on charges of magic and necromancy in 1489 and in 1493.[30]

The relationship between Ficino and the Valori became closer after 1494. Filippo's brother Niccolò not only continued to provide financial support—publishing Ficino's letters and *Platonic Commentaries* in 1496, among other works—but also brought Ficino more formally into the Valori family network. In 1496, Ficino became a godfather to Niccolò's son; three years later, Ficino acted as an agent for Niccolò Valori in his establishment of a perpetual lease of property in the Val di Marina that belonged to the church of San Lorenzo. Ficino prepared and sent the petition to Alexander VI, received the Pope's response, and was a witness to the transaction, which took place in Ficino's house.

After his uncle Francesco's assassination in 1498, Niccolò became the family's most influential republican politician and guardian of the previous generation's alliances. In addition to bringing Ficino into the family's immediate patronage circle, he remained a lifelong Savonarolan and wrote with reverence about all of his and Francesco's dealings with the friar whose name and memory after 1498 were more than a little compromising in the new republican environment in which Savonarola's enemies dominated. Niccolò nevertheless became a vocal champion of the republic. He was a prior in the Signoria that created

[30] For these details and more, see Chapter 2.

the position of *gonfaloniere a vita* for Piero Soderini, and hence was subsequently a key member of Soderini's inner circle.

Niccolò was also a good friend of Machiavelli and the godfather to Machiavelli's son. He and Machiavelli frequently collaborated professionally; they were sent together as an ambassadorial team to the court of Louis XII and Niccolò served on the *Nove delle milizie*, the committee to create and train a Florentine citizen-militia that Machiavelli had persuaded Soderini to entrust to him. Niccolò frequently defended Machiavelli against his critics: when Machiavelli's blunt and excessively frank dispatches from the field alienated and irritated the Florentine elite in the Signoria, Niccolò Valori soothed the bruised egos of the Florentine elite and tempered disapproval of the upstart chancellor.[31] In the eyes of the Medici, restored to the city after 1512, the two Niccolòs were ideologically committed to the republic and were therefore kept at a distance for many years.[32]

Niccolò's nephew, Bartolomeo, was one of a trio of young disaffected aristocrats who brought down Soderini's republican government and who helped to restore the Medici to the city. Niccolò and Bartolomeo remained divided about the future course of the city. Bartolomeo quickly rose to prominence in the new Medici regime, rewarded for his commitment to the long-term memory of friendship with the Medici, while Niccolò became a marked man. The Medici viewed him with considerable suspicion because of his prominence in the republican regime and because of his friendship with Piero Soderini. Shortly after the return of the family in 1512, Niccolò Valori and Machiavelli were both rounded up, imprisoned, and tortured for presumed complicity in a recently exposed conspiracy to assassinate several members of the Medici family.[33] The evidence suggests that Machiavelli's only guilt lay in association with the wrong people. There is no hard evidence for Niccolò, but its likely that he at least was aware of the plot and may have been an active supporter. In any case, it was only owing to his nephew's intervention with the ruling family that Niccolò's life was spared.[34]

The next generation, led by Niccolò's sons Francesco and Filippo and his nephew Bartolomeo, remained committed Mediceans until

[31] See the correspondence between Machiavelli and Niccolò Valori in Machiavelli (1971), 1033, 1039, 1041, 1042. John M. Najemy discusses the Valori-Machiavelli correspondence in Najemy (1990), 104.

[32] For details see Chapter 3. [33] BNCF, Panciat. 134, fols. 19r–v.

[34] The details of this conspiracy and Niccolò's possible sympathies for the conspirators are discussed in the chapter on Della Robbia's *Vita di Bartolomeo*.

the mid-1530s. Until that time, Bartolomeo was one of the leading Medicean statesmen, commissary-general of the Medici pope Clement VII's army during the siege of Florence that toppled the third republic of 1527–30, and a constitutional theorist of the yet again newly restored Medici regime, along with Francesco Guicciardini, whose position in the regime was augmented by his friendship with Bartolomeo Valori.[35] As commissary general of the victorious army, Bartolomeo was essentially prince of the city in the months following the siege. As with Francesco Valori and the Medici in 1494, relations soured between Bartolomeo and the Medici, the result of differing views on the constitutional ordering of Florence as well as the reluctance of the Medici to honour earlier promises to Bartolomeo of political appointment outside Tuscany.[36] In their private papers, the family articulated the conflict in terms of opposition to tyranny and respect for the republican roots of the city's political culture. Their espousal of republicanism was no rhetorical posture: in the mid-1530s the entire family followed Bartolomeo's lead and defected from Medici ranks, joining Filippo Strozzi and a growing army of Florentine exiles in Bologna.[37]

The exile army that the Valori joined was surprised, drawn into combat before it was ready, and destroyed by the forces of the new duke of Florence, Cosimo de' Medici, at the Battle of Montemurlo in 1537. Bartolomeo and his son Filippo were both captured and beheaded by Duke Cosimo, but not before being dragged on display through the city and tortured.[38] Bartolomeo's other son, Paolantonio, was imprisoned in Volterra for several years, until Duke Cosimo felt secure enough to declare a general amnesty; Filippo di Niccoló's son, Baccio, was allowed to remain free, though like Niccolò before him, he too remained a marked man and a political outsider. Over time, however, he won back the confidence of the Medici rulers and became a central figure in the Florentine political and cultural world of the later sixteenth

[35] There are two copies in Florence of Bartolomeo's appointment as Commissary-General of the papal army: BNCF, Palatino 1157, insert 8; and ASF, Strozziane, 1.12; see also Bartolomeo's expenditure account in Passerini (1847), 106–62. For his influence in the restored regime, see the correspondence between Bartolomeo, his son Paolantonio, Filippo Strozzi, and the captains of the Medici party in ASF, Strozziane, 1.157, 1.336, 1.369; 2.94, 2.143, 2.167, 2.185. The alliance between the Strozzi and the Valori began in 1498, with the marriage of Bartolomeo's sister Caterina to Federigo di Lorenzo Strozzi. ASF, Strozziane, 2.121, 2.51.

[36] See his correspondence with the Medici in ASF, MAP, filza 69, 257r; filza 140, 10r; filza 111, 185r–v, 186r, 188r, 189r; filza 123, 60r.

[37] On Strozzi, see Bullard (1980).

[38] Cochrane (1973), 34.

century.[39] Publicly and privately, he prized the family's Savonarolan and Ficinian traditions as much as his grandfather Niccolò had done and became an energetic patron of works that commemorated and celebrated both reformers. The family remained prominent members of grand ducal Florence until their extinction not many years later.

II

Chapter 1 considers the career of Francesco Valori and his alliance with Savonarola. It provides a narrative of the main political events surrounding the expulsion of the Medici and the establishment of the Second Republic and argues that Francesco maintained a distinction between Savonarola's vision of moral reform and his vision of *governo largo* political reform. The former he followed faithfully and actively; the latter he rejected in favour of his own vision of *governo stretto*.

Chapter 2 turns to Francesco's nephews, Francesco and Niccolò. The focus of the chapter is the family's relationship to Marsilio Ficino, their Platonic patronage, and the tensions it created for the family's relationship with Savonarola. En route, it provides an explanation of when and why the 'myth' of the Platonic Academy emerged in the early sixteenth century.

Chapters 3 and 4 turn to the literature that surrounded the Valori family. Chapter 3 considers the family's friendship with and political connections to Niccolò Machiavelli, their common fortunes following the restoration of the Medici and how those connections became reflected in Machiavelli's historical writings. It looks at a discrepancy between passages in the *Discorsi* and a small work entitled *Nature di huomini fiorentini*, in which Machiavelli arrives at contrasting conclusions about Francesco Valori's political career.

Chapter 4 considers Niccolò Valori's friendship with the humanist and biographer Luca Della Robbia, and shows how that friendship affected Della Robbia's biography of Bartolomeo Valori, who wove into his *Vita* a sustained defense of Savonarolism's impact on Florentine political life.

[39] Baccio provided an account of his fortunes in Florence and relationship to the ruling family in the family diary. BNCF, Panciat. 134, fols. 26–8, discussed in the final chapter. The fortunes of the Valori picked up when they established *parentado* with the influential Senator Francesco Riccardi, who married Gostanza Valori in 1603. ASF, Mannelli-Galilei-Riccardi, 420, 7.

The fifth chapter returns to the private papers of the Valori, examining a collection of documents gathered by Baccio that consider the relationship of the family to the Medici and the larger role of the family in Florentine history.

The sixth and final chapter contrasts two seventeenth-century histories of the Valori, the first a markedly Savonarolan and republican interpretation by the Dominican friar Silvano Razzi and the second a skilful reinterpretation of the family's traditions as essentially pro-Medicean by the court historian Scipione Ammirato.

The conclusion situates my analysis and arguments more generally in the historiography of the Italian Renaissance.

1

Francesco Valori and the Savonarolan Republic

Of all the Valori, Francesco di Filippo had the greatest impact on the Florentine events of his day, the future political development of the city, and his family's subsequent intellectual and political traditions. He was among the central political figures in the coup against Piero de' Medici of November 1494 and among the chief architects of the republic established in its wake, along with Piero Capponi, Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici, Bernardo Rucellai, and Paolantonio Soderini. Although he had long been a Medici loyalist, as had the family throughout the entire fifteenth century, when events began to turn against Piero de' Medici in November 1494, Francesco acted decisively and swiftly to prevent Piero from regaining control of the Signoria, leading a group of followers into the Palace of the Bargello—the city's prison and police headquarters—to equip themselves with weapons to protect the Signoria against Medici forces.[1] Francesco thereby effectively demolished the family's sixty-year tradition of alliance and friendship with the Medici, reorienting the family's basic political identity towards a newly reawakened republicanism.

In addition to his critical political role in the expulsion of the Medici and the re-establishment of the Florentine republic, Francesco soon became one of the most influential supporters of the Dominican firebrand prophet, Girolamo Savonarola, and was indisputably the movement's most controversial figure. Just as Francesco's political actions in 1494 helped to establish an enduring republican commitment for many members of his family, his alliance with Savonarola

[1] Martines (2006), 38 and Parenti (1994), 124: 'La Signoria intanto fatto sonare a martello, di già il popolo coll'arme compariva, onde il Bargello con i suoi armati in casa si ritrasse. Francesco Valori, da Pisa tornato, sanza altrimenti scavalcare in Piazza corse e, mancando il popolo l'arme, a casa il Bargello la moltitudine spinse, la quale dell'arme dei suoi fanti si valse . . . '

and perceived subsequent martyrdom for the Savonarolan cause established an equally strong—perhaps even stronger—family commitment, present and future, to lauding the friar and preserving his memory. Of course, given Savonarola's republican political sympathies after 1494 and his eventual adoption of a staunch anti-Medicean stand, the two fledgling traditions associated with Francesco—republicanism and Savonarolism—were closely intertwined and mutually reinforcing.

This chapter analyses the political career of Francesco Valori, his role in the expulsion of the Medici, and the origins and nature of his alliance with Savonarola. Ironically, in spite of his fame and notoriety, he was the most enigmatic and elusive member of the family. We know less about Francesco's motives and his own rationale for the two big political decisions of turning against the Medici and supporting Savonarola than we do for the decisions taken by subsequent generations of the family. Francesco was the only member of the family not to contribute to the family diary and account books.

Historians of Florence are no less divided than were Francesco's contemporaries about his fundamental motives and intentions. In his *Istorie fiorentine*, Guicciardini famously placed Francesco Valori among those who followed the friar more out of awareness of the political utility and influence of the friar and his following than out of frank belief in Savonarola's religious identity and message.[2] Franco Cordero has argued that political pragmatism accounts for the conversion of leading citizens from oligarchy to a broader based variety of republicanism, and that Valori's career in particular attests to nothing more than an amoral quest for the most immediate source of power.[3] Lorenzo Polizzotto, arguing for a sincere change of heart among the *ottimati* who had expelled Piero de' Medici, wrote that the 'subsequent political careers of these men [Francesco Valori and Iacopo Salviati], their actions, and pronouncements, demonstrate unequivocally their devotion to Savonarola's cause and their determination to translate the religious and political ideals of their prophet into reality'.[4] In his recent study of Savonarola and Florence, Lauro Martines is more cautious than Cordero or Polizzotto, but tends to side with Guicciardini that Francesco Valori,

[2] Guicciardini (1931), 123. Guicciardini distinguished, however, between those, like Francesco, alleged to be sceptical of the friar's prophecies, and other more purely hypocritical citizens, of whom there were many, who masked their self-serving and corrupt actions behind the cloak of Savonarola's piety and perceived good intentions.

[3] Cordero (1987), III: 500–3. [4] Polizzotto (1994), 16.

although clearly a committed *fratesco*, retained a good measure of tactical and ideological independence.[5]

Complicating the questions surrounding Francesco is the equally thorny question of Savonarola's impact on Florentine politics, since many of Francesco's actions were carried out in the name of the Savonarolan cause. Contemporaries and historians all agree that Savonarola had a profound and direct impact on the social and moral life of the city—the conscience of Florence, as Donald Weinstein put it—but no such consensus exists for Savonarola's impact on the major political questions of those years.[6] Many of the Dominican reformer's contemporaries and some modern scholars attribute the Great Council's creation and its anti-Medicean bias to the presence of Savonarola, the self-appointed champion of *governo largo* republicanism.[7] Much recent scholarship, however, emphasizes the limits of Savonarola's political influence, if not the power of the party that supported him. In Nicolai Rubinstein's assessment, the trial and execution of Savonarola little affected the principal political issues of the period: the French alliance, reform of the Great Council, and the authority accorded to the *ottimati* in the government's decision-making councils.[8]

The lack of consensus on Savonarola's role in Florentine political life during 1494–98 stems, in part, from a lack of consensus on the fundamental characteristics of the revived Florentine Republic. Some scholars have argued that the dismantling of the Medicean conciliar system in 1494 and the victory of advocates of a *governo largo*, realized in the establishment of the Great Council, caused a profound change in the exercise of power and the composition of the ruling élite.[9] Certainly many Florentine contemporaries of those turbulent years believed themselves to have witnessed the rebirth of a pure, quasi-Divine Florentine republicanism, attested to by the contemporaneous revival of

[5] Martines (2006), 152–3.

[6] Weinstein (1979), 272. On the presence and impact of Savonarolan moral reforms see Landucci (1927), 100–2; Trexler (1980), 462; Guicciardini (1970), 145–8; Polizzotto (1994), 37–9; Martines (2006), 291–2.

[7] Landucci (1927), 76; Guicciardini (1970), 147. Landucci and Guicciardini attributed the Great Council and the period's republican rhetoric to Savonarola, a position echoed by Ferdinand Schevill, Schevill (1965), 441–7. Gene Brucker has argued that Savonarola's popularity led to the formulation of policy along religious lines in the governing councils, severing, anxiously and problematically, Florence's long tradition of secular politics. Brucker (1985). R. Aubenas refers to Savonarola as a 'dictator', and asserts that he held Florence 'in subjection'. Aubenas (1957), 76–7, and see also Ercole (1930), 197–223.

[8] Rubinstein (1960), 183.

[9] Gilbert (1965), 11–28; Pampaloni (1961), 37.

historical narrative.[10] More recent scholarship on the Great Council and the new Republic, however, tends to emphasize oligarchic continuity. Although the majority of the Great Council was middle class, enjoying a greater political voice than they had had during the earlier oligarchic regimes, their improved political standing did not result in the election of many middle-class families to the city's key magistracies; the most important offices remained dominated by the elite.[11]

In light of this recent scholarship on the limitations of Savonarola's immediate political influence, my analysis of Francesco Valori's career concurs with Guicciardini's analysis—that Francesco was undoubtedly a convert to the friar's moral and spiritual cause, but that he distinguished between that agenda and the friar's political message. Whereas Savonarola believed the regime should expand its electoral base, and that a popular variety of republicanism was directly related to and inextricable from the more purely moral issues, such as gambling, sumptuary legislation, and sodomy, Francesco separated the two. He supported the moral reforms, often in the face of criticism, but believed that the government should establish a conservative variation of *governo stretto*, rule by a handful of elite and experienced oligarchs, of which he of course considered himself one.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first section examines the role of the primary participants in the expulsion of the Medici, suggesting that the uprising was inspired as much by the desire to retain a narrow oligarchy as it was by a popular republican ideology. The second section details Valori's role in the establishment of the second Florentine Republic, demonstrating that he and his allies attempted to institutionalize their oligarchical vision using the same political techniques they had used to help concentrate power in Medici hands. It concludes by explaining the developments that led Francesco to approach Savonarola and the *piagnoni*. The third section discusses the dynamics of power within the Savonarolan party, showing that Francesco Valori gained crucial political support as head of the party and

[10] Matucci (1990), 257–69 and (1994), VIII–XLVI. Florentine histories written by Florentines themselves have often been seen as literary expressions of the unity of citizen and city, the result of republican freedom and widespread participation in public office. Under the Medici, few histories were written other than the government-commissioned chancery histories. The expulsion of the Medici, however, initiated a wholesale revival in chronicle writing by Luca Landucci, Piero Vaglienti, Bartolomeo Cerretani, Piero Parenti, Bartolomeo Masi, and Benedetto Dei, among others.

[11] Bertelli (1973); Cooper (1985).

pursued Savonarolan moral and social reforms, but that on political and constitutional questions he operated independently and rarely received guidance from Savonarola. It concludes by focusing on Valori's work as a Savonarolan and as Standard-Bearer of Justice in 1497, showing that as late as 1497 he was still tacking a political line independent of Savonarola.

Over the course of the fifteenth century, the Medici had developed an elaborate system of electoral controls that enabled them to staff the essential offices of government with their supporters and friends. Cosimo and his grandson Lorenzo had shifted power and authority from the sizable, unwieldy, and unpredictable councils of the Commune and the People to the smaller and more tightly controlled councils of the Seventy and the Hundred. The Medici ensured that party loyalists dominated these councils by manipulating emergency electoral procedures known as *balìe*.

Intended to prevent governmental paralysis during times of crisis and to ensure continuity in government policy, *balìe* were small councils, appointed by a special gathering of the populace known as a *parlamento*. There were two types of *balìa*. In relatively rare cases, a *parlamento* could appoint a *balìa* with full powers to impose constitutional changes and enact legislation that might not pass through the regular councils. Far more common were *balìe* established for a fixed duration of a few years with more limited powers that functioned as ad hoc legislative councils. The latter became the model for the Medicean Council of the Hundred.[12]

To ensure that the institutions of government operated with a common goal, the traditional system of election by lot was abandoned during emergencies; the *balìe* appointed *accoppiatori*, officials empowered to determine the eligibility of citizens for public office and effectively to appoint citizens directly to the Signoria.[13] By relying on a 'state of emergency,' the Medici used *balìe* and *accoppiatori* to maintain effective control of the government for the better part of the fifteenth century. All systems have weaknesses and vulnerabilities, of course, and the stability of this system crucially depended on the ability of the Medici to convince their inner circle of council members that their best interests lay in the preservation of the existing order.

On the surface, it appeared that the transfer of power from Lorenzo to Piero occurred at an ideal time and with the approval of the political

[12] See Rubinstein (1997), 78. [13] Rubinstein (1997).

community. The chronicler Bartolomeo Cerretani began his history of the period between the death of Lorenzo and the fall of the Republic in 1512 by relating the spirit of optimism in Florence of 1490.[14] The government had just finished the war of the Lunigiana, which had earned Florence the city of Sarzana and the fortress of Serezanello, at the expense of the Genoese, and the fortress of Pietrasanta, at the expense of the Lucchese. Lorenzo appeared to rule the city in complete harmony with a small ruling group around him of around twenty citizens.[15] Lorenzo had strengthened the family's position in the city by marrying one of his daughters to the son of Innocent VIII and by arranging the appointment of his younger son Giovanni to the cardinalate. It seemed in that year that 'the city was for him and he for the city'.[16]

A clear majority of the city's elite ruling group appeared to have approved of Piero's ascent to *capo* of the family and the *reggimento*. Two days after the death of Lorenzo, April 10, 1492, the principal citizens of the regime visited Piero to affirm their fidelity to the Medici. On the 12th, the Signoria enacted a provision that enabled Piero to assume all the offices previously held by his father, in spite of the formal age restrictions that applied to him.[17] This provision passed with easy majorities in all the major councils.[18]

When Lorenzo died in 1492, his son Piero inherited an elaborate and effective system of electoral controls as well as a formal political affirmation of his right to assume the mantle of authority and responsibility. What caused the expulsion of the Medici and the dismantling of their electoral system only two years after Piero's accession? Historians have identified Piero's tactlessness, his insensitivity to the pride of Florentine noble houses, and his tendency to behave like a prince, forgetting the tactical use of humility, that essential charismatic component of his ancestors' popularity. But more than any other factor in the family's

[14] Bartolomeo Cerretani was well placed to judge the stability of Piero's succession. The Cerretani were an elite family, boasting entrance to the Priorate in 1305—only fourteen years after the Medici—and who maintained close contact with the Medici. Bartolomeo's father was among the 210 citizens whom Lorenzo entrusted with the *balìa* of 1480 that followed the Pazzi conspiracy. See Giuliana Berti's introduction to Cerretani (1994).

[15] Cerretani (1994), 190. [16] Cerretani (1994), 183.

[17] Piero was 20 while the formal requirement for substitutes was 40. Nevertheless, Piero inherited his father's position as a member of the Seventy, as an *accoppiatore*, the *governatore del palagio*, and the *governatore* of the wool guild. Parenti (1994), 26.

[18] Cerretani (1994), 185.

downfall, historians have looked to Piero's mismanagement of foreign policy during the crisis of the French invasion.[19]

Piero's personality and his disastrous policy towards Charles VIII were inarguably significant factors in the collapse of Medici power. The political context in 1494 certainly explains the timing of action against the Medici, but not all the motives for the politicians who turned against Piero—the causes and origins of their dissatisfaction goes back further. There is a discernible pattern of discontent with Piero among the group of *ottimati* who engineered the coup of 1494, led by Francesco Valori and others. Piero's absence from the city and the disfavour he incurred by granting the French king keys to prized Florentine fortresses provided the *ottimati* with the ideal moment to strike.

Contemporaries of those critical two years, such as Cerretani, Piero Parenti, and later Francesco Guicciardini, were far more sensitive to the harm caused by Lorenzo's and Piero's tendencies to create an inner cadre and secretariat of primarily 'new' men. The new men patronized by the Medici were more dependent on Medici favour for political survival than the elite families excluded from the inner circle and without the long traditions of high political office that characterized the elite families.[20] This was a crucial issue for Francesco Valori and the influential group of *ottimati* who turned against Piero de' Medici and attempted to re-establish elite oligarchic control of the state.

The Pazzi conspiracy of 1478 had made Lorenzo painfully aware of the need to restaff his regime with dependable and trusted allies. Until the final years of Lorenzo's rule and Piero's accession, those families that had satisfactorily demonstrated their fidelity after the Pazzi conspiracy received their rewards in the form of high political office and direct counsel with Lorenzo. Of the twenty 'noble and wise' citizens who ruled the city with Lorenzo, Cerretani identified Paolantonio Soderini and Bernardo Rucellai, both crucial figures in the re-establishment of the republic, and Francesco Valori, who had been frequently and influentially associated with Piero di Cosimo as well as Lorenzo.[21]

Valori was particularly close to Lorenzo and was one of the *ottimati* whose position in the regime became stronger after the Pazzi

[19] Rubinstein argued that foreign policy 'became the principal cause of Piero's downfall.' Rubinstein (1997), 232.

[20] Guicciardini (1970), 75–6; Brown (2002).

[21] Cerretani, (1994), 190.

conspiracy.[22] It followed naturally therefore that he was initially a close associate of Piero de' Medici after Lorenzo's death. In September of 1492, the Council of Hundred appointed six ambassadors to honour Alexander VI's election to the papacy. Both Valori and Piero de' Medici were among the six ambassadors. In November, they departed from Florence together, and when Piero unexpectedly departed from Rome, slighted by what he saw as the lack of pomp surrounding their entry into the papal court, he left with Pierfilippo Pandolfini and Francesco Valori in his entourage.[23] In October 1492, to help ensure a smooth transition from Lorenzo to Piero, the Signoria named ten *accoppiatori* to appoint officials to the major councils; among the ten elected were Valori and Piero de' Medici.[24]

In April 1493, Piero called a *pratica* of nine men, including Valori, to discuss the implications of the recent establishment of the Italian League.[25] According to Piero Parenti, the entire weight of the state lay in Piero and these nine men, who allowed Piero to rule through them but who also used him to preserve their own authority. In the following year, Valori was one of two ambassadors appointed to pay respects to the new Duke of Milan.[26] He frequently served as the republic's diplomat within the Florentine territorial state and on at least one occasion represented the republic at the Spanish court.[27] Valori was also among the last Medici-appointed *accoppiatori* that elected *a mano* the Signoria that turned against Piero in 1494.[28]

During September 1492, the Signoria appointed Valori to the highest position in the Florentine government, *gonfaloniere di giustizia*. Under his guidance, the Signoria extended its control over the republic by appointing five *accoppiatori*, with a tenure of five years, to elect *a mano* the Priors, the Councils of the People and the Commune,

[22] He, Lorenzo, and Piero were hunting companions, as attested by Francesco in letters to Lorenzo. ASF, MAP, filza 60, 80r, 230r, 233r, 236r; filza 72, 69r.

[23] Masi (1906), 20. [24] Parenti (1994), 36–68.

[25] Venice, the papacy, and Milan made up the Italian League.

[26] Parenti (1994), 47 and 112. The fifteenth-century Medici practised a form of double diplomacy, in which official ambassadorial reports were sent to the *Otto* while more nuanced and frank reports were sent directly to Lorenzo and Piero. On this subject, see Mallet, Rubinstein, Fubini, and Bullard (1977–). For Francesco's direct ambassadorial correspondence with Palazzo Medici, see ASF, MAP, filza 14, 234r; filza 32, 523r; filza 40, 284r; filza 41, 561r; filza 66, 267r–v; filza 57, 13r; filza 57, 31r–v; filza 57, 152r; filza 58, 14r; filza 60, 80r, 230r, 233r, 236r; filza 72, 64r.

[27] ASF, Otto di pratica, Carteggio, Missive, 11, fols. 77, 87, 90, 92, 103, 184, 202.

[28] Valori was also a member of the Council of Seventy. Rubinstein (1997), 315–17.

in addition to the inner councils of Seventy and Hundred.[29] Valori appeared to command such authority that other Florentine *ottimati* petitioned Piero to diminish his stature. Piero terminated Valori's appointment as *gonfaloniere*, replacing him with Piero Capponi.[30] This episode is particularly revealing for future developments because it is the first indication of the competition between Valori and Capponi that characterized their relationship as co-conspirators against the Medici and as leaders of the Savonarolan movement.

The general alliance between the Medici and the family's old elite families did not endure, however. Lorenzo and his son Piero began a policy of introducing new men into the government, in an attempt to gain independence from the *ottimati*. Bringing new men into office was not in itself new or obviously politically problematic—the Albizzi in the early fifteenth century appointed Paolo Fortini into the regime's inner circle, as well as Leonardo Bruni, and the Medici had earlier introduced into the regime new families such as the Pucci, Cocchi-Donati, and the Martelli. But Lorenzo and Piero went beyond simply placing new men and new families into positions of influence; they formed an inner circle, drawn primarily from the *gente nuova*, that increasingly excluded the older elite families.[31]

As Cerretani put it, Lorenzo began to share state secrets with 'men of great judgement but most ignoble', thereby earning the hostility of Paolantonio Soderini, Bernardo Rucellai, and other *stretti amici* of Lorenzo and bulwarks of his regime.[32] This policy led to the political ascent of *gente nuova* such as Antonio Pucci, Girolamo Morelli, Cosimo Bartoli, and Bernardo Buongirolami. Most offensive and alarming to the *ottimati*, however, was Lorenzo's appointment of Antonio di Bernardo di Miniato di Dino, a former artisan, as *Provveditore* of the Monte and Giovanni Guidi da Pratovecchio as *gonfaloniere*. Of the *ottimati* particularly hostile to their exclusion from these offices, Franco Cordero has cited Luigi and Iacopo Guicciardini, Francesco Valori, Piero Capponi, Bernardo Rucellai, and Paolantonio Soderini. All were participants in the coup against Piero and several became future *piagnoni*.[33]

According to Parenti, the *ottimati* close to Lorenzo feared that Piero would wrest control of the government from them the moment that

[29] Parenti (1994), 59; Rubinstein (1997), 280. [30] Parenti (1994), 60.

[31] I am grateful to Robert Black for the details on these earlier appointments and the distinction between the general practice of appointing *gente nuova* and Lorenzo and Piero's more exclusive and provocative governing style.

[32] Cerretani (1994), 190. [33] Cordero (1987), I: 102.

Lorenzo died.[34] No doubt these *ottimati* hoped to persuade Piero to rule through them by demonstrating their fidelity both to him and the Medici family, which explains the strong majorities that carried Piero's accession through the councils. But Piero, who failed to imitate so many of the better qualities of his father, chose to continue this dangerous practice. Piero showed little respect for the authority of the *ottimati*, rarely consulting with them and ruling through his inner circle—'young men of little experience and ignoble chancellors'.[35] As Parenti saw it, Piero's new men were expected to be exceptionally 'devoted and faithful', since they 'had been made great' by Medici power.[36] Parenti refers to Piero's use of this practice as part of a deliberate policy of reducing the authority of the Medicean *ottimati* and stabilizing his authority at their expense. As a result, from the first months of Piero's rule the *ottimati* began to consider the possibility of establishing a traditional elite oligarchy in place of Piero and his inner circle.[37]

Had the Medici preserved intact their implicit alliance with the city's powerful families, they might have dammed the undercurrent of dissatisfaction that became a flood in November 1494. They did not, however, and they suffered the consequences. The invasion of Charles VIII and Piero's stubborn adherence to the Neapolitan alliance provided the *ottimati* with an ideal moment to expel the family and dismantle their conciliar system.

Both Cerretani and Parenti describe cabals of *ottimati* planning seizure of the government well before November 1494. Shortly after the death of Lorenzo de' Medici in 1492, Bernardo Rucellai and Paolantonio Soderini met secretly with other distinguished and discontented citizens, including Francesco Soderini, Bishop of Volterra, and Giovanni and Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici, to express their common desire that Piero's authority in the city be greatly reduced.[38] In April 1493, stirred by the expulsion of Bernardo Rucellai and Paolantonio Soderini from the ruling group, a group of *ottimati* 'prudently and quietly suffered their injuries, waiting together, with others behind them, for the moment to retake the regime'.[39]

The events that led to the expulsion of the Medici are well known, and there is little need to rehearse them here, except to make two observations: first, that immediate criticism of Piero emphasized the

[34] Parenti (1994), 23.
[35] Cerretani (1994), 187.
[36] Parenti (1994), 23.
[37] Parenti (1994), 31–3.
[38] Cerretani (1994), 190.
[39] Parenti (1994), 47.

problem of *ignobili* and *giovani* in the government more than the loss of Florentine fortresses, and second, that two of the future leaders of the *piagnoni*, Francesco Valori and Piero Capponi, played instrumental roles in the revolt.[40] Piero lost authority in the city after the Signoria convened a *pratica* of *veduti* and *seduti gonfalonieri* to discuss the French crisis.[41] During this *pratica*, Piero Capponi delivered a learned and clearly well-rehearsed speech on the responsibility of citizens to take action against evil and misguided rulers. According to Capponi, Piero had invited the city's current troubles by not consulting its 'wealthy and mighty noble men', instead acting on advice from 'young men of little judgement'. He concluded his speech by urging the appointment of five prominent citizens to meet with Charles and to annul Piero's negotiations, an incontrovertible denial of Medici authority.[42]

Not long afterwards, the Signoria had declared Piero a rebel with a price on his head. The popular revolt was led, among others, by Francesco Valori, recently returned from Pisa, and soldiers under his command.[43] Having found an unarmed but growing anti-Medicean mob in the Piazza, Valori led an assault against the Palazzo del Bargello, where Piero's supporters had retreated and where his followers outfitted themselves from the city's armoury.[44]

It should come as no surprise that the first men to suffer in the revolt were the *uomini di bassa qualità* that Piero had introduced into the government. The mob, urged on by Valori and Piero Vettori, first sacked the homes of Giovanni Guidi da Pratovecchio, Chancellor of the *Riformagioni*, and Antonio di Bernardo di Miniato di Dino, *provveditore* of the *Monte*. In the street fighting that led to Piero's ignominious escape disguised as a friar, Piero was supported, according to Cerretani, by the 'most base lower classes' and few nobles.[45] The first officials sacked by the *parlamento* of 2 December, convened to reorder the government in

[40] For contemporary accounts, see Cerretani (1994), 195–209; Parenti (1994), 120–6; Landucci (1927), 58–62. For a synthesis, see Hale (1977).

[41] *Veduti* were citizens whose names had been drawn for office, but who had been disqualified upon inspection. *Seduti* were citizens whose names had been drawn from the purses and who passed inspection and went on to hold office.

[42] Cerretani (1994), 197–9. Along with the five *ottimati*, Capponi also suggested sending Savonarola, which indicates that from the beginning of their coup, Capponi understood the political utility of the friar's popularity and reputation.

[43] On Francesco's diplomatic activity in Pisa, see ASF, Otto di Pratica, Carteggio, Missive, 11, fols. 77, 87, 90, 92, 103, 184, 202; and his letter to Piero Capponi in BNF, Ginori-Conti, 26–75.

[44] Parenti (1994), 124.

[45] Cerretani (1994), 206–7; Brown (1979), 116–17.

the wake of the revolt, were Piero's new men: Francesco di ser Barone, Antonio da Bibbiena, Bernardo da Ricci, and ser Antonio da Colle. Antonio Miniati was tortured in prison and executed.[46]

To conclude, the revolt against Piero de' Medici was neither explicitly a republican reaction nor only an immediate response to the crisis caused by Piero's concessions to Charles VIII. On several occasions between 1492–94, a group of Florentine *ottimati* met to discuss the seizure of government, alarmed by the steady decreasing share of public offices they held. The methods employed to establish the new regime and the characteristics of its constitution suggest that these *ottimati* envisioned for the city the traditional aristocratic notion of *governo stretto* republicanism.

On November 30, the Signoria called a *pratica* to determine how the city should govern itself in the absence of Medici guidance. The *pratica* urged the Signoria to convene a *parlamento*, which would enable them legally to abolish the Medicean councils of the Hundred and Seventy.[47] The members of the *pratica* also impressed on the government the need for a new scrutiny because all the names in the *borse* had been gathered during the previous scrutiny of 1484, under the supervision of Lorenzo. Because the names were almost entirely Medici appointments, they feared that restaffing the major offices of government by election would raise to power a regime eager for the return of Piero de' Medici. To prevent this, two committees with special authority were created. The first was a magistracy of ten citizens created to ensure that political factions were not formed.[48] The second was the appointment of new *accoppiatori*, who ought to be 'good men and lovers of liberty', empowered to elect *a mano* the officials of the new regime.[49]

As discussed earlier, the Medici had maintained tight control over political appointments through the creation of *balìe*, small committees that determined policy independently of the regular organs of government. Theoretically, the Signoria could only create these omnipotent councils during times of emergency, requiring the sanction of the

[46] Brown (1979), 116–17 and 121.

[47] In theory, a *parlamento* represented the will of the people. To alter the constitution, the Signoria rang a bell, summoning citizens to the piazza, whose (often enforced) shouts of approval to proposed alterations constituted the city's 'consent'.

[48] ASF, Signori e Collegi, Deliberazioni Ord. Aut. 96, fol. 123v: 'Conciosiacosa -che la casa de' Medici colle compagnie, intelligentie et conventicule anzi coniure contro la libertà habbino tiranneggiato la città anni sexanta.' Cited in Polizzotto (1994), 10.

[49] Parenti (1994), 147–8.

Florentine people gathered in a *parlamento*. Throughout the fifteenth century, during periods of opposition to their rule or during the transfer of power from one generation to the next, the Medici would call a *parlamento* that inevitably granted the people's consent for an emergency *balìa*. The *balìa*, staffed by Medici supporters, would then take the necessary measures to consolidate the family's authority. The Medici consistently ensured the compliance of the *parlamento* by ringing the piazza with armed troops prior to its assembly.[50]

The Signoria, dutifully following the recommendations of the *pratica* to prevent a Medici restoration, convened a *parlamento* on 2 December 1494. According to Parenti, before ringing the city's bell, the signal for the political community of city to gather at the Palazzo della Signoria, the Signoria ringed both the piazza and the gates to the Signoria with armed troops.[51] After the *gonfalonieri* had led the citizens of their districts to the palazzo, Antonio Bartolomei, the new Notary of the *Riformagioni*, read aloud the new constitution and asked for the city's approval. After the *gonfalonieri* affirmed the new constitution, the Signoria and its colleges retreated into the palazzo and the people, in Parenti's words, 'were permitted to leave'. Francesco Valori, Piero Capponi, Bernardo Rucellai, Lorenzo di' Pierfrancesco de' Medici (now known as the Popolani family), and Tanai de' Nerli engineered and organized this public ratification of the new regime.[52]

The new regime attempted to create a ruling élite as small as at any time under the Medici.[53] After dismantling the Medicean system, which entailed the abolition of the councils of the Hundred and Seventy, the *Otto di Pratica*, and the Twelve Procurators,[54] the Signoria took its most ambitious step towards restricted oligarchy by appointing twenty *accoppiatori* to determine the occupancy of every important government office. The government argued that the current *borse* could not be used for elections because it had been last filled under the Medici. Therefore, until a new general scrutiny, the restaffing of the entire government became the responsibility of twenty men, including

[50] Hale (1977).

[51] Parenti (1994), 149. A few weeks earlier Valori had returned from Pisa with troops under his command.

[52] Cordero (1987), II: 55.

[53] This lasted until the resignation of the *accoppiatori*. The Medici ruled through their councils of Seventy and Hundred, which along with Signoria constituted a ruling group of approximately two hundred men. During the first year of its existence the Florentine Republic was ruled, in practice, by twenty *accoppiatori*.

[54] Rubinstein (1954), 151.

Francesco Valori, Piero Capponi, Bernardo Rucellai, and Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici. Theoretically, Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco was too young to hold the office of *accoppiatore*, but the Signoria, in the same way that they arranged for Piero's accession after the death of Lorenzo del Medici, abrogated the age *divieto* to ensure continuity among the *accoppiatori*.[55]

These twenty men replaced all the ambassadors, commissaries, and other magistrates whom Piero de' Medici had appointed. They directly appointed the Signoria, the *Otto di guardia*, the Councils of the People and Commune, and the *Dieci di Balìa* (now known as the *Dieci di Libertà e Pace*). As Nicolai Rubinstein has noted, the structure of the new regime, at least during its first year, borrowed heavily from the Medicean past: the suspension of *divieto* for allies, election by *accoppiatori*, and *parlamenti* controlled by a display of force.[56]

The monopolization of power by the *accoppiatori* and its *ottimati* bias quickly incurred popular hostility. Cerretani claims that by distributing political office only among friends and followers, the new regime developed enemies within a few days, particularly among lower-class citizens and those who had recently returned from exile. The citizens repatriated after their banishment in 1434 by Cosimo de' Medici hardly expected to return to a regime governed by the Medici's former supporters.[57] Parenti, who had more reason than Cerretani to desire the end of Medicean rule,[58] nevertheless recorded similar reactions. He reported that after the city learned the news of the *accoppiatori*'s election, the good citizens of the city lamented that they had hoped 'to take up arms for liberty, but it had not been for the liberty of the people, but for the conservation of the previous regime, purged only of a few *capi*'.[59]

Had the *ottimati* remained unified in the face of criticism, they could have withstood better the call for further reform. But the oligarchical cause had been weakened by internal conflict among three key *ottimati*: Francesco Valori, Piero Capponi, and Paolantonio Soderini. After

[55] Parenti (1994), 149–50; Cerretani (1994), 221.

[56] Rubinstein (1954), 150.

[57] Cerretani (1994), 222.

[58] The Cerretani were a noble family whose position in the Florentine government greatly increased through Medici patronage. The Parenti were a relatively new family, quite wealthy and politically ambitious. Piero Parenti's father, Marco, allied his family with the Strozzi in 1447 by marrying Matteo Strozzi's daughter, Caterina. The Strozzi were among the most powerful opponents of the Medici, who had banished their most notable ancestor, Palla Strozzi. This rivalry ensured that the Parenti would accede to nothing more than minor positions under the Medici. Phillips (1987), 21–96.

[59] Parenti (1994), 151.

their appointment as *accoppiatori*, Valori and Capponi had become divided, competing with each other for greater influence in the new government. But the greatest danger caused by internal dissent came from Paolantonio Soderini, who, embittered because Piero Capponi had blocked his appointment as one of the new *accoppiatori*, began to criticize the concentration of power in such few hands. By doing so, Soderini initiated another wave of popular criticism that awoke the *ottimati* to both the dangers posed by Savonarola and the possibilities his popular influence could offer them.[60]

The first formal protests occurred on 2 December, the same day on which the *parlamento* was held and the election results for the *accoppiatori* were announced. Angered by the recent news, a self-appointed pratica of Bartolomeo Carducci, Francesco Ricialbani, Cosimo Martelli, Agnolo di Biagio del Suzeca, and others marched to the Signoria to object to the *parlamento* of 2 December. It seemed to them that the proceedings were excessively restricted and that the Signoria had given twenty citizens too much power. In the first days of December, however, popular hostility was insufficiently vocal for the oligarchs to feel the need to placate their critics. The Signoria responded to the protestors with threats and had them removed from the *palazzo*.[61]

The *ottimati* faced considerably greater opposition shortly thereafter from the increasing power of a popular movement. Their attempts to establish a narrow oligarchy through the rule of *accoppiatori* failed after Savonarola began to preach publicly against their authority. In the early days of December 1494, during the *parlamento* and subsequent reordering of government, Savonarola began a series of public sermons advocating *governo largo*, asserting that God had willed that Florence should be ruled by 'its people, not by tyranny'.[62] Savonarola's trial deposition of April 1498 confirms Parenti's chronology. Savonarola asserted that the revolution of 1494 and the establishment of a *governo civile* had made Florence an ideal place for him to increase the glory of God. For this reason, Savonarola had enthusiastically supported the creation of the Great Council as the major organ of government.[63]

Throughout the rest of 1494, Savonarola's support of a popular regime increasingly focused on the power of the twenty *accoppiatori* as the principal obstacle to a broadly based republican regime. Cerretani recorded that Savonarola began to censure the *accoppiatori* after

[60] Cerretani (1994), 222–3.
[61] Parenti (1994), 149–50.
[62] Parenti (1994), 160.
[63] Villari (1861), II: cclvi.

Paolantonio Soderini's conflict with Piero Capponi, urging them to renounce their positions because God desired for Florence a sincere and '*largha libertà*'.[64] Savonarola first approached Giuliano Salviati and Domenico Bonsi, and managed to persuade Salviati to resign his position. Savonarola next targeted Francesco Valori for his resignation campaign, but failed to achieve the same results. Valori repudiated criticism of the *accoppiatori* fiercely, and accused Salviati of having 'devastated this city by your resignation'.[65]

In spite of Valori's efforts, however, the institution of *accoppiatori* faced greater popular displeasure, strengthened now by the addition of Savonarola's criticism. The resignation of Salviati and Bonsi made the advocates of *governo largo* only more resolute, and fearing further displeasure, the *accoppiatori* petitioned the Signoria in May 1495 to accept their resignations.[66] For the first time since the expulsion of Piero de' Medici more than a year earlier, the oligarchs' ideal form of oligarchy had been not only seriously challenged, but set back.

The resignation of the *accoppiatori* and the subsequent transfer of supreme power to the Great Council, under the guidance of Savonarola, have often been cited as the birth of a popular, broad-based republic.[67] Recent studies of the 1494 constitution, however, reveal that the new system inclined heavily towards *ottimati* control, even without the power of the *accoppiatori*.[68] Perhaps to prevent this bias, when Savonarola called for a more democratic system of political representation, based on the Venetian council, he urged the exclusion of the *accoppiatori* from its preparation, suggesting that it be entrusted to the *gonfalonieri*, after each *gonfalone* had concluded a popular consultation.[69] However, contrary to

[64] Cerretani (1994), 223. [65] Villari (1961), II: cclvi.

[66] Cerretani (1994), 223. Sergio Bertelli claims that the *accoppiatori* resigned, fearing bodily harm. Bertelli (1973), 155.

[67] Bertelli (1973), 150–5.

[68] Contemporary chronicles and histories have little to say about practical mechanics of the constitution: who was eligible, how elections took place, how long offices were held, etc. The following discussion of mechanics comes from articles by Nicolai Rubinstein and Roslyn Cooper.

[69] Many of Savonarola's contemporaries, and modern historians, have seen Savonarola as a principal protagonist in the establishment of a Great Council, based on a Venetian model, and, therefore, as a political analyst of some originality. J. H. Whitfield has argued that Savonarola's *trattato* on the Florentine government informed Machiavelli's political thought. Whitfield (1949), 44–59. Rudolf von Albertini wrote that Savonarola, as author of the *Trattato*, initiated the great constitutional debates of the sixteenth century. Weinstein (1972), 254–5. There is much evidence to the contrary, however. The Venetian government had long held the attention of Florentines, from as early as

Savonarola's wishes, the engineers of the new constitution and the eligibility system for the Great Council were, in addition to the *gonfalonieri*, the *accoppiatori*, the *Dodici buonuomini*, the *Dieci di libertà e pace*, and the *Capitani del parte Guelfa*.[70] Because these offices had been staffed by appointees of the *accoppiatori*, the constitution that outlived the *accoppiatori* nevertheless continued to reflect their influence and ambition.

Chroniclers such as Parenti and Cerretani praised the democratic nature of the Great Council and the increased voice it gave to the middle classes. The eligibility lists yielded three and a half thousand citizens qualified to sit on the Great Council, which made it, formally speaking, the most broadly based regime the city had ever known. This large body deliberated on taxation and state finance, and provided from its own ranks the officials who staffed the Signoria and the advisory Council of Eighty. The abolition of the *accoppiatori* prevented the electoral manipulation, common under the Medici, that would favour one faction over another, and the abolition of the Medicean Council of Seventy prevented the concentration of executive authority among a small clique.[71] However, in spite of its inclusiveness, Roslyn Cooper's analysis has shown that the new constitution did not substantially alter the composition of the city's ruling class, particularly as it affected the circle of families who occupied the highest positions of influence.[72]

We have seen that the instigators of the 1494 coup and the engineers of the new republic provided for a heavily aristocratic bias in the city's constitution. We also saw that, in spite of this bias, the locus of power in the new regime nevertheless had been diffused more widely than Valori and the *ottimati* had intended. A popular reaction, which had found a champion and spokesman in Girolamo Savonarola, successfully defeated Valori's first attempt at political hegemony through the office

1410, inspiring analyses from humanists such as Poggio Bracciolini, Francesco Patrizi, and Francesco Negri. See Muir (1981), 45. The idea of writing a theoretical justification of the republic established in 1494 did not come from Savonarola; he wrote the *Trattato* in 1498, at the request of a *Piagnone* Signoria facing increasingly hostile opposition in the city. Savonarola's *Trattato* superficially imposed Florentine political terminology on a philosophical pattern established by Aquinas; a convincing conflation of these two sources in no way required reference to the Venetian constitution. For this reason, scholars have suggested that the original inspiration to follow the Venetian model lay elsewhere, and that Savonarola, as a public champion of the Venetian model, may have acted as a propagandist for an elite oligarchy. Rubinstein (1960), 160–1; Weinstein (1972), 259–61.

[70] Rubinstein (1954), 153.
[71] Cooper (1985), 72.
[72] Cooper (1985), 74.

of *accoppiatori*. Less than a year later, however, Francesco Valori, an outspoken defender of rule by *accoppiatori*, emerged as the leader of the Savonarolan following that had been his first successful opponent.

After the failure of *accoppiatori* rule, Valori must have developed a keener appreciation of the necessity of popular support in addition to formal political control. The evidence suggests that he helped use Savonarola's mass appeal for his own purposes, but was also prepared to advocate for Savonarola's moral reforms at the highest levels of government.[73] This section tries to show how and why this unlikely alliance unfolded, and also to demonstrate that Valori generally showed considerable political independence from Savonarola.

In 1495, the Florentine oligarchs appeared unified on the surface. For example, when Charles VIII requested hostages from the Florentine government as surety in exchange for the concession of several fortresses and Pisa, he received Piero Capponi's son, Paolantonio Soderini's son, Francesco Valori's nephew, and Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco's brother.[74] However, the loss of Pisa and the city-wide consensus that its renewed subjection to Florence constituted the single most important political objective only temporarily masked the growing factionalism within the city's political camps. An alliance with a party of mass appeal became increasingly attractive to Valori as factional dissent grew among the *ottimati* in 1495.

At the close of 1494 and early 1495, the oligarchs began to compete among each other for political influence, splintering their party and

[73] Valori recognized the political potential of Savonarola, much as the Medici had before 1494. Lorenzo and Piero de' Medici immediately appreciated the potential in Savonarola's religious reforms for their political ambitions. Lorenzo Polizzotto has argued that Savonarola's success in separating the Dominican convent of San Marco from the jurisdiction of the Lombard Congregation, often seen as first evidence of his lofty reforming initiative, was merely the culmination of a plan begun by Lorenzo and carried on by Lorenzo's son Piero. The Medici family had been associated with the convent since 1436, after Cosimo *il vecchio* had ousted the Silvestrine order and replaced them with Dominican Observants. The convent played a crucial role in the Medici family's political prestige: symbolically, through artwork replete with references to the authority granted them by God, and practically, through proximity to the Medici *palazzo*, providing a discreet locus for party meetings. Discretion was important, for a long standing tradition in Florence declared that the formation of political parties was a serious crime. Given this close relationship between family and convent, the Medici could not allow a Lombard ecclesiastical hierarchy to determine San Marco policy. Polizzotto (1993), 334–6; Weinstein (1970), 185–226. For contemporary accounts of the separation of the San Marco from the Lombard Congregation, Cerretani (1994), 193; Parenti (1994), 50–2.

[74] Parenti (1994), 281.

paralysing their authority. As noted earlier, Valori and Capponi were among the earliest rivals.[75] In spite of their personal rivalry, however, they both led the faction of narrow oligarchy. The second faction was more apprehensive of the popular reaction, and advocated political concessions to secure more stability. This faction was led by Bernardo Rucellai and Paolantonio Soderini, who must have been further pushed into this camp by his exclusion from the *accoppiatori* at the hands of Valori and Capponi.[76] The divisions increased in the summer of 1496 when Capponi organized a lobby group advocating a Milanese alliance, conflicting with the French party led by Paolantonio Soderini and Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco.[77]

Franco Cordero has dated Valori's transition from a supporter of oligarchy to one of *frateschi* popularism as beginning in May 1495.[78] If Cordero is correct, then we have further evidence suggestive of Valori's ability to rebound from political setbacks and to pre-empt future attacks. In January 1495, a new Council of Eighty had been drawn from the *borse*. Parenti notes that many principal citizens lost office, including Francesco Valori and Piero Capponi. In their places, the *borse* had introduced many lower-class men, supporters of popular government, and prominent citizens from the preceding regime who had been hostile to Valori's and Capponi's coup of 1494, in particular Bernardo del Nero and Pierfilippo Pandolfini.[79] Three months after the restaffing of the Council of Eighty, the principal advisory council of the Florentine Republic, with enemies on two fronts, we find Valori seeking support from the heart of the popular movement. His pre-emption was successful, for his authority within the city grew steadily, culminating in his election as Standard-Bearer of Justice in 1497.

Sometime after May 1495 Valori contacted Savonarola, suggesting that Savonarola could more effectively implement his great *opera* if the *frateschi* had a political as well as a spiritual leader. Savonarola was as aware of factional splintering within his own following as the *ottimati* were of theirs. He wrote in his trial deposition three years later that too many of his followers suffered from excessive pride and ambition, that

[75] Without the support of someone like Savonarola, Valori was bound to lose this kind of competition because he had no sons and a very small family. This precluded for him the support of a large *conserteria*, the customary source of influence and power in factional politics.

[76] Parenti (1994), 152 and 181; Cerretani (1994), 233.

[77] Brown (1979), 125; Bertelli (1972), 32–7 and (1980), I: 22–30.

[78] Cordero (1987), II: 330.

[79] Parenti (1994), 306.

too many 'wished to be followed than to follow others'. Although he had urged them both personally and in his sermons to remain united, focusing on nothing else, he had achieved few results.[80] Savonarola also felt that the discord among his followers had alienated prominent citizens initially inclined to support his cause. He therefore concluded that there could be 'no unity without a *capo*'.[81]

Savonarola, for all the effectiveness of his sermons, was too much at a disadvantage to control and to guide a political party. As a foreigner and a friar, Savonarola could not buttress his cause with the customary panoply of political techniques, long perfected by Florentines well versed in the subtleties of communal competition. As a newcomer to the city, Savonarola could not rely on friends, relatives, and neighbours, traditional and usually reliable sources of political support, to maintain control over his party. Unlike *ottimati* such as the Medici, with an enormous fund of wealth at their disposal, Savonarola could offer no financial incentives to help his party cohere, nor could he offer patronage of any kind. As a religious he lacked the sons and daughters necessary for the marriage alliances that played a fundamental role in Florentine political life.[82]

Precisely why Savonarola promoted Valori as *capo*, exempting him from the censure of excessive pride and inclusion among the ranks of those who 'wish to be followed than to follow others', is uncertain. It is relatively clear, however, that the idea to promote Valori did not originate with Savonarola. Valori approached Savonarola, describing himself as a good citizen and that 'in this respect no one could surpass him'. He then reiterated to Savonarola on many occasions that 'these scoundrels, that call themselves *arrabbiati*, wish to destroy the current regime'. Valori lamented that, although he wished 'to do great things to favour and help the *bene comune*', no one followed him and he remained alone. Savonarola understood that Valori had said this because most *frateschi* 'did not show much favour towards him'. Although some *frateschi* were wary of Francesco's political priorities, Savonarola nevertheless promoted Valori as *capo* of the *piagnoni*, persuaded that 'he would not become a tyrant'.[83]

[80] Villari (1861), II: cclxxxv.

[81] Villari (1961), II: cclvi.

[82] Butters (1985), 10–12.

[83] Villari (1861), cclvi and cclxxxv. Lionello Boni and Antonio Giraldi came to Savonarola, warning him of the dangers of entrusting leadership to *ottimati* of dubious republican commitment. Villari (1861), II: cclxxxvi.

However, it would have been difficult for Savonarola to evaluate precisely Valori's efforts to establish a *governo largo* because Savonarola played a minimal role in the political deliberations of the *frateschi*. In their depositions, both Savonarola and his religious lieutenant, Domenico da Pescia, asserted that political gatherings, *intelligenze* and *pratica*, did not take place at San Marco. Domenico steadfastly insisted that those who came to San Marco attended only to spiritual matters, never to the city's temporal affairs.[84] Savonarola, more cautious, confessed that no *intelligenze* took place that 'he was aware of', but averred that his only influence on his followers lay in his public sermons and in the purely spiritual devotions, processions, and *laude* frequently carried out in San Marco.[85] Lauro Martines' recent assessment of this question supports Savonarola's statements.[86]

Although one would expect Savonarola to deny accusations of political organization, given the serious punishment meted out to violators of the city's prohibitions against *intelligenze*, Savonarola's need to maintain a reputation of holiness and otherworldliness within the city tends to support his denial. Savonarola often spoke of the need to maintain his reputation and to maintain '*fama di buon vita*'. To keep his saintly and impartial image intact, Savonarola could speak about politics only in general terms, careful to avoid particular commitment or statements of support, usually confining his statements to the importance of his following's unity. In his trial deposition he asserted that to preserve his public image he had made it one of his firmest propositions not to get involved with political details. In addition to public image, however, Savonarola also shunned political debate because he knew that Valori and the movement's *ottimati* were prudent statesmen, much better versed in the subtleties of Florentine politics than he.[87]

Savonarola's concern for his public image and his need for more adept and unconstrained political representatives helps account for Valori's independence regarding questions of political policy within the Savonarolan party. Eager to dissociate himself from the numerous diplomats and ambassadors who, having heard rumours of the friar's influence abroad, came to San Marco to argue their cases, Savonarola referred them directly to Valori.[88]

[84] Villari (1861), II: ccv.
[85] Villari (1861), II: cclviii.
[86] Martines (2006), 154–5.
[87] Villari (1861), II: cclviii, cclx, and cclix.
[88] Villari (1861), II: cclxiii–xiv.

One could argue that Valori accomplished two coups in his career: the first in 1494, expelling Piero de' Medici, and the second in 1495–96, securing leadership of the Savonarolans. Savonarola's energetic endorsement of Valori as party boss earned him the political support and alliance of numerous *ottimati*, including many who had previously been hostile to him. Savonarola especially sought out Valori's critics among the *frateschi*, persuading them of Valori's superior potential to unite the fragmented movement. He specifically records speaking with Giovan Battista Ridolfi, Alamanno and Iacopo Salviati, Luca Albizzi, Antonio Giraldi, Lionello Boni, and Domenico Mazzinghi, in addition to 'those who passed through San Marco' and his friars and confessors.[89]

Valori capitalized on Savonarola's confidence. In October 1496, Valori had been a candidate for the *Dieci di libertà e pace* but was not elected.[90] In January 1497, supported by the Savonarolans, he emerged as *Gonfaloniere di giustizia*, the highest office in the Florentine Republic. The timing of Valori's election, following in the wake of his leadership of the Savonarolans, likely resulted from *frateschi* votes that he had not before won. Savonarola played an important role in this development by frequently preaching to his party about the importance of unity and by defending Valori from his detractors. When Lionello Boni approached Savonarola, warning him that Valori was an 'evil citizen seeking only his own good', Savonarola defended Valori and assured him that he had specifically ordained that Valori enjoy such authority.[91] Because of Valori's political success, Savonarola's confession that he urged his followers to favour each other in elections sounds plausible.[92] As a result, no one in the *frateschi* camp openly challenged Valori's authority.

At times, Savonarola was aware of the potential dangers inherent in passing the mantle of political authority to Florentine *ottimati*.[93] He admitted that some people came to gatherings at San Marco 'for their own benefit' and to form a *mezza intelligenza*, his admonitions to respect San Marco as a place of devotion notwithstanding.[94] In spite of Savonarola's stalwart defense of Valori, the repeated warnings

[89] Villari (1861), II: cclvii and cclxxxvi. [90] Cordero (1987), III: 501.
[91] Villari (1861), II: cclxi. [92] Villari (1861), II: cclxxxiv.
[93] Savonarola was not alone in this respect. The chronicler Piero Parenti lost all sympathy for Savonarola after Valori ascended to the office of Standard-Bearer of Justice with *frateschi* support. Parenti deemed the existence of an organized political party contrary to Savonarola's rhetoric, and saw Valori's success as the friar's attempt to gain a monopoly of power within the city. Parenti (1994), xxix.
[94] Villari (1861), II: cclix.

about his past from people such as Lionello Boni and Antonio Giraldi must have caused Savonarola to worry. He confessed that he had had some suspicions about Valori and other *ottimati* within the movement, concerned that they 'would not be able to restrain themselves and would create a regime among themselves'. As a consequence of this concern, Savonarola renewed his series of speeches against *governo stretto*, now more for his own followers, it seems, than others.[95] At one point, Savonarola proposed establishing a *doge* for Florence, again imitating the Venetian example, but did not pursue the plan because he could think of no acceptable candidate. The two most obvious candidates, Valori and Giovan Battista Ridolfi, Savonarola worried might '*fare tyranno*'.[96]

Valori appears to have distinguished between Savonarola's spiritual reform programme and Savonarola's political programme. The former, such as sumptuary laws for women, organizing children around public displays of piety, and laws against gambling, prostitution, and sodomy, he continued to promote.[97] He actively supported the generally Savonarolan conviction that the survival of the regime depended on steadfast loyalty to the French alliance, though he did so on economic grounds.[98] Savonarola had frequently urged the city's government to recognize and help coordinate the *fanciulli*, the processions of boys that helped enforce Savonarolan morality on the streets. Many elite politicians resented the authority wielded by and freedoms granted to children, while others believed that such peculiar social innovations would make Florence the laughing stock of Christendom. It was only during Valori's tenure as *gonfaloniere* that the government was finally persuaded to acknowledge the legal and corporate rights of the *fanciulli*.[99] During government *pratiche*, Francesco lobbied aggressively on behalf of measures that would strengthen the newly established republic. He criticized citizens who grumbled about increases in taxation as having inadequate love of their native land; in the face of fiscal crisis, the regime should take bold measures, voting in new and heavier taxes, taxing the

[95] Villari (1861), II: cclvii.
[96] Villari (1861), II: cclviii.
[97] Cordero (1987), III: 501.
[98] ASF, CP, 62, fol. 260v.
[99] On criticism of the *fanciulli*, see Parenti (1994), 181; Cerretani, (1994), 233. The government acted only after representatives of the *fanciulli* delivered an oration to the Signoria and after the Signoria had a formal consultation with Savonarola's representatives in San Marco. A text of the oration is in Pseudo-Burlamacchi (1761), 125–6. The legislation was approved by 69–25 votes in the Ottanta and by 710–354 in the Great Council. ASF, Provvisioni, 187, fols. 112r–113r. Cited and discussed in detail by Polizzotto (1994), 38–41.

clergy (he suggested that the republic first try to obtain a license from Rome, but that if Rome would not grant one, the republic should proceed as if it had), and showing mercy to none, because, Francesco argued, 'all our good comes to us from freedom and the republican government'.[100] Under his leadership, the government banned Francesco Cei for having written a poem that criticized Savonarola.[101] However, his convictions did not blind him to the necessity of discretion. In June 1497, the most distinguished *piagnoni* in Florence drew up a petition to Alexander VI that urged the Pope to lift the recently imposed ban of excommunication. According to Fra Roberto Ubaldini, a Dominican from San Marco, Francesco Valori urged that the petition be burned, that no copies be made, and that it definitely not be sent to Rome.[102]

In his study of the first years of the Great Council, Rubinstein noted the years of especially active legislation devoted to questions of eligibility and voting systems. In particular, he noted that legislation on these questions died down in 1495 and renewed in vigour beginning in 1497: the same years that Valori and his *ottimati* peers stepped down as *accoppiatori* and that Valori re-emerged as *gonfaloniere di giustizia*.[103] The Signoria convened under Valori's leadership began again to restrict the numbers of the office-holding class in an attempt to prune the Council of members who had arrived after the failure of *accoppiatori* rule. Those citizens who had ascended to the Great Council by receiving an exemption from possession of the *beneficio* (which normally ensured that a citizen's ancestors belonged to the ruling class) were expelled. Valori intended this law to apply only to new men by exempting from the purge those citizens who had lost the *beneficio* but who belonged to families that had had members on the major councils in the past.[104]

[100] 'Perchè dalla libertà et republica habbiamo ogni nostro bene . . . Et circa questo . . . prego le Signorie Vostre non ci avere respecto alcuno' ASF, CP, 62, 205r and 218r and 63, fol. 117v.

[101] Polizzotto (1994), 208.

[102] 'che la si ardessi, che mai non se ne trovassi copia alcuna, et per niente che la non si mandassi a Roma.' Villari (1861), II: cclvii.

[103] Rubinstein (1954), 158.

[104] Cooper (1985), 77; Guicciardini (1970), 123. The most famous victim of this oligarchical purge was the chronicler Piero Vaglienti, who came from a *gente nuova* family that had matriculated from the jewel crafters' guild at the beginning of the fifteenth century. He lost his seat in the Great Council, and understood exactly who was behind the recent purge. In a letter to Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino, in 1514, Vaglienti wrote that he had been given a share of power under Tanai de' Nerli, holding three offices, but when Valori assumed the office of Standard-Bearer, he and many others had been excluded from the regime by laws initiated by Valori. Vaglienti (1982), 12; Cooper (1985), 112.

After Valori merged with the popular opposition that had been so obstinate in 1495, the only apparent threat to his position in the city came from supporters of the Medici, known as *bigi*, who had disapproved of the 1494 revolt and who aspired to see Piero de' Medici return as ruler of Florence.[105] Valori and Savonarolan *ottimati* such as Soderini had played too instrumental a role in the 1494 coup for the Medici ever to forgive them if they were to return to power. For this reason, as *gonfaloniere* Valori initiated a campaign of persecution for pro-Mediceans, purging them from government councils.

Valori first struck at the *bigi* by having the Signoria under his leadership declare as rebels any citizen who maintained contact with Piero, Giovanni, or Giulio de' Medici.[106] Valori extended the penalty for rebellion to the fathers and brothers of the accused.[107] Valori had also intended the modifications to the Great Council discussed above to target those men who owed their political ascent to Lorenzo's favour after 1478. To remain politically qualified, those citizens who had been successful in the 1484 scrutiny or who had recently been members of the Councils of the Commune or People had to show evidence that their ancestors had been taxpayers in Florence for at least fifty years. By ensuring that their ancestors had been politically eligible under Cosimo *il vecchio* de' Medici (d. 1464), Valori exempted from power any residue of Lorenzo and Piero's new men.[108]

Valori's attack on the *bigi* culminated in August 1497, after the discovery of a conspiracy within the city walls to restore Piero de' Medici to power. The committee chosen by the Signoria to investigate the crime arrested five of the city's most prominent men: Bernardo del Nero—a vocal opponent of Valori—Giannozzo Pucci, Lorenzo Tornabuoni, Niccolò Ridolfi, and Giovanni Cambi.[109] The five plotters insisted on their right to appeal to the Great Council, citing a law established in 1494 that had been strongly supported by Savonarola and Valori.[110] Savonarola remained silent throughout this episode, denying in his

[105] The 'greys', so-called because their unpopularity during the republican period required them to remain in the shadows.

[106] These Medici descended from Lorenzo *il magnifico*'s line; the other rival line of the family had changed their name to Popolani and had collaborated with Valori and the engineers of the 1494 coup.

[107] Cordero (1987), III: 501. [108] Cooper (1985), 77–8.

[109] On the conspiracy, see Pitti (1842), 42–50; Martines (1968), 441–5.

[110] Valori spoke in favour of the right of appeal in pratiche held on the 6th and 15th of March, 1495. ASF, CP, 61, fols. 3r–4v. Savaronola spoke in favour of the law in his sermons on the Psalms. Savonarola (1969–74), I: 10–14, 32, 79–80.

deposition any complicity in the execution of the conspirators. Valori, however, persuaded the *pratica*, convened to consider the rights of the guilty, into denying them any appeal. In violation of a law associated with Savonarola, the five conspirators were beheaded without the appeal that had been granted to accomplices of lesser rank such as Filippo Corbizzi and Giovanni Benizzi.[111] Not only did this seemingly hypocritical stand from the leader of the *frateschi* damage Savonarola's reputation, it also contributed to Savonarola's execution because the friar's enemies used this constitutional violation in the trial against him.[112]

Although the execution of the Medicean conspirators, in particular Valori's rival Bernardo del Nero, seemed to consolidate Valori's position as 'absolute head of the city', as Guicciardini saw it, the ferocity with which he attacked his opponents led to his murder not long after.[113] Savonarola's excommunication and his defiance of the papal ban on preaching had greatly weakened his reputation in the city. The election of a Signoria hostile to Savonarola only exacerbated this situation, followed by the debacle of the trial by fire that both legitimated the Signoria's arrest warrants for Savonarola and his followers and that enabled a group of *compagnacci* to incite a mob against San Marco and the Savonarolan *ottimati*.[114] Francesco Valori, while being marched under guard to the Signoria, was assassinated in the street by Vincenzo Ridolfi and Simone Tornabuoni, relatives of two of the executed conspirators.

The great drama of the trial by fire and the fury with which the mob attacked San Marco, less than a year after Valori's election as *gonfaloniere* and the zenith of Savonarola's position in the city, are often seen as a microcosmic model of the larger pendulum shifts in political sentiment during these years. However, a unity of *ottimati* interest lay behind these events. The *compagnacci* in power organized this assault only on Savonarola himself, not the *ottimati* within the party. The *compagnacci* objected to the presence of a friar such as Savonarola on the political scene; they had no intention of excluding Savonarolan *ottimati* from their share of political office. Paolantonio Soderini, that close associate of Savonarola and Valori, had his son Tommaso join the *compagnacci* to maintain good relations with all the city's factions. The Signoria had ordered that all Savonarolan *ottimati* be brought to the *palazzo*

[111] Guicciardini (1970), 130–7; Cerretani (1994), 235–40; Weinstein (972), 82.
[112] Bertelli (1972), 38–9. [113] Guicciardini (1970), 136.
[114] For detailed account of the trial by fire, see Ridolfi (1959), 231–43; Weinstein (1970), 285–8. Richard Trexler explains the importance of Savonarola's excommunication and the threat of interdict in Trexler (1974), 180–8.

unharmed, including Valori, and even sent an armed guard to prevent the mob from sacking Soderini's house. Valori was the only *ottimate* casualty of the *compagnacci*'s mob, and he was killed not by order of the Signoria, but by two pro-Mediceans carrying out a vendetta. As a penalty for the Savonarolan associations, the Signoria required that Giovan Battista Ridolfi and Paolantonio Soderini merely pay fines to the city.[115] Except for Valori, all of the Savonarolan *ottimati* continued to play a prominent role in the government during the years immediately following Savonarola's trial and execution.[116]

Valori's support of Savonarola and his energetic efforts to prevent the Medici from returning to Florence led to his bloody death, but those same actions ensured that future generations of the Valori family would revere his memory and the Savonarolan cause. The circumstances of Francesco's career and death were recorded in the family diary by his admiring nephew Niccolò, who saw in his uncle the first Savonarolan martyr from the city's elite families. The family prized that particular interpretation of Francesco and, as we shall see in detail in Chapter 5, commissioned a biography of Francesco in the late sixteenth century that took Francesco's Savonarolan piety and martyrdom as its primary themes.

[115] Vaglienti (1982), 47–8; Cerretani (1994), 246–68; Guicciardini (1970), 141–5.
[116] Rubinstein (1960).

2

Marsilio Ficino and the Valori Family

Francesco was not the only Valori to sympathize with and support Savonarola's moral programme while maintaining an independent posture on other issues about which Savonarola would not have agreed. During Savonarola's years of ascendancy the Valori family, who already boasted a tradition of friendship with Marsilio Ficino, became Ficino's patrons and supporters yet more publicly and yet more vocally. Francesco's nephew, Niccolò, revered his uncle and respected his alliance with Savonarola. He appears rather consistently to have been more idealistic than Francesco—whereas Francesco's relationship with Savonarola was based on a combination of admiration and mutual expediency, Niccolò's admiration and support of Savonarola was more intrinsic. And yet, just as Francesco has his own opinions about how best to govern the republic, so Niccolò had his own opinions about the value and importance of neo-Platonic philosophy, against which Savonarola increasingly railed from the pulpit after 1494.

This chapter examines the Valori friendship with and patronage of Ficino. It begins with Filippo Valori, with whom the relationship was first forged, turns to his brother Niccolò, who brought Ficino more closely into the family's patronage orbit, and then examines the commitment of subsequent generations to memorialize and celebrate the family's association with neo-Platonic philosophy. By the end of the fifteenth century, the Florentine elite of course had a considerable tradition of supporting humanists, scholars, and philosophers associated with the new learning, in part out of intellectual sympathy but no doubt also in part to follow intellectual fashion. But Niccolò's commitment to Ficino was more notable, however, since he brought the family closer to the scholar in the midst of Savonarola's frequent and strident attacks on the value of classical philosophy as a guide for current crises, which had to weigh on Niccolò considerably given his familiarity with Savonarola and the political advantages his family gained through their commanding role in the *frateschi* movement.

The family's enduring connection to Ficino, his memory, and neo-Platonic studies tells us something immediate and fundamental about the family, but—given the public and vocal nature of that support—it also sheds light on some of Ficino's and Savonarola's ideas and statements. Viewing matters from the perspective of the Valori family, we will see later in the chapter some additional reasons why Ficino and Savonarola might have regarded each other as rivals, and hence another reason why Savonarola so frequently condemned Plato in his sermons and why Ficino acknowledged Savonarola's death with a bitter and savage denunciation of the friar's hypocrisy.[1] The family's neo-Platonic commitment also helps explain why the myth of a Florentine Platonic academy under Medici patronage first emerged, since one of the key catalysts of that myth was Niccolò's biography of Lorenzo de' Medici that defended the political utility of Platonism against Savonarola's criticisms.[2]

As both patrons and friends, the Valori family were Ficino's most loyal supporters and powerful friends in the republic of 1494–98. Relations between Ficino and the Valori had always been close and are relatively well known.[3] Filippo, Niccolò, and Francesco Valori were all Ficino's students at one time or another, as well as active patrons of Ficino's work.[4] Ficino began his project of translating Plato's dialogues in 1462, having received from Cosimo de' Medici a manuscript containing all of Plato's dialogues in Greek. Shortly thereafter he also received a similar manuscript from Amerigo Benci.[5] He translated the dialogues sporadically, completing the first ten by Cosimo's death in 1464. It was not until 1483 that he began immediate preparation for publication, turning to the Valori family for assistance. A few months later, in January 1484, Filippo Valori and Francesco Berlinghieri signed a contract with Fra Domenico da Pistoia and Lorenzo Veneto to publish 1,025 copies

[1] Kristeller (1937), II: 76–9. [2] Hankins (1990) and (1991).

[3] For example, see the comments Filippo Valori wrote as accompaniments to the dedication copies of Ficino's writings (which he paid to have copied), in Kristeller (1937), I: 22, 65–6, 94–5, 104–5; Ficino's comments about the Valori in the preface to his *Commentaria in Platonem*; and the discussion by Della Torre (1902), 733–5.

[4] See the list of Ficino's *auditores* in Hankins (1991), 440–5. Filippo Valori tutored others as well, presumably because of affection for study, since he did not need the money. On his income, see the *catasto* documents published by Verde (1973), III: 741–2. See the correspondence between Filippo and Michele Acciari, the tutor of Filippo's son, in BNCF, Rinuccini, 17; partially republished in Verde (1977), 164, 647–51. On Acciari, see Branca (1976), esp. 469–70.

[5] Kristeller (1937), I: cxlvii–clvii; Kristeller (1966): 41–54; Gentile (1987), 51–84.

of Ficino's *Platonis opera omnia* at a printing press located in the Dominican convent of San Iacopo di Ripoli. In the fall of the same year, the first edition was duly published, leading Ficino to sing the praises of Filippo in a letter to Iacopo Antiquario.[6]

The friendship was forged most strongly by Niccolò Valori's brother, Filippo di Bartolomeo. Part of Ficino's affection for Filippo stemmed from their mutual friendship with Lorenzo and enthusiasm for Platonic studies. In the conclusion to his commentary on the *Timaeus*, Ficino explained to Lorenzo that he was greatly endebted to Filippo Valori not only because of Valori's commitment to Platonism, but also because of the great esteem in which Filippo held Lorenzo and the Medici.[7] In another letter to Lorenzo, Ficino wrote that he and Filippo had become one through their affection to Plato and Lorenzo.[8] It was in a letter to Filippo that Ficino, encouraged by Cristoforo Landino and Cosimo de' Medici, announced his commitment to perfect his Greek so that he could penetrate the Greek sources of Platonic doctrine.[9] In 1490 Ficino sent Lorenzo an elaborately illuminated commentary on Plotinus, funded by Filippo and that contained an introductory letter written by Filippo to Lorenzo. Filippo explained that, knowing Ficino was about to send a copy of his commentary to Lorenzo, he felt the work lacked the external decoration befitting the celebrated library of Florence's first citizen. He therefore had taken steps to ensure that when Plotinus entered the resurrected Alexandrian library, he would do so not in the humble dress of the philosopher, but richly robed in

[6] Kristeller (1978), 25–35; Hankins (1990), 300–1. 'Si librarii quondam nostros Platonis libros tanta diligentia impressissent, quanta Philippus Valor magnificentia exprimi procuraverat, optime nobiscum actum existimaremus. Libros autem de vita nostros exprimi sorte nuper feliciore curavit, vir nobilissimus pariter atque optimus . . . ' Ficino (1959), I: 906.

[7] 'Philippo plurimum debere me fateor tum quia Platonica egregiaque omnia magnopere colit, tum quia singulari amore erga te tuosque omnes afficitur.' Ficino (1959), II: 1466.

[8] 'Dum vero Marsilium Ficinum nomino, Philippum quoque Valorem academicum nostrum intellige pariter nominatum. Nam si Valor atque Marsilius in Platone defendendo et in te amando idem sunt, procul dubio inter se quoque sunt idem . . . ' Ficino (1959), II: 1130.

[9] 'Philippo Valori dilectissimo viro. Anno salutis humanae MCCCCLVI, quo ego quidem aetatis agebam tres atque viginti, tu vero natus es, primitias studiorum meorum auspicatus sum a libris quatuor Institutionum ad Platonicam disciplinam. Ad quas quidem componendas adhortatus est Christophorus Landinus, amcissimus mihi, vir doctissimus. Cum autem ipse et Cosmus Medices peregissent eas, probaverunt quidem: sed ut penes me servarem consuluerunt, quoad, Graecis literis erudirer, Platonicaque tandem ex suis fontibus haurirem . . . .' Ficino (1959), I: 929.

wedding clothes, to honour, the recurring marriage between Wisdom and the minds of Plotinus' readers.[10]

In the wake of the Pazzi conspiracy of 1478, Filippo Valori had frequently substituted for Lorenzo in the financing of copying and editing Ficino's translations of Plato, a detail interpreted by Melissa Bullard and Riccardo Fubini as evidence of the frequently distant relationship Ficino had with every Medici after Cosimo.[11] Valori's support was political as well as financial: Filippo Valori was among the close circle of the humanist's allies who rallied around him during Innocent VIII's investigation of Ficino on charges of magic and necromancy for remarks made in the *Liber de vita*.[12] When Ficino's enemies, the *lupi rapaci*, as he called them, renewed against him their accusations of magic, this time prompted by the publication of *De sole et lumine*, Ficino again turned to Filippo Valori for protection.[13] When the controversial work was published in 1489, again by Filippo Valori, it concluded with three dystichs composed by Amerigo Corsini that praised Filippo as Ficino's supporter and protector, along with Giovanni Canacci, Bernardo Canigiani, Piero del Nero, Piero Guicciardini, and Piero Soderini.[14]

Filippo was recognized as an accomplished student of Plato, and his political career frequently brought him into close contact with Ficino's circle. He was chosen as a cultural ambassador when he was selected, along with a handful of leading patrician intellectuals, to visit Matthias Corvinus, the king of Hungary, and to bring the king Ficino's commentary on Plotinus.[15] In Hungary, Filippo Valori came into contact with two of Ficino's former pupils and friends, Francesco Bandini and Prospero Buonaccorsi, to whom Ficino sent copies of the Valori-sponsored edition of the *Opera*.[16]

[10] Published in Della Torre (1902), 626.

[11] Kristeller (1987), 17; Fubini (1996); Bullard (1990), 467–92; argued also by Hankins (1991), 461–3.

[12] On Ficino's investigation by the Inquisition, see Kristeller (1985), 83–97.

[13] Ficino (1959), II: 943, 949.

[14] 'De triplici vita, quem tu, Ficine, libellum/Compositum in lucem mictere, docte, paras/Imprimere hunc doctus gratusque Valorius ultro/Curavit, doctis pabula grata viris;/Tresque Petri, binique Canes, Cursorve Amerigus/Contendent morsus pellere quisque feros.' Published in Della Torre (1902), 624.

[15] On Filippo's visit to Hungary, see Ficino's letter to Francesco Bandini in Ficino (1959), I: 896; and a letter of Angelo Poliziano to Corvinus in Poliziano (1546), I: 246–7.

[16] '. . . Quod Platonis nostri libri tandem ab impressoribus sint expressi, pia Philippi Valoris opera et magnifica manu factum est. Quod autem minus eleganter expressi id partim negligentia impressorum, vel potius oppressorum, partim, si dictu fas est, malignitate fortunae nobis accidisse putato . . .' Ficino (1959), I: 872.

Ficino frequently dined with Filippo and was a frequent visitor at the Valori villa in Maiano, where he completed his commentary on the *Timaeus*, and remained on close terms until Filippo's death in 1494.[17] On another visit to the Valori villa, Ficino began to translate Porphyry, who, Ficino claimed, would enable the philosopher to penetrate the hidden meaning of the divine oracle that Plotinus had set out in such obscure terms.[18] Ficino dedicated to Filippo his second redaction of the *Institutiones platonicae*, his translation of Priscian's *Comments* on the *De Mente* of Theophrastus, the *Liber de vita longa*, and book eight of his correspondence. On several occasions Filippo did more than fund and support Ficino's Platonic projects: on at least one occasion he spurred Ficino on and ensured he met his deadline with the Ripoli publishers, as Ficino revealed in a letter to Lorenzo;[19] on another occasion, when Ficino was distracted from finishing the *Commentaries* owing to requested translations of other Platonic authors, Filippo assisted by copying the text of Plotinus and the *Commentaries*.[20] Ficino dedicated his treatise on health and longevity to Filippo Valori, hoping that, by extending Filippo's life, the treatise would also inevitably extend the patronage and protection of Plato that

[17] See his letters to Filippo in Kristeller (1937), 1: cxx; Ficino (1959), I: 859, 875, 887, 930, 932, and 2: 1466.

[18] 'Cum superioribus diebus apud Philippum et Nicolaum Valores in agro Maiano versarer et in quodam ibi secessu naturam daemonum indagarem, affuit repente Plotinus, divinumque oraculum de daemonibus nobis effudit, verbis et brevissimis et obscurissimis involutum. Visum itaque nobis operae pretium accire Porphyrium tum Plotini discipulum, tum perscrutandis daemonibus deditissimum, qui facile daemonicum sui praeceptoris involucrum nobis evolveret.' Ficino (1959), I: 878–9.

[19] 'Decreveram, magnanime Laurenti, breviora hic quemadmodum argumentum decere videbatur, afferre, multaque amplioribus commentariis, quae in Timeum iam designavimus, reservare. Sed Philippus Valor, Platonicorum studiossimus, penes quem universo Platonico operi in agro Maiano extremam manum imposui, plura me hic coegit effundere.' Ficino (1959), I: 859.

[20] This from a letter to Francesco Bandini: 'Nihil iamdiu ad te scribo charissime mi Bandine, quoniam interea et tibi et omnibus multa conscribo. Utinam tam multum bona sint quam multa. Plotini libros omnes iamdiu me fecisse Latinos intellexisti, atque in eos commentaria scribere mox incoepisse, haec ad dimidium iam perduximus, et forsitan absolvissem, nisi inter commentandum coactus fuissem traducere insuper in Latinum Psellum Platonicum de Demonibus et Synesium de Somniis atque et parte Porphyrium de Abstinentia, ac etiam divinum Iamblicum de Aegyptiorum Assyriorumque theologia et denique Priscianum Lydum Theophrasti mentem, de mente diligenter interpretantem, inter haec Philippus Valor, valoris et gratiae plenus, regique vestro omnium deditissimus, Plotini textus commentariaque regi transcribit, volumine regio. Quintertiones iam tres atque triginta grandes sunt absoluti.' Ficino (1959), I: 895.

Filippo so assiduously promoted.[21] When Ficino's friend and German scholar Martin Prenninger undertook a visit to the papal court, Ficino wrote to Filippo, then Florentine ambassador in Rome, asking him to facilitate Prenninger's visit and lend his support.[22]

Ficino frequently spoke of the goodwill that the Valori showed him and showed Plato. In a letter to Filippo, Ficino praised the Valori as instrumental in the revival of Plato and, for that reason, he explicitly compared them to the Medici, the other family to which he devoted an equal amount of admiration and affection.[23] In the dedication to Niccolò of the *Platonic Commentaries*, Ficino considered the wisdom, integrity, and political stature of Francesco Valori, comparing his political sagacity with his nephew Filippo's intellectual talents. He concluded that Francesco had impeccable integrity, comparing him to Cosimo de' Medici and reiterating Niccolò's assessment of Francesco as *padre per affectione*.[24] Ficino then wrote that he was always in the habit of considering to whom he ought to dedicate his labours; when considering the *Commentaries*, no family merited that dedication more than the Valori. For forty years, the Valori had been fostering and assisting the great Platonic project.[25] Before Cosimo's death, Bartolomeo

[21] '*Marsilii Ficini Proemium in librum de vita longa. M. F. Philippo Valori*. Quamobrem, hortor et obsecro te, mi Valor, ut quanta semper opera gloriae Platonicae faves, tanta aliquando diligentia praecepta haec nostra de Vita producenda legas atque serves quibus diu vivens resurgenti nuper disciplinae Platonis diutius una cum magnanimo Laurentio Medici patrocinari possis.' Ficino (1959), I: 903.

[22] 'M. F. Philippo Valori. Meministi, mi Valor, quam ardenter nos amet Martinus noster Uranius, adeo ut et filium suum meo nomine Marsilium nuncupaverit nostrumque natalem instituerit celebrandum . . . Hic te salutabit, consilium aperiet suum, auxilium postulabit. Si memineris quam saepe de Martino dicere solebam, alter ego, non dubito quin habeas hunc in omnibus mirifice commendatum.' Ficino (1959), I: 930.

[23] 'Opportune admodum librorum meorum vitae iamdiu aspirat domus Medica: aspirat simul et Valoria domus, quippe cum et hae familiae prorsus idem ubique velint, et opem medicam mox valetudinis prosperae Valor ipse sequatur et spiret semper utriusque familiae felicitati Deus omnipotens, et concordiam hanc servet antiquam.' Ficino (1959), I: 864.

[24] 'Franciscus interea patruus vester, aeque meritus de republica, vir omnium integerrimus . . . Franciscus Valor qui istuc legatus accedit, et patruus est Philippi, atque Nicolai, et mihi aetate quidem frater, sed reverentia pater. Vir profecto prudentia, integritate, authoritate summa, quem quoties aspicimus et audimus, quod et quotidie facimus quasi magnum illum Cosmum Medicem, quem vultu verbisque refert, spectare et audire videmur.' Ficino (1959), I: 906–7. For Ficino's other dedications to Niccolò, see Ficino (1959), I: 904, 951, 952.

[25] 'Soleo semper in libris meis edendis diu mecum deliberare, cui potissimum labores meos dedicare debeam: in hac vero commentariorum Platonicorum editione, nullus mihi deliberationi locus relictus esse videtur; tanta enim nobis cum antiquissima Valorum familia iamdiu necessitudo conflata est, ut haec sibi iam mea omnia iure optimo

had furnished Ficino with funds to assist his translation of the *Platonic Dialogues*, for which Ficino praised Bartolomeo Valori as a leading light of Florence, a gifted student, and a frequent interlocutor in Platonic discussions.[26] Concerning Niccolò's elder brother, Filippo, Ficino praised his zeal for Plato and the Platonic philosophers, and designated him the most gifted of his peers in the 'Academy'.[27] Ficino then concluded praising the loyalty to him and to Plato shown by Francesco and Niccolò, particularly during the troubled and turbulent months after the expulsion of the Medici.[28] Niccolò Valori, according to Ficino, had been born under stars that were aligned in a particularly propitious arrangement for philosophical studies, which explains the frequency with which Niccolò philosophized with Ficino.[29] Ficino dedicated the eleventh book of his correspondence to Niccolò, praising him as a diligent student of Platonic wisdom and as a long-time supporter of Ficino's studies.[30]

The family and Ficino became closer after 1494 and the expulsion of the Medici. In 1496, Ficino became godfather to Niccolò's son, Filippo, and was one of two others present at the boy's baptism.[31] A year earlier, Ficino established another family alliance related to the Valori. Ficino's niece Alessandra da Daniele married Biagio Buonaccorsi, Machiavelli's loyal ally in the Florentine chancery and a friend of the Valori. Ficino

vendicet. Maiores profecto tui, optime mi Nicolae, quadraginta iam annis sub Platone philosophati, platonica nobis opera elaborata summopere coluerunt.' Ficino (1959), II: 1136.

[26] 'Primus quidem pater tuus Bartholomaeus Valor, vir admodum elegans et, ut ita dixerim, urbis nostrae delitiae, una cum socero suo Petro Paccio, clarissimo equite, enarrationibus disputationibusque in Platonem nostris frequenter interfuit, atque omni studio celebravit.' Ficino (1959), II: 1136.

[27] 'Deinde frater tuus Philippus, natu maior, vir profecto magnanimus, more paterno disciplinam platonicam prosecutus, non solum Platonis ipsius sed Platonicorum quoque omnium libros, nostra iamdiu interpretatione latinos, magnifico sumptu in lucem e tenebris eruit, optime omnium hactenus de Academia meritus.' Ficino (1959), II: 1136.

[28] 'Franciscus interea patruus vester, aeque meritus de republica, vir omnium integerimus et magno illi Bartolomaeo avo suo similis in omnibus meis meorumque perturbationibus pio nos semper officio fovens, iampridem nobis haec otia fecit. Tu denique, tuorum erga Platonem atque Marsilium sequutus officia, curis me familiaribus, et his quidem frequentibus, quotidie levas, disciplinamque platonicam studiosissime colis . . . ' Ficino (1959), II: 1136.

[29] This from a letter to Filippo Valori: 'quotidiana Nicolai fratris tui mecum philosophantis consuetudo' Ficino (1959), I: 952.

[30] '[Niccolò] . . . observator platonicae sapientiae diligens, et studiorum meorum diuturne servator' Ficino (1959), I: 904, 951.

[31] BNCF, Panciat. 134, fol. 22v.

attended the wedding and promised Biagio a dowry of 850 florins.[32] Three years later, Niccolò established a perpetual lease of property in the Val di Marina that belonged to the church of San Lorenzo. Ficino acted as Niccolò's agent in the transaction. He prepared and sent the petition to Alexander VI, received the Pope's response, and was a witness to the transaction, which took place in Ficino's house. There is not only notarial evidence for this, but a detailed account in the family diary, setting out for future generations the assistance that Ficino had provided.[33] After his brother Filippo's death in 1494, Niccolò assumed his patronage of Ficino's Platonic works, paying for the publication of Ficino's *Platonic Commentaries* in 1496.

It is also possible that, through the informal tutoring that Ficino had provided, Niccolò Valori formed lasting friendships and political alliances with Ficino's other *auditores*.[34] Of the thirteen names of his students Ficino listed in his letter to Martin Prenninger, seven recur regularly in the pages of the Valori family diary that Niccolò wrote in the 1490s, especially those of Bernardo Canigiani, the alliance with whom is also discussed in the family account books, and Antonio Lanfredini, who appear on almost every page as trusted allies.[35]

The enthusiasm of the Valori for Ficino and the public prestige they must have connected to neo-Platonism, given their patronage, reminds us that Florentine neo-Platonism had a similar kind of political cachet for the Florentine elite as did the earlier humanism that had a more explicitly civic dimension. Ficino clearly symbolized a style of politics that appealed to the Valori much as the vision of consensus politics articulated by Bruni and others appealed to the elite in the first half of the fifteenth century. Weinstein persuasively showed how Savonarola's millenarian vision for Florence initially grew out of the city's indigenous tradition of Florentine exceptionalism, particularly as articulated by the city's humanists. After having absorbed that way of thinking, Savonarola rerouted the city's special vision of itself around millenarian Christian lines, replacing a narrative of political liberty with a narrative of religious redemption. The Valori's commitment to Ficino in the midst of such

[32] See citation in Gentile, Niccoli, and Viti (1984), 190.

[33] BNCF, Panciat. 134, fol. 26v; BNCF, II. I. 526, 6v–11v. The description of Ficino's assistance in the diary is not included in Kristeller (1987).

[34] On Ficino's tutoring, see Hough (1977), 301–4; Cristiani (1966), 209–22.

[35] BNCF, Panciat. 134, fols. 16–21; ASF, Panciatichi, Patrimonio Valori, Libri d'azienda, 3, fols. 144b and 150b. See the list of Ficino's *auditores* in Hankins (1991), 440–5.

an environment suggests that however thoroughly Savonarola co-opted the humanist political narrative for Florence, Ficino's vision of Florence as a special locus for philosophical illumination still spoke, directly and relevantly, to the Florentine elite.

Ficino had himself long argued such a point. He saw factionalism and dissent as the consequence of the absence of a proper moral philosophy, one capable of simultaneously addressing the spiritual and civic needs of the patriciate. Rather than encouraging good men to abandon politics, as Hans Baron and Eugenio Garin argued about Renaissance Platonism, Ficino saw it as a crucial link between the individual and the body politic. Platonism's emphasis on fraternal love had the potential to encourage a ruling class—properly educated—to set aside its personal interests and quarrels and pursue the common good. At his most optimistic, Ficino hoped that if the Florentine elite embraced his vision with sufficient enthusiasm, the unification of wisdom and power, long the goal of humanist education, might actually be achieved in the Florentine city-state.[36]

In several respects, Ficino's personality, as well as his philosophy, had a civic dimension. For much of the 1450s, Ficino was closely associated with a confraternity centred around Lorenzo Pisano, a canon of the church of San Lorenzo, who was a spiritual guide to a distinguished group of Florentine intellectuals and patricians. His self-proclaimed gift of prophecy came to him not during moments of abstract metaphysical speculation, but rather in matters of hard-headed questions of Florentine politics.[37] During the conflict with Naples that followed the Pazzi conspiracy, Ficino dreamt that King Ferrante had been visited by his deceased father, Alfonso, who spoke to him in an angelic language. In a letter to Cardinal Giovanni d'Aragona Ficino interpreted Alfonso's speech as advice to his son to pursue peace with the Florentine republic.[38]

Niccolò must have seen the political relevance of Ficino's neo-Platonism in similar or sympathetic terms, given his contemporaneous relationship with Savonarola. Niccolò recorded in the family diary that he spoke to Savonarola shortly after the death of his brother Filippo in Naples, where he had been stationed as an ambassador. Niccolò praised Savonarola as a most widely admired friar, while Savonarola

[36] On this subject more generally, see Rice (1958); Hankins (1990).

[37] Field (1988), esp. ch. 6.

[38] 'Alfonsus Rex felicissimo avus tuus, venerande pater, nuper Ferdinando patri tuo feliccisimo regi oraculum effudit ex alto angelica lingua . . . ' Ficino (1959), I: 816.

praised Filippo Valori as among the most honest citizens he had encountered.[39] Niccolò's attendance at Savonarola's sermons was sufficiently well known that Alexander VI excommunicated him, lifting the ban after Savonarola's death in 1498.[40] Reflecting on the injustice of Savonarola's death, Niccolò described Savonarola as the religious light of his times.[41] After Savonarola's death, in 1501, Niccolò was appointed *Commissario Generale* to Pistoia, charged with quelling the disruptive conflict between the Cancellieri and Panciatichi factions.[42] In a number of letters to Lanfredino Lanfredini, Niccolò's brother-in-law, Niccolò described his actions and mission in Pistoia in distinctly Savonarolan terms: he believed that the rival factions, willingness to cause political discord was impious, that God would repay such impiety in kind, and that his task as commissary-general was to unify the factions into a single, broadly-based, and unified regime.[43]

Savonarola's public statements about Plato and classical philosophy levelled a fundamental challenge towards one of the family's prized traditions. Savonarola's public criticism of Plato and ancient philosophers began immediately after the expulsion of the Medici. In a sermon from November 1494, Savonarola warned Florentines that to be true Christians, they had to renounce pagan philosophy and philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, who did not understand how to find or pursue a Christian way of life.[44] In May 1496 he declared that true Christian knowledge made a joke of Plato and that Scripture regularly

[39] 'Ricordo come a dì 29 novembre 1494 piacque a dio tirare ad se la benedetta anima di Filippo mio fratello circa a hore 7 di notte, essendo ambasciadore a Napoli per la nostra città, che a dio piacci haverci facto verace perdono. Il che mi persuade a crederlo la vita, ch'è eterna, et [. . .] inteso che passò con grandissima quiete et bene examinò la coscientia sua, facciendosi caso d'ogni minima cosa, ad me ha decto Fra Hieronimo da Ferrara, aprova[tissi]mo religioso, "havere visti io [in] praticha pochi di più netta conscientia di lui." Fu in vita molto honorato, et visse con buona gratia, e lasciando gli altri honori ch'egli hebbe, fu oratore a Roma di 24 anni, dove satisfece assai.' BNCF, Panciat. 134, fol. 22v.

[40] ASF, Panciatichi, 184, cass. 1, doc. 7.

[41] BNCF, Panciat. 134, 17v: 'Et non molto tempo di poi fecemo quella . . . sceleratezza di fare abruciare il padre e lume de' sua tempi di religione doctrina et sanctità [. . .]'

[42] BNCF, Panciat. 134, 12v.

[43] '. . . siamo inpii et Idio ce ne pagherà . . . [devo] levare queste due case Panciatiche e Cancellieri et ridurgli a uno vivere popolare.' BNCF, Lanfredini, MS. II. v. 21, fols. 37–40.

[44] Savonarola (1965), 59–60. 'voi tenete molti libri in casa, che non li doveresti tenere, perchè v'è scritto di molte cose inoneste. Audili questi tali libri, chè non sono cose di cristiani. Se tu vuoi esser cristiano, ti bisogna esser unto del Spirito santo, non di cose pagane e disoneste.' See also his remarks in Savonarola (1969–74), II: 24, 36, 64 and (1955), II: 329–30, 343–4.

contradicted the ancient philosophers.[45] In 1498, he declared, 'let Plato be Plato and Aristotle Aristotle and not Christians, for they are not'. As evidence of the triumph of his reforming message, he pointed to the contrast between the piety of Florentines in 1498 and the state of affairs only a few years earlier, when a paganism devoid of any sense of the proper Christian life prospered.[46] These are only a few examples among many and represent a recurring theme in Savonarola's sermons after 1494.[47]

The Valori's insistence on mutual support for Ficino and Savonarola must have been difficult for them during the early years of the republic. By early 1495, Savonarola's politics had become inextricably related to Francesco Valori in particular and to Niccolò Valori more generally. Consider the intellectual problems Niccolò, and to a lesser extent, Ficino, faced after the expulsion of the Medici. At exactly the same time that Savonarola attacked Plato and the wise men who failed to guide the ship of state into a safe harbour, in his sermons on Amos and Zachary in 1496, Niccolò Valori published Ficino's *Commentaries on Plato*.[48] In the preface to this work, published when Savonarola was approaching the height of his power, Ficino singled out each member of the family for their specific contributions to his task of reviving Platonic philosophy.[49] Niccolò's commitment as a patron of Platonic philosophy remained as strong as it had ever been, attested to by his 1496 publication of Ficino's commentaries, though tested more strongly now because of the unsympathetic political climate for Platonic arguments created by Savonarola. His personal loyalty to Ficino certainly increased, the priest and philosopher was now in fact a relative of Niccolò, and Ficino, on at least one occasion, acted in his capacity as priest to further the family's fortunes. By 1496, Niccolò's uncle Francesco had become close to Savonarola and within a year would be recognized by many Florentines as the political leader of the movement. In the turbulent factional politics of those years, the political fortunes of the relatively small Valori

[45] Savonarola (1962), I: 30–2 and 75. 'Quella scienzia, ti dico la quale viene per grazia, è quella che vale. Fatti beffe d'ogni altra scienzia, fatti beffe di Platone e Aristotile . . . '

[46] Savonarola (1955), I: 51, 2: 291. 'Questa dottrina tu hai veduto che la t'ha provato la fede con tante ragioni e ha introdotto il ben vivere nella tua città. Non è vero questo, popolo che prima qua, in Firenze, non sono molti anni, era un paganesimo senza lume alcuno di ben vivere?' 'Si vuol fare che Platone sia Platone, Aristotile Aristotile, e non che siano cristiani, perche non sono.'

[47] Polizzotto (1994), 96.

[48] See Marcel (1958), 564–7.

[49] I have used a manuscript copy of the preface from the BNCF, Rinuccini, 27, *zibaldone Valori*, unfoliated.

family benefited greatly from the support Francesco received from the Savonarolan party. Savonarola's public critiques of the Medici and of Platonic philosophy must therefore have been a particularly strong source of discomfort for Niccolò.

Yet Ficino and Savonarola did not begin as enemies, nor did they initially view each other as representatives of mutually exclusive traditions of social and moral reform. Quite the opposite—relations between the two had initially been close and sympathetic: Ficino admired Savonarola and believed that the Dominican was a divine agent; Savonarola owed his invitation by Lorenzo de' Medici to reform the convent of San Marco to the support of Giovanni Pico and the circle of Platonic intellectuals that had gathered around Ficino. As much recent scholarship has demonstrated, the intellectual affinities between the two were considerably greater than their intellectual differences.[50]

The two nevertheless began to chart increasingly separate paths, for which we have several explanations. Alison Brown has argued that Savonarola's attack on Plato from the pulpit after 1494 must have reflected 'principally political motives'.[51] She interprets his criticism of Plato as an attempt to distance himself from the Medici regime that in the eyes of Florentines was closely associated with the Platonic revival. Donald Weinstein and Lorenzo Polizzotto see the differences between Ficino and Savonarola as the product of substantive philosophical and religious differences. In their view, the two reformers initially only shared the assumption that the present church was in a state of precipitous decline and a propensity for millenarian prophecy. The inevitable break stemmed from Ficino's conviction that reform was gradual, elitist, and guided by philosophical speculation, whereas Savonarola viewed the necessary reform of society as sudden, violent, popular, and guided in every way by Scripture as the ultimate source of knowledge.[52] To these explanations, we can add the possibility that Savonarola's objection to Plato, intellectual and spiritual in and of itself, became an increasingly hard conviction about which he spoke increasingly often as he saw one of the leading families of his own following publicly proclaiming their allegiance to Ficino and the intellectual cause for which he stood.

The timing of Ficino's denunciation of Savonarola's hypocrisy in 1498 is of course at least partly explained by Savonarola's execution

[50] See Weinstein (1970), 185–92; Ridolfi (1952), I: 148.
[51] Brown (1986), 403. [52] Weinstein (1970), 191–2; Polizzotto (1994), 95–6.

and a political climate dominated by the friar's opponents. Whenever Ficino actually began to harbour serious reservations about Savonarola, there could be no more hospitable climate to publish those views than in April 1498. But seen from the perspective of the Valori family, there is another plausible explanation for Ficino's timing and motives. It would no doubt have strained Ficino's relations with his most important patrons after the expulsion of the Medici to publish a condemnation of Savonarola, since the Valori were political leaders of the Savonarolan movement. An important source of the family's influence in the city, which was often used in Ficino's favour, stemmed in part from Savonarola's reputation for integrity and commitment to the good fortune of the city. After the failed trial by fire, Francesco Valori was murdered, the Valori *palazzo* was put to sack, and Niccolò barely survived the mob attack.[53] Although Niccolò eventually returned to favour in the city, with more authority than ever, he said, the fall of the family was total in the months immediately following April 1498. Ficino had firsthand indisputable evidence of the consequences of Savonarolan commitment for Florentines: his friends and patrons had been destroyed, in Francesco, his wife, and nephew's case, destroyed quite literally, by their Savonarolan enthusiasm.

Niccolò made his most public statement about the centrality of Ficino's vision of philosophical and political concord in his biography of Lorenzo de' Medici, weaving into that narrative a response to Savonarola's criticisms of Platonism by showing that Platonic patronage fostered a virtuous and moral citizenry. Valori's *Vita* was the first substantive biography of Lorenzo. In spite of its frequently eulogistic qualities, Valori's *Vita* remains an informative and detailed analysis of Lorenzo's career and it has influenced most modern interpretations of the Medici ruler. Machiavelli and Guicciardini based their eulogies of Lorenzo upon it and repeated almost verbatim many of Valori's details.[54] Most of the personality traits that scholarship attributes to Lorenzo—his juxtaposition of moodiness, melancholy, and playfulness, his commitment to peace in the peninsula, his intellectual curiosity—were first articulated by Valori.

Niccolò's biography of Lorenzo addresses all these issues and tries to refute the two principal lines of Savonarola's criticism. It becomes

[53] BNCF, Panciat. 134, fol. 22v.

[54] Guicciardini (1933), 223–8; Machiavelli (1989), 1432–3; Valori in Niccolini (1991), manuscript copy in BNCF, Palatino, 1101.

in effect a defense of his family's intellectual tradition in particular and more broadly of the social and political utility of Platonism. First, Niccolò reinforces Ficino's larger attempts to reconcile the study of Platonism with Christianity, to show that moral rigour and moral reform were aided by the study of Plato.[55] He has Lorenzo affirm that without Platonism one cannot easily understand Christian doctrine, reiterating Ficino's larger argument that Platonic doctrine is in essence religious philosophy, designed ultimately to further religion and bring men back to Christian faith. To hammer this point home, Valori related Lorenzo's patronage of the Augustinian Mariano da Genazzano. Impressed by Mariano because of his reputation for 'eloquence and learning', to such an extent that he moved 'not only the people, but intellectuals as well', Lorenzo believed it would be 'as useful as it was honourable' to ensure that Mariano stayed in Florence. Valori's explanation of how this happened repeatedly makes parallels between the study of Platonism and the study of theology. Lorenzo built a monastery a small distance outside Florence. Lorenzo, Giovanni Pico, his close friend, and many other intellectuals would regularly gather there, as if in an 'academy of the Christian religion, to debate and discuss divine mysteries and the secret meanings of theology'. Valori is echoing Ficino's conviction that the correct interpretation of Plato's truths was a secret, that it had been deliberately concealed for protection but would be revealed in fifteenth-century Florence. Mariano used to say that he had never met any man 'so filled with piety and faith and who would speak with such reverence of divine matters and, following the opinion of the Platonics and other Christians, would argue that terrestrial life was but a pale shadow of a future life'. According to Valori, no discussions pleased Lorenzo so much as those that addressed the immortality of the soul.

The *Vita* defended Ficino and Platonism against religious criticism. It also used Platonism as a defense of the Valori family's close collaboration with Lorenzo, Lorenzo's cultural project in general, and so can also be read in the context of the 1490s as a politically acceptable explanation of the well-known cultural achievements of the Valori under the Medici. In part this emerges from what Niccolò does not say. Almost no domestic political questions are discussed. The one exception is the Pazzi conspiracy, in which the principal emphasis is on Lorenzo's clemency and Filippo Valori's loyalty to Lorenzo and encouragement

[55] This paragraph paraphrases pp. 128–30 of Niccolò Valori's *Vita*.

of Lorenzo's attempts to establish public harmony in the aftermath.[56] This is certainly not true, but unlike other accounts such as Poliziano's, Valori neither condemns nor praises the conspirators. The rest of the political discussions follow what one would expect of humanist history: he recounts the wars which Florence was involved in and emphasizes Lorenzo's encouragement of pacific policies and balance of power. He never actually refers to Lorenzo as a ruler or discusses Lorenzo's political relationship to the elite. The question of Lorenzo's political status in Florence simply never comes up.

Early in the biography, Valori has Lorenzo affirm that, along with Christianity, being a good citizen depends on an understanding of Platonic doctrine.[57] If one studies the *Vita* for examples of Lorenzo's good political citizenship one finds that it was entirely cultural, and that it frequently revolved around Ficino, Platonism, and educational utility. The intellectual work undertaken not only by Lorenzo, but by the first citizens of the city, are the principal civic achievements for the Republic. Among those singled out for praise are Niccolò's father and brother, Bartolomeo and Filippo, Donato Acciaiuoli, and Pierfilippo Pandolfini. Perhaps the most praiseworthy of Lorenzo's activities was his intellectual patronage of the Pisan Studio, which he adorned with learned scholars without sacrificing the quality and number of scholars remaining in Florence to educate the Florentine youth. Chief among these erudite scholars was Ficino, more 'skilled than anyone at penetrating Platonic secrets and hidden meanings' and who for Florence was 'the first to show the way of the Academics'. Finally, it is Ficino who becomes the Platonic interpreter of the portents and signs that indicate the fall of the Medici and troubles for Italy. It is thus the principal advocate of Platonism, Marsilio Ficino, who first predicts the demise of the family's fortunes; and importantly, it begins with Piero, whom no one ever defended as an ideal Platonic ruler.

There are competing arguments about the principal function of the text. Felix Gilbert argued that Valori's praise of Lorenzo, much like Machiavelli and Guicciardini's, was simply a calculated piece of political flattery. Its purpose was to redeem him in the eyes of the Medici after

[56] Valori in Niccolini (1991), 107–13.

[57] Valori in Niccolini (1991), 100. The rest of this paraphrases pp. 100, 102, 127–31, 144 of the *Vita*.

the debacle of the Boscoli-Capponi conspiracy and his consequent imprisonment.[58] Catherine Kovesi argued that the *Vita*, while on one level designed to flatter the Medici, at another level was an attempt to reinforce the Savonarolan traditions of the family, almost in code; it was therefore a more complex and politically interesting document than had been appreciated.[59]

The interpretation here concurs with Kovesi's final conclusion, but differs on two points: Niccolò's praise of Lorenzo may well have been genuine and the principal family tradition he wished to propagate was their connection to Platonism, not Savonarolism. There is no reason to conclude that Niccolò's statements deploring the actions of the Medici after Lorenzo's death imply that he did not have genuine affection and admiration for Lorenzo, especially given their mutual friendship with and support for Ficino. Late in his life, he wrote a letter to Francesco di Iacopo da Empoli that spoke in reverential terms about the memory of Lorenzo *il magnifico*.[60] The principal tradition the Valori wanted propagated was their prominence as patrons of Marsilio Ficino and Platonic philosophy, not Savonarolism. Niccolò Valori's *Vita di Lorenzo* was a defense and legitimation of Platonic studies for the Florentine political elite.

The sixteenth-century Platonic tradition for the Valori was as vital as it was during Ficino's lifetime. Niccolò presented the *Vita* to Leo X, his son Filippo presented it to Lucrezia Salviati, and his son, Baccio Valori, presented it to Duke Cosimo I in the early 1560s. Between then and 1600, Baccio Valori became the hub of Platonic literary activity. He sponsored the Dominican Silvano Razzi's biography of Francesco Valori, which elaborated on the special relationship between Ficino and the family. Benedetto Varchi wrote a biography of Ficino's pupil, Francesco da Diacceto, dedicated to Baccio.[61] Baccio encouraged Francesco Patrizi to write a biography of Ficino. Patrizi declined; however, along with Luca Pinelli, Benedetto Varchi, and Francesco de' Vieri, he wrote several commentaries on Platonic philosophy, addressed to Baccio.

An anonymous biography of Ficino from the late sixteenth century was dedicated to Baccio, who may have furnished the author with source

[58] Gilbert (1958), 114. [59] Kovesi (1987), 301–7.

[60] ASF, MAP, filza 124, 696r.

[61] BNCF, Magliabechi xxx. 14: Vita di Messer Francesco Cattani da Diacceto. Al molto magnifico e suo osservandissimo Messer Baccio Valori.

material.[62] The author of the biography lamented that no one had yet written a proper biography of Ficino, though Francesco Patrizi and Benedetto Varchi had at least stated their intentions of doing so.[63] Patrizi in fact had not declared his intention of doing so; however, it is true that Baccio Valori had asked Patrizi to undertake the biography. Patrizi eventually declined, though only after expounding to Baccio his enthusiasm for Ficino and acknowledging that a biography was indeed needed. The correspondence between Baccio and Patrizi is preserved in the Valori family papers.[64] The biography goes on to discuss and praise every aspect of the Valori family's relationship with Ficino: their role as Ficino's protector, Filippo's correspondence with Ficino, Filippo's journey to Hungary to promote Ficino's Platonic labours abroad, Bartolomeo and Francesco's Platonic studies, and Niccolò's support and protection after 1494.[65] The biography concludes by marvelling that Ficino enjoyed friendships not just with the greatest citizens of Florence but with luminaries from all the cities of Italy: first among them were three generations of the Medici family and three generations of the Valori family, but also including King Matthias of Hungary, Cardinal Girolamo Riario, Leo X (Giovanni de' Medici), Federigo da Montefeltro, duke of Urbino, Bernardo Bembo, and Ermolao Barbaro.[66]

Several biographical contributions to the family's *zibaldone*, which appear to be drafts for a history of Florence and of the family's role in Florentine history, structure their cultural contribution entirely around the revival of Platonism, the family's friendship with Ficino, and the posthumous loyalty they continued to show him through Platonic studies. Patronage of Platonism was the most enduring and prominent element in Valori family mythology; Niccolò Valori's *Vita di Lorenzo* was the first attempt to make a systematic public affirmation of their family's ideology.

[62] BNCF, Palatino, 488: *Vita Ficini*; published as an appendix to Marcel (1958), 694–730. On the authorship of the biography, see Marcel (1958), 690–3; Garin (1951): 94–5; Kristeller (1937), I: 177.

[63] 'E ben vero che M. Francesco Patritio, gran' Platonico de nostri tempi o prima Benedetto Varchi diedero intentione di far' questa fatica a molti amici e fra gl' altri al clarissimo Sig. Baccio Valori, che cio desiderava non poco, ma non fu poi, che si sappia, o impediti dalla morte o da altro, messa ad esecutione altrimenti.' Marcel (1958), 696.

[64] BNCF, Rinuccini, 27, cassetta 3, unfoliated pages.

[65] Marcel (1958), 703, 706, 709–10, 719.

[66] Marcel (1958), 714.

3

The Valori Family and Machiavelli's Portraits of Francesco *il vecchio*

Filippo Valori forged most closely the friendship with Marsilio Ficino that subsequently became a central component of the family's identity and self-portrait. His uncle Francesco di Filippo forged the alliance with Savonarola that became an equally central component of the family's identity and self-portrait. His nephew Niccolò di Bartolomeo Valori admired, respected, and extended those two primary allegiances, but also brought Niccolò Machiavelli into the family's friendship and patronage orbit. Much as subsequent generations respected the connections between the family and Savonarola and Ficino, subsequent generations of the family respected and preserved the memory of friendship with Machiavelli that had been created by Niccolò Valori. In their family diary and Baccio's later *zibaldone*, the family frequently invoked Machiavelli's historical assessments of Francesco Valori when discussing the family's role in Florentine politics, as did Florentine historians and biographers in the family's patronage network, such as Scipione Ammirato and Silvano Razzi.[1]

The controversy that surrounded Francesco Valori's career, his vocal condemnations of Medici power, and Machiavelli's close and public friendship with Niccolò Valori all combined to exert a direct and significant force on Machiavelli's own thinking about Florentine history and the manner in which he related the history of the recent years of the republic. Among the Valori, the fact of friendship and frequent political collaboration between the two Niccolòs affected Niccolò Valori's career most immediately, but it affected the way in which later generations of the family historicized their role in Florentine history. The friendship had immediate and direct consequences for Machiavelli's own political career and its abrupt end after the restoration of Medici power,

[1] See Chapter 5.

as well more subtly informing Machiavelli's subsequent reflections on Florentine politics of the republican years.

This chapter considers the friendship and political connections between the two Niccolòs, Valori and Machiavelli. It then examines the way in which that friendship affected Machiavelli's historical writing and his strategy for writing the final, ultimately unfinished book of the *Istorie fiorentine* that was to deal with the expulsion of the Medici and the restoration of the republic.

Machiavelli was connected to the Valori family in several ways. Machiavelli and Niccolò Valori were good friends and their political fortunes were densely intertwined. Niccolò Valori was godfather to Machiavelli's youngest son, Bernardo. Machiavelli and Valori both played central roles in the government of Piero Soderini and were among the *gonfaloniere a vita*'s most loyal supporters. Valori was a prior in the Signoria that created the position *gonfaloniere a vita*.[2] They were sent together as ambassadors to the court of Louis XII; Valori served in the *Nove delle milizie* under Machiavelli's chancellorship, and both men were arrested by the Medici for alleged participation in the Boscoli-Capponi conspiracy of 1512, which also resulted in Valori's imprisonment and torture. Both of them dedicated literary works to the Medici following their release from prison.

Machiavelli's correspondence during his chancery and ambassadorial years reveals a close overlap between his patronage circle and the Valori family in general, as well as a consistent pattern of close collaboration with Niccolò Valori, who was clearly going out of his way to persuade Soderini and influential Florentine politicians of Machiavelli's perspicacity as a political observer. In a letter from 1500, Agostino Vespucci identified Niccolò Valori as one of Machiavelli's loyal friends in Florence.[3] One of Machiavelli's most frequent interlocutors and loyal allies in the chancery was Biagio Buonaccorsi—the only other chancery official to be sacked along with Machiavelli after the restoration of the Medici, and also a friend of the Valori and a relative through marriage of Marsilio Ficino.[4]

John Najemy has persuasively demonstrated that Machiavelli's correspondence implicitly reveals the Florentine elite's frequent irritation and

[2] BNCF, Panciat. 134, 17r–18r. [3] Atkinson and Sices (1996), 32.
[4] Fachard (1976); Sasso (1980), 195–222. On Ficino and Valori, see previous chapter.

exasperation with Machiavelli's public service, the result of Machiavelli's excessively detached posture that caused his allies some anxiety.[5] Machiavelli tended to report when he felt like it, rather than when his superiors in Florence demanded letters, which meant that he went long periods of time without writing at all. He also frequently violated the rules of professional discourse, chiding, satirizing, and faulting his superiors on several occasions and appears himself to have been prone to sullenness and pique when he felt his advice was underappreciated.

In all these instances, Niccolò Valori was Machiavelli's most helpful ally, assiduously promoting Machiavelli's reputation with Soderini and others, defending Machiavelli's independent style in the face of criticism, reassuring Machiavelli about his status in Florence, and encouraging him to write more frequently. In 1501, Niccolò Valori wrote to Machiavelli that although Machiavelli's talents were akin to 'a city on top of a hill [that] cannot be hidden', Valori had nonetheless impressed upon Lanfredino Lanfredini Machiavelli's good faith in numerous letters.[6] In October, 1502, Valori wrote to Machiavelli to apprise him of the reaction in Florence to Machiavelli's recent report on Cesare Borgia, assuring Machiavelli that everyone recognized what Valori had known for some time—that Machiavelli provided 'a clear, exact, and sincere account, upon which one can rely completely'. Valori subsequently discussed Machiavelli's report with Piero Soderini, giving 'it its due as generously as one can possibly state it, giving you this particular and personal praise'.[7] At the end of the month, Valori assured Machiavelli that he had been working both 'in public and private' to make Machiavelli's accomplishments known, discussing Machiavelli's last two dispatches in detail with Soderini, who, as a result, was becoming increasingly 'devoted' to Machiavelli.[8] The following November, Biagio Buonaccorsi urged Machiavelli to thank Valori—'a man drawn by nature to help out his friends'—for all the work he had done on Machiavelli's behalf (and here one thinks of Valori's similar loyalty to Savonarola and Ficino).[9]

Valori also appears frequently to have been Machiavelli's principal contact for requests from the Signoria. He was the person to whom Machiavelli requested additional operating funds; and when Machiavelli wanted the Florentine government to allow him to return to the city to attend the inauguration of Piero Soderini as *gonfaloniere a*

[5] Najemy (1990). [6] Atkinson and Sices (1996), 43.
[7] Atkinson and Sices (1996), 49. [8] Atkinson and Sices (1996), 62.
[9] Atkinson and Sices (1996), 70–1.

vita, he asked Niccolò to intervene on his behalf.[10] On at least one occasion, Valori helped Machiavelli pursue his goals from behind the scenes, instructing Biagio Buonaccorsi to write two letters in Machiavelli's name asking for funds, and when Valori wanted to return from the French court, he pushed the Florentine government to name Machiavelli his replacement.[11] The relationship was certainly one of mutual professional respect, but it was also, at least for Niccolò Valori, one of genuine friendship. Valori's entries in the family diary suggest that he was particularly conscious of the family's fragility—having grown up without a father, he wrote admiringly of his uncle Francesco as 'padre per affectione'.[12] To Machiavelli, he wrote that he could be counted upon for anything, 'since I have no brothers, I consider that I have you and you have me in no other stead than that of a brother'.[13]

Machiavelli twice wrote about the Valori, both passages reflecting on the meaning and impact of Francesco Valori's controversial role in Florentine politics. Machiavelli first considered Francesco Valori in the *Discorsi*, in a passage explaining the importance for republics of establishing a system of public indictments by which the poor can accuse the powerful without fear of retribution. Machiavelli described Valori as an ambitious politician whose quasi-princely power engendered dangerous factional violence. Crucially, Machiavelli viewed the opposition to Francesco as legitimate and natural, given Francesco's tendency towards arrogance and rashness. Hence, what was needed was a formal and public institution by which his rivals could check his growing power without fomenting factional discord.[14] In the 1520s, in one of his notebooks of drafts for the *Istorie fiorentine* entitled *Nature di huomini fiorentini*, Machiavelli's assessment of Francesco had changed in notable ways. In the latter portrait, Machiavelli described Valori as a republican patriot who consistently sought the common good and upheld the

[10] Atkinson and Sices (1996), 59.

[11] Atkinson and Sices (1996), 61, 98.

[12] BNCF, Panciat. 134, fol. 12r.

[13] Atkinson and Sices (1996), 63.

[14] '[. . .] come accadde ne' tempi che Francesco Valori era come principe della città; il quale sendo giudicato ambizioso da molti, e uomo che volesse con la sua audacia e animosità transcendere il vivere civile; e non essendo nella republica via a potergli resistere se non con una setta contraria alla sua; ne nacque che, non avendo paura quello se non di modi straordinari, si cominciò a fare fautori che lo difendessono; dall' altra parte, quelli che lo oppugnavano non avendo via ordinaria a reprimerlo, pensarono alle vie straordinarie: intanto che si venne alle armi. E dove, quando per l'ordinario si fusse potuto opporsegli, sarebbe la sua autorità spenta con suo danno solo; avendosi a spegnere per lo straordinario, seguì con danno non solamente suo, ma di molti altri nobili cittadini.' Machiavelli (1971), 87–8. The Roman system of public indictments was also discussed by Guicciardini (1994), 152–3.

republic's laws.[15] In a clear contrast to the earlier portrait, Machiavelli no longer viewed the enmity towards Francesco as either legitimate or natural. He now viewed it as the result of misunderstandings—accidental and intentional—of Francesco's character, which he then defended without reserve.[16] Since both assessments were written more than a decade after Valori's murder, the circumstances surrounding him could hardly have changed.

The contrasting portraits raise some immediate questions. What caused Machiavelli to alter his initial interpretation? Were both accounts part of a larger single interpretation of the Florentine statesman? Why did Machiavelli not mention in the later portrait the most well-known and controversial feature of Francesco's political career, namely his alliance with Savonarola and his leading role in the friar's following? Finally, why did Machiavelli praise a man so directly associated with Savonarola and the political party that had excluded Machiavelli from office before 1498? Machiavelli's reputation as an opponent of Savonarola was likely the cause of his rejection for an office in the Second Chancery in February 1497, during Valori's term as *gonfaloniere di giustizia*, and contributed to his more spectacular success in April 1498, immediately following Savonarola's and Valori's downfall.[17]

[15] BNCF, Gonnelli, 24, 3, 5f–v: *Nature di huomini fiorentini et in che luoghi si possino inserire le laude loro.* The sketches occupy the first five pages; in spite of the title, there is no discussion of literary 'places' in which to insert the sketches—the remaining five pages are blank. Giuliano de' Ricci made an apograph, along with many of Machiavelli's official letters, also preserved in the BNCF, Palatino E. B., 15, 10, 82v–83r. Baccio Valori made a partial copy from an unspecified source in the late sixteenth century, BNCF, Rinuccini, 27, cassetta 3, unnumbered folio. The text was first published by Mazzoni and Casella (1929).

[16] I have modified Allan Gilbert's translation from (1989), III: 1436.
'Hebbe Francesco Valori questo fine indegno della vita e della bontà sua, perchè veruno ciptadino hebbe mai la patria sua che desiderassi più el bene di quella che lui, nè che ne fussi tancto et con meno respecti defensore. Il che, perchè non è conosciuto da molti, lo fece odiare da molti; donde li suoi inimici particulari presono animo d'amazarlo. Et dello animo et mente sua buona ne fa fede lo havere hauto sempre governo et essere morto povero, di modo che li suoi nipoti rifiutorno la sua heredità. Fanne fede non essere mai suto cagione nè principio di alcuna innovatione, ma fermo defensore delli stati presenti della città. Nè per lui manchò che lo stato de' Medici non stessi, el quale dopo la morte di Lorenzo difese contro alli detractori di quello. Nè per lui stecte che lo stato libero non si fermassi; et tutte quelle securtà et ordini, che li ha, si possono riconoscere da lo animo et obstinatione sua.' Text quoted from Martelli (1971); cf. BNCF, Gonnelli, 24, 3, 5r–5v.

[17] This has been argued by Nicolai Rubinstein and Sergio Bertelli. Rubinstein (1972), 6; Bertelli (1975), 1–16; Robert Black agrees that Machiavelli's criticism of Savonarola helped his appointment, though he sees as more significant the fact that Machiavelli

Viewed from the perspective of the Valori family, answers to these questions begin to emerge. This chapter contextualizes Machiavelli's two sketches in the political circumstances surrounding the composition of the *Istorie fiorentine*, Machiavelli's ties to the Valori family, and contemporary accounts of Valori's personality and career.[18] The notebook sketches of Florentine statesmen were clearly preliminary sketches of the unwritten ninth book of the *Istorie fiorentine*, which Machiavelli was writing in a Florence of renewed Medici power. He likely reinterpreted Valori's role in the politics of 1492–98 to obscure his own ties to the principal statesmen of the Soderini regime, in general, and the Valori family, in particular. Arguing from a different set of sources, it confirms Felix Gilbert's cautious reminder about the impact of politics and political survival on the pioneering historical literature of early sixteenth-century Florence: that Machiavelli and Guicciardini 'frequently had political purposes when discussing historical events and thus consciously constructed a historical myth'.[19]

The memory of Francesco Valori's power, ambition, and hostility towards the Medici was a critical issue for several republican *ottimati*, including Machiavelli and Niccolò Valori, in 1512–13. Roslyn Cooper has pointed out that several Florentines, Niccolò Valori among them, were unable to maintain their position in the city after the restoration of the Medici, while many others had no difficulties. She concluded that those *ottimati* unable to make the transition were simply those men that the Medici had definitively rejected as untrustworthy.[20] The issue for the Medici was not Savonarolan affiliation, as, for example, the continued

had at that point no earlier record of active political interests or participation in the affairs of the republic. Black sees Machiavelli's appointment as part of a broader pattern of de-politicizing the chancery by purging it not only of activist *frateschi*, but also of all outspoken and public political figures. Black (1990), 84–5 and (1985), 1–16. After the initial phase of Machiavelli's career, his attitude towards Savonarola remains open to interpretation. See Weinstein (1972), 253–64; Brown (1988), 52–72; Peterman (1990), 189–214; see also Martelli (1998), 67–90; Coli (1998), 91–114; Barbuto (1998), 149–78; Cervelli (1998); Ridolfi (1978), 15–17, 397, 602.

[18] For general analyses of Machiavelli's milieu and Florentine politics during the early sixteenth century, see Stephens (1983); Butters (1985); Silvano (1991); Albertini (1953). For political analyses during Savonarola's years, see Rubinstein (1960); Guidi (1988); and the essays in Garfagnini (1997).

[19] Gilbert (1958), 114. Gilbert stated the potentially corrupting effect of politics on historical writing most explicitly. For other examples of the way in which the competitive world of Florentine politics impinged upon Renaissance literary composition, see Najemy (1993), 53–80; Brown (1961), 186–221; Cooper (1988); Kovesi (1987), 301–25.

[20] Cooper (1988), 78.

success of Iacopo Salviati attests, so much as strong support of Piero Soderini. Guicciardini identified the core group of Soderini supporters: Niccolò Valori, Antonio Canigiani, Alessandro Acciaiuoli, Bernardo and Alessandro Nasi, and Pierfrancesco and Tommaso Tosinghi. These men also had been such strong supporters of Francesco Valori that Guicciardini dubbed them the *setta Valoriana*.[21] Because these men had firmly stood behind Valori during the execution of the five Medicean conspirators, they had no chance of reconciliation with the Medici and thus unwaveringly stood by Piero Soderini. Although Guicciardini did not include Machiavelli in this group, Machiavelli must have been aware that his service in the Soderini regime, his own personal loyalty to Soderini, his political correspondence with Alessandro Nasi, as well as his close and public friendship with Niccolò Valori, could only suggest that his sympathies lay with the *setta Valoriana* that the Medici were deliberately excluding from power.[22]

Like Machiavelli, Niccolò Valori's impeccable republican credentials and his implication in the 1512 Boscoli-Capponi conspiracy against the Medici put him high on the restored Medici's list of enemies of the regime. In addition to these two problems, Valori also had to contend with the anti-Medicean reputation and fame of his uncle Francesco. Catherine Kovesi and Roslyn Cooper have both analysed the elaborate literary process by which Niccolò Valori began to regain political credibility with the Medici. Again, paralleling Machiavelli's experience, the process for Valori involved three literary works: a eulogistic life of Lorenzo *il magnifico*, a family *Ricordanza*, and a *Vita* of Bartolomeo Valori, which Niccolò commissioned from Luca della Robbia. All three works deal directly with the problematic legacy of Francesco's notoriety. Because the Valori had played a prominent role in Florentine politics and culture under Lorenzo, Niccolò's *Vita* of Lorenzo enabled him to remind Leo X of the close, pre-Francesco connections between the Valori and the Medici. The *Ricordanze* and the *Vita di Bartolomeo*, which paralleled the life of Francesco, challenged Francesco's reputation as an arrogant, overly ambitious, self-serving politician by repeatedly asserting that he was a committed patriot who had always set aside self-interest

[21] Guicciardini (1931), 328 refers to the *setta Valoriana*. 'Ed in quegli medesimi dì, avendo un poco di male Alessandro Acciaiuoli, si ragunorono una sera in casa sua Antonio Canigiani, Pierfrancesco Tosinghi e Niccolò Valori ed alcuni altri, e' quali per essere stati aderenti di Francesco Valori si chiamavano la setta valoriana [. . .]'

[22] For Machiavelli's correspondence with Nasi, see Machiavelli (1971), 1097–8 and 1125.

and worked for the common good of the city. Family records indicate that these public statements were deeply held convictions: Niccolò paid for masses said in honour of Francesco, and, after the mob sacked and burned Francesco's home, Niccolò paid for damages to neighbouring homes and for the cleaning of the former site of Francesco's house.[23] He defended Francesco's treatment of the Medici conspirators and referred to him as a 'father by affection'.[24]

Machiavelli's first writing on Francesco provides a concise assessment of Valori's political status in 1497 and its effect on Florentine political life that can be easily corroborated by Machiavelli's contemporaries. Describing Valori's political authority between the summer of 1497 and April 1498, Francesco Guicciardini wrote that Valori remained absolute head of the city until his death.[25] Piero Parenti wrote that Valori governed the city according to his will during August 1497. Describing political events in December 1497, Parenti recorded that a few *ottimati* members of the Savonarolan party controlled political life, and that Valori in particular dominated the regime.[26] According to Filippo de' Nerli, Valori's election as *gonfaloniere* in 1497 created precisely the same political context Machiavelli described in the *Discorsi*: fear and resentment among enemies and the escalation of factional politics.[27] Guicciardini also described in detail the creation of an

[23] ASF, Panciatichi, 2, 2r. [24] BNCF, Panciat. 134, 11r, and 17r.

[25] '[. . .] Francesco Valori rimase assolutamente capo della città insino alla morte sua, avendo seguito massime da tutta la parte del frate in genere [. . .]' Guicciardini (1931), 145.

[26] 'Posatesi alquanto le nostre chose circa del criminale, parse che infra li altri cittadini Francesco Valori emergessi e primo restassi, e secondo il suo ordine la città si governassi: a che non poco momento dette la morte ordinaria di Piero Filippo Pandolfini, il perché, privo il Valori d'emoli, e mediante la parte fratesca gagliardo, ad arbitrio suo quasi ogni cosa conduceva [. . .] Piacemi brevemente al presente le condizioni della città nostra circa al governo di drento raccontare. Governavansi le cose publiche per ordine di pochi primati, e massime di quelli della parte fratesca, fra cui el principato tenea Francesco Valori: e quale ordine questi davano, tale per il resto della città mediante la loro parte, additta a tali capi e soscritti come innanzi dicemo, si esseguiva. Questi tali, participando assai delli onori e utili della città, facilmente si lasciavano á laro capi governare, espediendo che da loro proposto fussi, sanza altrimenti ricercare o intendere se bene o no fussi per la città.' Parenti (2005), 126 and 131. On Parenti's chronicle, see Matucci (1985), 149–93 and (1990); Pampaloni (1959), 147–53. On the anti-Medicean origins of the Parenti family, see Phillips (1987).

[27] 'Fu fatto pel Gennaio del 1496 [Florentine style] Gonfaloniere di giustizia Francesco Valori, che era de' principali tra gli Frateschi, ed era di tanta reputazione e credito in quella parte, che si poteva quasi dire capo della setta. Mostrossi in quel Magistrato il Valori tanto rigido contro gli avversari, e gli spaventò di tal sorte, che gli fece molto più temere, che per l'ordinario non facevano, e però più si risentivano, e meglio s'ordinavano

opposing political party and the great hatred and rivalry between the two party leaders, Bernardo del Nero and Francesco Valori.[28] Although in other contexts many contemporaries recorded more positive assessments of the Florentine statesman, all the opinions Machiavelli expressed in the *Discorsi* were shared at one time or another by other observers.

The vision of Francesco in the later sketch, however, is far more original. Few accounts of Francesco described him as a model of political patriotism, let alone a man who single-mindedly pursued the good of his country. Machiavelli's refashioned Valori is a political conservative, someone who shunned revolution and faithfully served both the Medicean and republican regimes for which he worked. The similarities between Niccolò Valori's refashioned Francesco and Machiavelli's later sketch overlap in significant ways. They both emphasize early connections and loyalty to the Medici and both assert that Francesco was misunderstood, that he had selflessly worked for the common good.

Machiavelli may have consulted Niccolò directly for the composition. How did Machiavelli know that Francesco's heirs repudiated his inheritance? No contemporary historians or chroniclers mention that detail. The most likely explanation for how Machiavelli knew the details of Francesco's inheritance is that Niccolò told him; Francesco died childless, so his heirs were his brother Bartolomeo's sons, Filippo and the same Niccolò of Machiavelli's friendship; it was Niccolò Valori himself who renounced the inheritance.[29] The subsequent diffusion of the sketches also suggests that Machiavelli at least presented a copy of the sketches to the Valori. The earliest published reference to the *Nature di huomini fiorentini* that I have been able to locate dates from 1782;[30] I have found no mention even of their existence prior

alla difesa; cosa, che non possono far peggiore i capi delle parti, che mettere gli avversari in disperazione senza assicurarsene.' Nerli (1859), 15–16. On Nerli's chronicle, see Biagianti (1975), 45–100 and Montevecchi (1989), 71–104.

[28] '[. . .] gli inimici del frate non avendo un capo di tanta autorità da opporgli, poi che era morto Piero Capponi, voltorono el favore a Bernardo del Nero, el quale benchè fussi dello stato vecchio, era già stato fatto de' dieci e ritornato in riputazione, ed era vecchio con credito grandissimo di essere savio e di tanta pratica ed autorità, che in Firenze non pareva altro uomo da opporre a Francesco Valori; e lo creorono in scambio di Francesco, gonfaloniere di giustizia; e così sendo già battezzatto capo della altra parte, nacque fra Francesco e lui emulazione ed odio grandissimo.' Guicciardini (1931), 131.

[29] ASF, Panciatichi, 134, no. 6 and discussed by Niccolò in the family diary, BNCF, Panciat. 134, 25v.

[30] Machiavelli (1782–83), 81.

to 1782 and many modern editions of Machiavelli do not include the *Nature di huomini fiorentini*. I have encountered no contemporary Florentine source aware of the existence of Machiavelli's biographical sketches, other than the Valori themselves, who, in several family documents from the sixteenth century discuss Machiavelli's sketch of Francesco, and include transcriptions to help foster a republican myth of Francesco.[31]

Machiavelli's evaluation of Valori in the *Nature di huomini fiorentini* contradicts much of what Valori's contemporaries had to say about him; Machiavelli himself could not entirely have believed it. Machiavelli was twenty-five in 1494, old enough to be a more reliable witness to these events than he at first appears. He leaves out of the portrait some fundamental details, while those he does present blend truth and half-truth to create an entirely unique image of Valori. All of Valori's contemporaries identified him as a participant in the November coup against the Medici and as one of the architects of the renewed republic.[32] Much of the widespread hostility towards Valori resulted from his aggressive attack on the five Medici conspirators in 1497, in which he successfully campaigned for the suspension of one of the new republic's fundamental laws. Yet Machiavelli omits Valori's role in the coup against the Medici, his role in the foundation of the new republic, and his role in punishing the five Medicean conspirators. Most striking of all, however, is Machiavelli's complete omission of any reference to Valori's alliance with Savonarola and his role as one of the leaders of the *frateschi* movement, especially considering that Machiavelli may have known Valori personally and shared some of his political connections.[33] Valori was more closely associated with Savonarola than any other republican figure and yet in the few lines Machiavelli devotes to Valori's career, he does not mention the most obvious source of Valori's fame and power.[34]

[31] BNCF, Rinuccini 27, cassetta 3, unnumbered folio.

[32] Several generations of the Valori family acknowledged that Francesco played a central role in the revolt against the Medici. BNCF, Rinuccini 27, cassetta 3, unnumbered folios and BNCF, Panciat. 134. Parenti, Nerli, and Guicciardini all discuss Valori's role in the revolution of November 1494. See below.

[33] Andrea Cambini reported that 'Francesco Valori sia andato a casa cictadini privati, dico che io non ho notitia; ma mi pare havere inteso che un dì di festa andassi con Nicolò Machiavelli et Tommaso Guidecti a vedere Francesco dello Scarfa, ma non lo afermerei di certo.' Villari (1861), II: cclxxvii.

[34] 'Fucci tirato con favore della parte del frate, della quale fu assolutamente fatto capo', Guicciardini (1931), 130; for Nerli's comments, see note no. 6.

The two sketches converge on only one point: that many Florentines hated Francesco Valori. In the *Discorsi*, Machiavelli echoes many judgements of his fellow historians. Several years later, however, Machiavelli claims to have discovered a fundamental patriotic truth about Valori that has escaped other historians. At least part of the latter sketch's purpose, therefore, must have been to defend and to explain Valori to his readers, to show that a misunderstanding lay at the root of the widespread hostility towards him. Why did Machiavelli undertake this apology of Francesco Valori and upon what sources or observations did he base his claims?

The answer to the first of these two questions lies in the larger literary and political context surrounding the *Nature di huomini fiorentini*: the composition of the *Istorie fiorentine*, the Medici commission, and Machiavelli's relationship with the Medici. Felix Gilbert has provided a detailed account of the circumstances of the Medici commission and Medici expectations of Machiavelli as their public historiographer. Gilbert repeatedly emphasized that the *Istorie* were unfinished, that Machiavelli expected to and was expected to continue them, beginning with Piero di Lorenzo's two years of rule, the French descent into Italy, and the renewal of the Republic.

In May 1525, Machiavelli went to Rome to present Clement VII with the first eight books of the *Istorie*. Pleased with the work, Clement paid Machiavelli 120 ducats and promised him a raise, after which Machiavelli continued writing. He told Francesco Vettori that he had begun writing again and that he was condemning the princes he held responsible for causing the Italian Wars (the preamble to which corresponds precisely with the putative ninth book of the *Istorie*, 1492–94). Even before he received the rise, Machiavelli had stated to Clement that he intended to '*seguitare l'impresa mia*' and that events after Lorenzo's death, being '*più alto e maggiori*' deserved a full description, '*con più alto e maggiore spirito*'.[35]

Gilbert concluded that both the Medici and Machiavelli envisioned the project as one of traditional humanist history. The Medici expected the *Istorie fiorentine* to present significant events in a rhetorically impressive form to strengthen the reader's political pride and moral fortitude, much as the humanist histories of previous First Chancellors Leonardo Bruni and Poggio Bracciolini had done. The purpose of historical narrative was to preserve and perpetuate only those events and

[35] Gilbert (1972), 83–95.

deeds worthy of honour. Machiavelli appears to have shared the same view of his task as did the earlier humanist chancellors and his current Medici patron.[36] During the period in which his appointment had yet to be finalized, Machiavelli experimented with the conventions of history writing in his *Vita di Castruccio Castracani*. He asked his friends to critique the *Vita* as a project for a larger history and it followed all the conventions of rhetorical humanist history.[37]

All the character sketches from Machiavelli's notebook conform to Gilbert's account of the commission, although he neither cited nor discussed the text. First, the full title of Machiavelli's sketches is *Nature di huomini fiorentini et in che luoghi si possino inserire le laude loro*—suggesting that he intended them for a larger work and that he was selecting people along the lines of humanist history, according to important and noble deeds. In addition to Valori, the *Nature di huomini fiorentini* includes brief career assessments of four other Florentine statesmen: Piero Capponi, Antonio Giacomini, Cosimo de' Pazzi, and Francesco Pepi. All the statesmen were involved in the renewed republic (the history of which Machiavelli was preparing to write), and both Valori and Capponi in particular played central roles in the constitutional reordering of the city that followed the expulsion of Piero de' Medici. Four of the five sketches begin abruptly, with references to an implied previous discussion, also suggesting that they were part of a larger narrative. For example, Machiavelli clearly intended to insert the assessments of Valori and Capponi after he

[36] Machiavelli was trained as a humanist and belonged to the humanist world of the Florentine Chancery. See Black (1990) and (1985): 1–16. For ways in which Machiavelli's republican thought deviated from Quattrocento civic humanism, see Jurdjevic (2007a), Hankins (1996), 134–5; and Rahe (2000). On the humanist tradition in the Florentine chancery, see Garin (1972), 3–29; Black (1985); Brown (1979); Witt (1983).

[37] Gilbert (1972), 77–8. Machiavelli's *Istorie* deviated in one important respect from humanist histories. Rather than celebrate the virtuous deeds of Florentines, the *Istorie* narrated Florentine politics in terms of discord, disorder, and factionalism. On the basis of this observation, Gilbert concluded that Machiavelli intended the *Istorie* to demonstrate the abasement of Florentine political life under the Medici, in spite of their commission by and dedication to Clement VII. According to Gilbert's interpretation, however, Machiavelli would not have continued the theme of corruption in the book of the *Istorie* that dealt with the republican interlude. One would expect Machiavelli to have chosen for *Nature di huomini fiorentini* only those people suitable for traditional humanist history: examples of moral fortitude, patriotism, and good character. Najemy endorsed and substantially expanded Gilbert's reading in (1982), 551–76. Najemy concluded that Machiavelli, criticizing the Medici for pursuing the politics of family and followers, the essence of destructive factionalism, had written a prescription for the political renewal of Florence: it would have to rid itself of the Medici.

had described their deaths.[38] The sketches of Cosimo de' Pazzi and Francesco Pepi begin: 'the ambassadors chosen were . . . ' In each of the sketches Machiavelli intended to showcase virtues that he particularly esteemed. He chose Piero Capponi as an example of bravery, courage, and patriotism, relating the famous encounter between Piero and Charles VIII in which Piero tore up Charles' unfavourable treaty of alliance with the Florentines, thereby reasserting Florentine liberty.[39] The essay on Giacomini reflected several of the virtues that Machiavelli prized: Giacomini was a skilled soldier, cautious in making decisions but fiery in carrying them out. Better still, he lacked all partisan biases and personal ambition; he was therefore a man of such virtue that, although of obscure origin, he achieved fame not only in Florence but throughout Tuscany. He was also, Machiavelli tells us, a protégé of Francesco Valori.[40] Machiavelli includes Cosimo de' Pazzi and Francesco Pepi as other examples of the virtues of the Florentine regime—the noble, talented, and virtuous are called to political office.[41]

[38] For the opening to Valori's sketch see note no. 17. The sketch of Capponi begins 'Così morì Piero Capponi, huomo assai reputato per le virtù dello havolo et bisavolo suo . . . ' Machiavelli (1971), 917.

[39] 'Puossi darli, infra le altre, questa laude, che lui solo reggessi quello che tucti li altri cittadini havéno abbandonato, quando in su la fronte del re stracciò quelli capituli che toglevono la libertà alla patria sua. Né lo sbigottì la insolentia et potentia de' Franzesi, né la viltà de' suoi; et solo per lui stette che Firenze non vivessi serva de' Franzesi, come per Camillo che Roma non vivessi ricomperata da quelli [. . .]' Machiavelli (1971), 917. Guicciardini expressed the same approval of Capponi in his history. 'Erano Francesco Valori, Piero Capponi, Braccio Martelli e parecchi altri cittadini deputati a praticare col re, e sendo in sul formare le composizioni, portorono al re una bozza de' capitoli, ne' quali la città sarebbe convenuta; e non gli piacendo, lui dette loro un' altra bozza, secondo la quale voleva farsi lo accordo; dove sendo cose molto disoneste, Piero Capponi presala, animosissimamente la stracciò in presenzia del re, soggiugnendo che poi che e' non voleva accordarsi, le cose si terminerebbono altrimenti, e che lui sonerebbe le trombe, e noi le campane [. . .]' Guicciardini, 105.

[40] Banished (when still a child) with his father by Piero de' Medici, Giacomini returned to Florence just before 1494 through the intervention of Francesco Valori. 'Costui, in sua pueritia, per le parte di messer Luca et di Piero de' Medici vecchio fu confinato con suo padre fuora della città [. . .] Era tornato, poco avanti el '94, in Firenze; et, come huomo virtuoso, fu, per il mezo di Francesco Valori, primamente monstro alle actioni publiche [. . .] Era Antonio delle cose della guerra innanzi ad tucti li altri cittadini fiorentini peritissimo; cauto nel piglare e partiti; animoso nello exequirli; [. . .] Era, privato, sanza parte et sanza ambitione alcuna; quando publico, era solo desideroso della gloria della città et laude sua [. . .] Donde non solo crebbe el suo nome in Firenze, ma in tucta Toscana. Et così Antonio, incognito prima et obscuro, acquistò reputatione in quella città, dove tucti li altri clari et reputati cittadini la havevono perduta.' Machiavelli (1971), 917–18.

[41] 'Cosimo de' Pazi [. . .] et messer Francesco Pepi . . . huomini, oltre allo essere nobili, graduati et prudenti, in chi el nuovo stato assai confidava per havere renduto all' uno la patria, all' altro lo stato, et, di stiecto causidico, haverlo chiamato ad quello

The *Nature di huomini fiorentini* was itself an unfinished work in progress, a point overlooked by modern editors of the text that further suggests the sketches are drafts for a larger project. I consulted the only extant autograph.[42] The document is a small booklet of ten pages, of which the sketches occupy the first five. In spite of the title, there is no discussion of literary 'places' in which to insert the sketches and the remaining five pages are blank, which might suggest that Machiavelli intended to continue working on them. Allan Gilbert, Mario Martelli, and the editors of an 1833 edition of Machiavelli's works have suggested that Machiavelli intended the text for the *Istorie fiorentine*.[43] Scipione Ammirato made the same argument in his *Delle famiglie nobili fiorentine*, and evidently had also consulted the original.[44]

Machiavelli understood that the commission for which he had been chosen, after more than a decade of exile and exclusion from Florentine politics, signified a substantial improvement in his complex and problematic relations with the ruling family. He had been a close friend of Giuliano de' Medici in his youth and had even belonged to the Medici carnival *brigate*.[45] After their return to the city in 1512, the Medici banished Machiavelli from the world of Florentine politics. The former secretary was tainted by his presumed complicity in the Boscoli-Capponi conspiracy, for which he was briefly imprisoned and tortured, and by his well-known loyalty to the former *gonfaloniere a vita* Piero Soderini.[46] To regain Medici favour Machiavelli had written and dedicated many works to the family, but his pariah status remained.[47] The Medici-commissioned *Istorie* therefore was Machiavelli's best chance to return to Florentine political life.

However, the task of writing a history for the Medici in which the Medici played a pre-eminent role forced Machiavelli to confront his

governo che in uno vivere libero, per la sua virtù, non li poteva essere negato.' Machiavelli (1971), 918.

[42] BNCF, Gonnelli, 24, 3. I have located only two sixteenth-century copies, one complete, by Giuliano de' Ricci, BNCF, Palatino E. B., 15, 10, 82v–83r, the other partial, by Baccio Valori in the late sixteenth century, BNCF, Filze Rinuccini 27, cassetta 3, unnumbered folio.

[43] A. Gilbert (1989), III: 1436; Martelli (1992), 22; Machiavelli (1833).

[44] He wrote that the sketches were written by 'a very famous Florentine writer, from one of his tiniest notebooks, written in his own hand perhaps for the *Istorie fiorentine*'.

[45] See Martelli (1971), 377–405; Fubini (1997): 127–41.

[46] On Machiavelli's alleged involvement in this conspiracy, see Stephens and Butters (1982).

[47] See Fubini (1997), 127–41; Jaeckel (1998), 73–92; Fubini (1998), 93–6.

own contradictory feelings towards the family. As John Najemy has persuasively shown, Machiavelli saw the Medici simultaneously as the cause of his and the Florentine republic's downfall and yet also as the most secure route to his own political success and Florentine recovery.[48] In a letter to Donato Giannotti, Machiavelli admitted that he could not openly express his criticism of the Medici in the *Istorie*; to solve this problem, he claimed to have voiced his criticisms through the speeches of anti-Mediceans.[49] In the ninth book, however, Machiavelli would have to relate the expulsion of the Medici and provide an account of the republican regime of which he himself had been a loyal supporter as Second Chancellor. In particular, he would have to provide an account of the motives and deeds of Medici enemies with whom his own career was connected.

Francesco Valori was one such Medici enemy. Valori played too important a role in the politics of the republican episode for Machiavelli to omit him from the *Istorie*. A member of the major guilds, Valori was among the first *ottimati* to move against Piero de' Medici. He attended 51 *pratiche* between 1495 and 1498; from 3 December 1494 to 10 June 1495 he was one of the twenty *accoppiatori* who restaffed the entire government; in January 1497, he was elected *gonfaloniere di giustizia*; in 1495 and 1497 he was a member of the Ten on Liberty and Peace; in 1496 he was an officer of the *Monte*; and in 1495 and 1496 he was a member of the Council of Eighty.[50] He was also, in the eyes of many contemporaries, Savonarola's closest *ottimate* ally and the political leader of the Savonarolan movement.

According to Gilbert, Machiavelli was not expected to do any original research for the *Istorie*, nor was he expected to establish new historical facts. The commission required him to present the best-known extant historical narratives in a more stylistically elevated form.[51] By making a careful comparison between Machiavelli's later sketch of Valori and the information about him available in extant chronicles (the histories of Bartolomeo Cerretani, Francesco Guicciardini, Piero Parenti, Filippo Nerli, Iacopo Nardi, Piero Vaglienti, and the trial depositions of Savonarola and his followers), Machiavelli's method becomes clear. He faithfully reported the content of available histories on the subject of Valori's early service to the Medici. Machiavelli had slim to no

[48] Najemy (1982), 553.
[49] Discussed by Gilbert (1972), 85–6 and by Gilmore (1970), xxvi–xxvii.
[50] Guidi (1988), 189. [51] Gilbert (1972), 77–9.

historical grounds, however, for the other details of his description. He consistently obscured and denied Valori's anti-Medicean career, and his own public friendship with Francesco's nephew cannot have been far from his mind.

As we saw in Chapter 1, Machiavelli's description of Valori as a man who defended the Medici regime after Lorenzo's death was accurate. Valori was a close associate of Piero de' Medici. In September 1492, the Council of One Hundred appointed six ambassadors to honour Alexander VI's election to the papacy, including Valori and Piero de' Medici.[52] Valori returned to be appointed as *gonfaloniere di giustizia*, and worked so closely with Piero that several leaders of the regime began to complain that Piero conducted affairs on Valori's advice alone.[53]

An anecdote related by Guicciardini confirms Parenti's observation that Valori was Piero's principal advisor. After Lorenzo's death, Bernardo Rucellai and Paolantonio Soderini tried to rectify the features of the Medici regime that many *ottimati* had found particularly burdensome under Lorenzo. They both tried to persuade Piero not to conduct himself in the tyrannical way that had incurred odium towards Lorenzo. They also argued that Medici power in the city would be strengthened if Piero used his authority more moderately and permitted a more republican order. But, according to Guicciardini, Piero was incapable of appreciating such subtle arguments. Piero's secretary Piero da Bibbiena and a particularly vocal Francesco Valori advised Piero that such arguments were not offered in his interests. On the strength of their advice, Piero began consistently to slight Bernardo Rucellai and Paolantonio Soderini.[54]

[52] Masi (1906), 20.

[53] '[. . .] parendo a qualcuno de' capi dello stato che il Gonfaloniere Francesco Valori troppa autorità presa s'avessi, e quasi di suo solo consenso tale cosa esseguissi.' Parenti (1994), 60.

[54] '[. . .] ristrettisi insieme, credo con desiderio di mantenere pure lo stato a Piero, ma che e' limitassi e moderassi alcuna di quelle cose che a tempo di Lorenzo erano state grave a' cittadini, e le quali, insino vivo Lorenzo, Bernardo Rucellai aveva qualche volte biasimate, gli cominciorono a persuadere che e' volessi usare moderatemente la autorità sua e, quanto pativa la conservazione dello stato suo, accostarsi più tosto a una vita civile, che continuare in quelle cose che davano ombra di tiranno [. . .] Non era naturalmente el cervello di Piero inclinato a essere capace di questi ricordi, perchè come tutto dì mostrorono e' processi sua, la sua natura era tirannesca ed altiera; ma vi si aggiunse che, come fu intesa questa cosa, subito ser Piero da Bibbiena suo cancelliere ed alcuni cittadini, fra' quali si dice essere stato vivamente Francesco Valori, gli dissono che questo non era el bene suo, e che chi lo consigliava così, gli voleva fare perdere lo stato; in modo che non solo non seguitò el parere di Bernardo e Pagolantonio, ma insospettito tacitamente di loro [. . .]' Guicciardini (1931), 84.

The historians of this period do not, however, confirm that Valori defended Piero's regime against critics. Of the twelve members of the *pratica* convened by Piero to discuss negotiations with the French ambassadors, Guicciardini recorded that only Valori and Piero Guicciardini spoke out against Piero's decision to favour Naples, even though most members of the *pratica* disapproved of the policy.[55] Guicciardini also indicated that Valori had already established a reputation as an opponent of Piero de' Medici before the expulsion. Valori returned to Florence from Pisa during the popular revolt in November 1494, where he was greeted with rejoicing because he 'was an honest man and was known to be opposed to Piero'.[56] In their family diary Niccolò Valori himself acknowledged the prominent role played by Francesco in the revolt, as did Baccio Valori, writing almost a century later, while compiling a family history and working for the Medici dukes.[57]

Filippo de' Nerli describes Valori's role in the expulsion of the Medici in slightly different terms and confirms that Valori had a reputation as Piero's opponent even before the expulsion. Having heard reports of the great hatred he had incurred in the city by giving Charles VIII key Florentine fortresses, Piero returned to Florence to defend his actions and attempt to re-establish the stability of his regime. The citizens of Florence, however, were already in a state of revolt. Nerli recorded that Valori, already known as hostile to Piero, had returned to Florence to encourage the rebellious citizens and to confirm the rumours of the poor state of relations between Piero and the French.[58]

[55] 'Aveva Piero fatto una pratica stretta di cittadini, co' quali si consultavano queste cose dello stato: messer Piero Alamanni, messer Tommaso Minerbetti, messer Agnolo Niccolini, messer Antonio Malegonnelle, messer Puccio Pucci, Bernardo del Nero, Giovanni Serristori, Pierfilippo Pandolfini, Francesco Valori, Niccolò Ridolfi, Piero Guicciardini, Piero de' Medici, ed Antonio di Bernardo; a' quali tutti, da pochi in fuora, dispiaceva questa risoluzione, nondimeno sendo favorita da' più intrinsechi, non si opponevano, eccetto qualche volta e non molto Francesco Valori e Piero Guicciardini.' Guicciardini (1931), 91.

[56] 'Giunse in questo tumulto in Firenze Francesco Valori el quale tornava dal re [. . .] e perchè gli era in somma benivolenzia del popolo, sendo sempre stato uomo netto ed amatore del bene, ed avendo fama di essersi opposto a Piero, fu ricevuta con grandissimo gaudio di tutto el popolo, e portatone in palagio quasi di peso in sulle spalle de' cittadini. Corse di poi el popolo furiosamente a casa Piero e la mandò a sacco [. . .]' Guicciardini (1931), 97–8.

[57] BNCF, Rinuccini 27, cassetta 3, unnumbered folio and BNCF, Panciat. 134, 11v.

[58] 'Poichè in Firenze s'intese Piero de' Medici aver dato le fortezze di Pisa al Re Carlo, e che si conobbe la perdita grande che faceva la città per la ribellione di Pisa e dell' altre terre del dominio, che quel caso di Pisa si tirò dietro, sdegnaronsi i magistrati, i cittadini e quasi tutto l'universale contro i Medici, e se ne sparlò tanto alla scoperta, e sì liberamente,

Finally, Piero Parenti recorded that Valori not only incited the anti-Medicean mob, but also that he participated in the popular revolt. Upon returning from Pisa, Valori discovered that the anti-Medicean mob lacked weapons. Without dismounting from his horse, Valori led the people to the Bargello, where they armed themselves with the weapons of the Bargello's soldiers.[59]

Machiavelli claimed that Valori had never been the 'cause or originator of any revolution' but a firm defender of political *status quo*. Here Machiavelli indicates that he is aware of his deviation from the content of available historical narratives. People are rarely characterized by things they did not do. Why declare that Valori did not participate in a revolution unless most people believed that he did (and as all the chroniclers record)? And indeed, the representation of Valori begins even more strongly to deviate from contemporary accounts. While Valori may have joined the revolt against the Medici only in its final stages, he played a central and public role in the constitutional reordering of the city and the dismantling of the Medicean electoral system.

Some chroniclers confirm Machiavelli's positive character assessments of Valori, but such judgements are relatively rare. Iacopo Nardi described Valori as an old, wise, and noble man.[60] Guicciardini's account of November 1494 suggests that Valori had a reputation for honesty and for desiring the public good.[61] The overwhelming majority of contemporary judgements of Valori confirm Machiavelli's statement that many Florentines hated him. In most cases, the point of contention was Valori's overweening ambition and arrogant, harsh treatment of his

non solo in privato, ma anco in pubblico, che Piero avutane notizia deliberò di partirsi di Pisa, dove per accordarsi col Re s'era condotto, e non avendo potuto trovar luogo co' Francesi da poter ben convenir con loro a proposito dello stato suo, affrettò tanto più il suo ritorno a Firenze, per poter essere colla Signoria, e far ogni pruova di disporla a voler conservar quello stato, e per giustificare le pratiche tenute col Re per conto delle fortezze, e per vedere anche s'egli avesse potuto confermare nella parte sua Francesco Scarfi, ch' era Gonfaloniere di giustizia, e così posare ancora gli animi di molti cittadini, che se gli erano scoperti contro, i quali erano già molto sollevati e molto più si sollevarono dipoi che Francesco Valori, che già s' era scoperto contro a' Medici, era venuto in Firenze per dar loro più animo e per più certificarli, che le cose de' Medici con i Francesi restassero molto mal disposte, e per tal cagione si parti il Valori dalla corte del Re, dove Messer Agnolo Niccolini ed egli per conto dello stato de' Medici erano ambasciadori.' Nerli (1859), 102–3.

[59] Parenti (1994), 124.

[60] '[. . .] un uomo vecchio, nobile, e savio [. . .]' Nardi (1838–41), 34.

[61] '[. . .] e perchè gli era in somma benivolenzia del popolo, sendo sempre stato uomo netto ed amatore del bene, ed avendo fama di essersi opposto a Piero, fu ricevuta con grandissimo gaudio di tutto el popolo [. . .]' Guicciardini (1931), 97–8.

perceived opponents, not dissimilar from *ottimati* consensus towards him under Piero de' Medici.

Many followers of Savonarola fiercely resented Valori's promotion within their ranks and mistrusted his commitment to popular government. Savonarola first encountered Valori while attempting to break the political monopoly exercised by the twenty *accoppiatori* of 1494–95. Savonarola had begun to make speeches in which he called for their resignation, arguing that they had fulfilled their task and that their excessive power undermined the new republic. Savonarola persuaded Giuliano Salviati to resign, but met fierce opposition from Valori, who accused Salviati of destroying the city through his resignation.[62] The controversy that first surrounded Valori's ascent within the Savonarolan party fragmented the movement. Giovan Battista Ridolfi, Lionello Boni, Alamanno and Iacopo Salviati all criticized Savonarola's decision to promote Valori within the *frateschi*, on the grounds that he was a bad citizen, excessively ambitious, and that he only pursued his own interests—charges echoed in Machiavelli's *Discorsi* portrait.[63]

Contemporaries of Valori also singled out Valori's arrogant, harsh, and even paranoid treatment of his perceived enemies. Andrea Cambini, a close intimate of both Savonarola and Valori, recorded in his trial deposition that Valori had such an uncontrollable hatred of Piero de' Medici that he suspected many citizens without reason.[64] Although he had praised Valori for his honesty, Guicciardini described Valori as an ambitious and haughty man, so fierce in his own convictions that

[62] 'Il quale benche havesse molte contradictione pure si fece dipoi ebbi desiderio che si levassino. xx. Et persuasi prima irrenuntiare a Giuliano Salviati. Poi a messer Domenico Bonsi. Il quale si monstro alieno. et vuolmi arricordare che io lo dicessi anchora a Francesco Valori: il quale lhebbe per male la renuntia del. xx. et disse a Giuliano Salviati. Tu hai guasto questa cipta a renuntiare [. . .]' Villari (1861), II: cliv.

[63] 'Ma Giovan Baptista mi sputava parole per le quali comprendevo non sintendeva bene con Francesco benche parlava in generale: così anchora parlai a Alamanno et Iacobo Salviati: Intendendo che non stavano bene con Francesco et confortaili a stare bene con lui. Et loro mi disseno essi fa troppo grande e bisogna darli qualche sferzata et tenerlo adrieto. Et io havevo per male che fusseno disuniti da lui perchè mi pare sempre siano iti bene [. . .] Lionello bono anchora quando era de Signori mi venne a parlare et dissemi male di Francesco Valori che era male cittadino: che cercava el bene proprio. Et io lo difendevo perche desideravo che havesse auctorita come ho dicto: [. . .] Et essendo, più tenpo fa, Francesco Valori in mala opinione di molti di quelli frequentano San Marco, che mostravano temere della grandezza et volontà su circa le cose publiche [. . .]' Villari (1861), II: cliv–clv and clviii and cclxxviii.

[64] 'Con Piero de' Medici havea hodio inconportabile, in maniera che pel sospecto grande ne havea, al continovo dubitava di molti, et erane in gelosia; et per adventura, el più delle volte, sanza probabile ragione.' Villari (1861), II: cclxxv.

he pursued them blindly, abusing and pushing all those who stood in his way.[65] Filippo Nerli also drew attention to Valori's harsh and frightening attitude towards his opponents.[66] Savonarola, one of Valori's closest associates in his final years, confirmed Guicciardini's portrait. He explained in his trial deposition that he had defended Valori against his detractors because he wanted Valori to have authority within the party, even though Valori was by nature a man who drove away all his friends.[67]

Machiavelli declared that Florence 'never had a citizen who more desired her good' than Francesco Valori. Some chroniclers praised Valori for reforming the regulations governing access to the Great Council during his tenure as *gonfaloniere* in 1497.[68] In particular, Guicciardini approved of a law that Valori enforced, barring from the council anyone who had failed to pay taxes. The enforcement of this law evidently drastically reduced the number of Florentines in the council, because Valori immediately afterward reduced the minimum age for attendance from thirty to twenty-four. Guicciardini also praised Valori for purging the council of men without proper credentials, whose false appearances had been undetected during the confusing early months of 1494.[69] Vaglienti approved of Valori's revisions, though he suggested that Valori had not applied them sufficiently thoroughly.[70] Nardi also approved of Valori's attempts to stabilize the Great Council, although

[65] 'Fu Francesco uomo molto ambizioso ed altiero, e tanto caldo e vivo nelle opinioni sua, che le favoriva sanza rispetto, urtando e svillaneggiando tutti quegli che si gli opponevano [. . .]' Guicciardini (1931), 152.

[66] 'Mostrossi in quel Magistrato il Valori tanto rigido contro gli avversari, e gli spaventò di tal sorte, che gli fece molto più temere, che per l'ordinario non facevano, e però più si risentivano, e meglio s'ordinavano alla difesa; cosa, che non possono far peggiore i capi delle parti, che mettere gli avversari in disperazione senza assicurarsene.' Nerli (1859), 115–16.

[67] 'Et io lo difendevo perche desideravo che havesse auctorita come ho dicto: benche anchora mi dispiaceva per la sua natura che era uomo da scacciare tutti i suoi amici [. . .]' Villari (1861), II: clviii.

[68] Discussed also by Niccolò Valori in BNCF, Panciat. 134, 13r.

[69] 'Attese ancora a fortificare el consiglio, faccendo una legge che chi era a specchio non vi potessi venire; e perchè el numero rimaneva molto scarso, vi messe e' giovani che avessino finito ventiquattro anni, che prima non vi poteva venire chi non avessi trenta. Cavonne ancora molti che ragionevolmente non vi potevano venire, ma in quella confusione da principio, sotto vari nomi di case ed altri falsi colori, vi erano entrati. Per queste cose e per essere tenuto netto e buono cittadino, sendo in reputazione grandissima [. . .]' Guicciardini (1931), 130–1.

[70] '[. . .] come per l'utimo vostro parlamento si conchiuse, el quale fu perfetto e buono e laldabile. E per cagione che utimamente per Francesco Valori si fe' che chi fusse entrato nel consiglio pel partito de' Signori e Collegi, come per esso parlamento si disponeva se

he recorded that lowering the age for attendance had adverse effects that undermined the Council since the youth now permitted entry favoured the *arrabbiati* in elections.[71]

Accounts that describe Valori as a shrewd and calculating factional politician, however, considerably outnumber accounts that praise the public utility of Valori's actions. Parenti described Valori and Piero Capponi, during their tenure as *accoppiatori* in 1494–95, as ambitious leaders of rival factions, each with supporters and followers. Parenti accused them of exploiting their positions as *accoppiatori* to distribute offices to their friends and relatives. He specifically states that Valori and Capponi were enemies of the public good.[72] Guicciardini doubted the sincerity of Valori's professed committment to Savonarola's reform programme. He divided Savonarola's followers into three categories: those who believed in the friar's works and predictions, evil men who hid their wicked actions behind the friar's holiness, and politically shrewd men, who recognized a powerful political party in the Savonarolan movement, and therefore a sure route to public office, influence, and reputation. In this final category, Guicciardini put Francesco Valori at the top of the list.[73]

ne trovassi fuora, giudico e dico che in alcune cose fu ben fatto e ancora sarebbe buono fallo d'alcuni che vi restonno e quali sono novellini alla terra.' Vaglienti (1982), 254.

[71] '[. . .] che Franceso Valori trovandosi gonfaloniere di giustizia, e in sua compagnia una signoria molto unita, insino del mese di marzo e d'aprile 1496, fece molte riforme e constituzioni buone, circa il governo e fermezza del consiglio, credendo pure d'acconciarlo meglio col farlo di maggior numero, e perciò manco eposto alle offese di chi per via di sette lo volesse alterare. Tra le quali constituzioni fu ordinato, che i giovani da 24 anni in su potessero andare al consiglio, pur che fussero netti di specchio, con certe altre condizioni, che per brevità si lasciano, con ciò sia cosa che prima non potessero intervenire nel consiglio di minore età d'anni 30. Ma ne seguì assai diverso effetto da quello che'l detto Francesco, e gli uomini di buona mente avevano creduto, perciò che la scorretta gioventù moltiplicata nel consiglio si accostava nell' elezioni de' magistrati al favore degli arrabbiati, e conseguentemente a guastare, o vero a poco amare il consiglio [. . .]' Nardi (1838–41), 105.

[72] 'Da altro canto Francesco Valori et Piero Chapponi, du' altri capi scopertisi et molto ambitiosi, volendo ciascuno empiere le vogle sue et contentare di ufici li amici loro et parenti, dissentivano intra da loro mirabilmente. Ciascuno di questi seguaci et fautori haveano, ma nimico el popolo, il quale di bene vivere desiderava.' Parenti (1994), 22–3.

[73] '[. . .] alcuni naturalmente inclinati al credere per bontà di natura e vòlti alla religione, ed a chi pareva che le opere sue fussino buone e che le cose predette da lui tutto dì si verificassino; alcuni maligni e di cattiva fama, per ricoprire le opere sue ed acquistare nome buono con questo mantello di santità; alcuni uomini, secondo el mondo, costumati, vedendo el favore e la potenzia aveva questa parte, per correre più agli ufici ed acquistare stato e riputazione più col popolo. Eranne capi Francesco Valori, Giovan Battista Ridolfi

Parenti described Valori's power as a *gonfaloniere* backed by Savonarola in more stark terms, as a threat to republican liberty. Valori made decisions based on the counsel of a few intimates, stacked *pratiche* with *frateschi*, and controlled when and who could speak in the *pratiche*. Parenti accused Valori of altering the government with the help of friends and relatives in such a way that he became its head. Using Savonarola's popular influence, Valori ensured that his plans would neither be destroyed by suspicious citizens nor contradicted in the Great Council. He concluded his summation of Valori's term as *gonfaloniere* by writing 'thus, under the cover of public good, a free and popular government became a partisan regime'.[74]

Both Guicciardini and Parenti observed that Valori used the authority of public office to attack Savonarola's enemies. Having achieved the most powerful office of the republic with the support of the *frateschi*, Guicciardini wrote, Valori dutifully favoured the party as much as he could, in particular expelling from Florence many Franciscan preachers who openly contradicted Savonarola.[75] Parenti recorded that Valori threatened the Franciscans with haughty and hateful words, referring to them as evil and seditious men. Without allowing his audience to respond, he began to expel them from the assembly.[76]

Why did Machiavelli omit from his sketch any mention of Valori's famous alliance with Savonarola? Perhaps he did not want to draw

e Paolantonio Soderini, messer Domenico Bonsi, messer Francesco Gualterotti, Giuliano Salviati, Bernardo Nasi ed Antonio Canigiani.' Guicciardini (1931), 123.

[74] 'Ordinava lui con pochi suoi intimi le provisioni et tutto col consenso del frate, poi chiamava larga pratica et consigliare le facea. Questa pratica el forte erano de divoti del frate, e quali subito consentivano, et se alcuni altri contradiceano, che pochi scoprire contro si voleano, non haveano seguito [. . .] nondimeno perche non v'erano libere le ringhiere et dire non si potea in opposito et solo si comandava a certi che parlassino et non ad altri [. . .] In effetto con l'amici et partigiani suoi ristrinse a riformare lo stato in maniera, che lui capo ne fusse et sotto l'ombra et mantello di frate Jeronimo la maggior parte del popolo disposta a sua devotione tenesse et a cagione, che i suoi disegni et le sue imprese guaste da altri accorti cittadini non li fussino et contradette in el consiglio grande le provisioni, tale ordine tenea . . . Cosi da uno vivere popolare et libero sotto coverta di bene a un vivere partigiano si venne [. . .]' Parenti (1994), 155–7.

[75] 'Fucci tirato con favore della parte del frate, della quale fu assolutamente fatto capo; e però attese in questo magistrato favorirlo quanto più poteva, insino a cacciare di Firenze molti predicatori dell' ordine di San Francesco e' quali apertamente gli contradicevano.' Guicciardini (1931), 130.

[76] 'Intromessi alla Signoria, el gonfaloniere della justitia Francesco Valori, capo et si puo dire guidatore di tutta la Signoria, subito proruppe in altiere et vituperose parole contro di detti frati, minacciandoli che fino a di fame morire li farebbe insieme con l'altri del convento, sicome huomini seditiosi, tristi e di cattivo exemplo. Et senza lasciarli alcuna cosa rispondere dell' audienza li caccio.' Parenti (1994), 58.

attention to Valori's connections to a powerful republican movement. By late 1496, Savonarola had become an outspoken critic of the previous Medici regime and by 1497–98 the Savonarolan movement had become synonymous with a millenarian brand of republicanism.[77] Even as late as the 1520s, when Machiavelli was writing, Medici authorities fearful of republican dissent were suppressing Savonarolan confraternities.[78]

Savonarola's later attacks on Medici tyranny alone, however, do not fully explain Machiavelli's important omission. As Roslyn Cooper pointed out, the sixteenth-century Medici did not reject former leaders of the Savonarolan movement, such as Iacopo Salviati. They mistrusted first and foremost Soderini's supporters. As a shrewd eye-witness to the events of those years, Machiavelli must have recognized what Savonarolan scholarship has only recently begun to appreciate: that Savonarola was only briefly pushed into an anti-Medicean position, that he owed his Florentine career to Medici patronage, and that the Savonarolan party protected the Medici faction from excessive reprisals between 1494–96.

Savonarola himself was a former Medici client and assisted Medici supporters immediately preceding and following the family's expulsion in November 1494.[79] Between 1492–94, Savonarola never publicly criticized Piero de' Medici, even in the aftermath of Piero's expulsion.[80] Second in importance to the constitutional realignment of the city was the question of how to treat members of the defeated regime. Many of the recently returned exiles expected the persecution of Medici followers and collaborators, especially those who had supported Piero up to November 1494. However, no persecution of Medicean *ottimati* took place, in part owing to Savonarola's intervention.[81] Central politicians of the new republic such as Valori felt that the presence of erstwhile Medici supporters would help to offset the power of the *ottimati* who had been excluded from government throughout the entire Medicean Quattrocento. According to Guicciardini, the initial tolerance

[77] Savonarola did not criticize Piero de' Medici in the aftermath of November 1494. Savonarola's treatise on the constitution of Florence, in which he does inveigh against the Medici, was commissioned by a *piagnoni*-dominated Signoria in 1498. See Polizzotto (1993), 343.

[78] Polizzotto (1985), 258–82.

[79] Polizzotto (1993), 334–6; Weinstein (1970), 185–226; Trexler (1980), 448–50; Trexler, (1978), 293–308; and Alison Brown (1998).

[80] Polizzotto (1993), 343.

[81] Savonarola (1965), 426–8 and (1969–74), 8–15 and 108. See also Polizzotto (1994), 13.

of Mediceans would not have been possible without Savonarola, who used his public influence to persuade Florentines to forgive past offences, what Lauro Martines has called Savonarola's 'peace-and-pardon campaign'.[82] In his first political sermon of 14 December, Savonarola called for universal peace, of which the Mediceans were the main beneficiaries, and an amnesty between citizens of the old and new regimes.[83]

The consequent amnesty of 19 March 1495 bound together Medici supporters and Savonarolans, and began an alliance that lasted until 1497. Many former Mediceans became part of the Savonarolan party.[84] There were even rumours circulating in 1494 that Savonarola was colluding with the exiled Piero de' Medici and storing Medici valuables in San Marco.[85] Parenti recorded complaints that the *bigi*, as the Medici faction was named, were being called in May 1495 to *pratiche* and thereby regaining political power. In 1496, similar complaints were made: Piero de' Medici's supporters, with Savonarola's assistance in the form of preaching for peace and unity, were almost more successful in elections than supporters of the new republic.[86]

Savonarola's earlier Medicean ties and the initial assistance the Savonarolans gave to Mediceans during the first years of the new republic could have provided Machiavelli with a way to discuss Francesco's *piagnone* sympathies without alienating his Medici audience. But again, Machiavelli must have recognized what current scholarship has only recently begun to appreciate: that the coincidence of interests between Savonarolans and *bigi* ended after Valori emerged as one of the political leaders of the Savonarolan party. From his appointment as an *accoppiatore* of the new republic until his assassination in 1498, Valori consistently and vociferously opposed the committed Medicean faction that hoped for a restoration; a large part of the effectiveness with which

[82] Martines (2006), 141.

[83] 'Erano nella città molti che arebbono voluto percuotere Bernardo del Nero, Niccolò Ridolfi, Pierfilippo, messer Agnolo, Lorenzo Tornabuoni, Iacopo Salviati e gli altri cittadini dello stato vecchio; alla quale cosa si opponevano molti uomini da bene, massime Piero Capponi e Francesco Valori, parte mossi dal bene publico perchè in verità si sarebbe guasta la città, parte dal privato loro [. . .] E nondimeno, benchè e' favorissino una cosa giusta e ragionevole, e la autorità loro fussi allora grandissima, sarebbe stato quasi impossibile avessino tenuta questa piena, sendo cosa procurata da tanti inimici dello stato vecchio e grata al popolo, a chi piacciono tutte le novità e travagli, quando venne uno aiuto non pensato, da fra Girolamo [. . .]' Guicciardini (1931), 107–8; Rubinstein (1960), 165.

[84] Polizzotto (1994), 13–19.

[85] Polizzotto (1993), 344.

[86] Rubinstein (1960), 160.

Valori opposed the Medici faction came from his leadership of the Savonarolan party.

In January 1497, supported by the Savonarolans when their political influence was at its greatest, Valori was appointed *gonfaloniere di giustizia*. Although he faithfully pursued Savonarolan moral reforms, such as laws against gambling, prostitution, and sodomy, he began an attack on pro-Mediceans.[87] Guicciardini reported that Valori first struck at the Medici by proposing harsh laws that called back from Rome all Florentine priests and courtiers from the court of Cardinal Giulio de' Medici and that prohibited commerce with the Medici.[88] He then turned on the *bigi* by purging 'new men', many of whom were suspected of Medici sympathies, from the Great Council.[89]

Bartolomeo Cerretani reported an incident in which Valori played a publicly recognized role defending the city against an assault by Piero de' Medici. Two months after Valori's tenure as *gonfaloniere*, in April 1497, Piero de' Medici departed Siena with three thousand soldiers, gathering cavalry as he approached Florence. Piero reached the city but was unable to breach the walls. Valori played an instrumental role in ensuring that Piero's raid did not turn into a Medici uprising. On his advice, all known Medici friends and supporters were called to a *pratica* and held under guard until Piero had retreated from the city walls.[90]

[87] Ridolfi (1952), I: 272.

[88] 'Partito lo imperadore, fu di poi creato per calendi di gennaio gonfaloniere di giustizia Francesco Valori, benchè forse dua mesi innanzi non avessi vinto lo uficio de' dieci [. . .] Fucci tirato con favore della parte del frate, della quale fu assolutamente fatto capo [. . .] E perchè le cose de' Medici erano in modo transcorse, che fuori se ne parlava con grandissima licenzia, e così molti preti e cortigiani fiorentini erano iti a stare a Roma col cardinale de' Medici, ordinò legge asprissime, revocandogli e proibendo e' commerzi con loro [. . .]' Guicciardini (1931), 130–1. Parenti described Valori's activity slightly differently. 'Di qui reputatione al frate et a lui grande nacque, benche non senza grandissimo odio di molti cittadini et meglio fortificarsi et armarsi contro alla parte a lui opposita, vedendo ristrignere alquanti cittadini et mandare a Roma al cardinale de Medici, dubitando che non si tenesse qualche pratica segreta del farci ritornare Piero, accio per tal via lui abbattuto rimanesse. Creo una provisione et vincere la fece, per la quale dal cardinale et da Piero et da Giuliano sotto la pena di ribello si rimovessino qualunche cittadino fiorentino o del contado li corteggiasse o con loro habitasse. Obligo etiam a tal pena e padri o fratelli di quelli tali, e quali non ubidissino, con certa pero limitatione.' Parenti (1994), 55–6.

[89] Cooper (1985), 77–8.

[90] 'E la causa del non romoreggiare la ciptà fu che la mattina a buon'ora in sul dì per consiglio di Francesco Valori fu richiesti tutti gl'amici de' Medici e sospecti a una praticha, benchè ve ne mescholassino qualchuno altro, et tenuti insino che Piero de' Medici si partì, [. . .]' Cerretani (1994), 234–5.

Machiavelli concluded his sketch of Valori with the statement that the laws of the free republic must be attributed to Valori's courage and resolution. This brief statement obscures Valori's infamous and prominent role in the discovery of a conspiracy within the city's walls to restore Piero de' Medici to power, which culminated in the arrest and execution of five of the city's most prominent men. Every Florentine historian of these years devoted considerable detail to the Medici conspiracy of 1497, which exacerbated the already loaded factional tensions within the city. Valori played a key role in each stage of the investigation and, in the eyes of several observers (including Machiavelli's friend Guicciardini), engineered the suspension of an appeal law to destroy his political enemies. Even within the Savonarolan party, many members criticized Valori's role in the executions.[91] Lorenzo Polizzotto and Sergio Bertelli have both concluded that Valori's role in the execution of the five conspirators transformed the slowly diverging paths of the Savonarolans and Mediceans into an unbridgeable chasm.[92]

After Piero's failed attempt to return to Florence in 1497, the Signoria instructed the *Otto di guardia* to monitor Piero's movements. In particular, the Signoria instructed Francesco Valori and Tommaso Tosinghi, respectively members of the *Otto* and *Dieci* at the time, to investigate and unravel the details of the recent plot.[93] Their investigation resulted in the arrest on 4 August of Lamberto dell' Antella, who claimed to have been in contact with Valori as early as January 1497 and who was interrogated by Valori and the remaining members of the *Otto*.[94] Lamberto revealed all the details of the future conspiracy, which led to

[91] '[. . .] dico che, sendo quest' anno Alamanno Salviati, Alexandro Nasi mal contenti di Francesco Valori, credo per le cose seguite d'agosto, et parlando di lui molto male [. . .]' Villari (1861), II: cclxxxii.

[92] Polizzotto (1994), 48 and (1993), 345; Bertelli (1972), 57.

[93] Villari (1861), II: 16.

[94] 'Permise, che per certo case fusse preso dal magistrato degli otto uno Lamberto di Giovanni dell' Antella, il quale essendo ribello si stava tra Roma e Siena [. . .] Il che essendo presentito per certi indizi da Francesco Valori, uno dell' ufficio de' dieci, e da Tommaso Tosinghi, che sedeva degli otto, i quali particolarmente osservavano gli andamenti di quello, fu per loro ordine nella sua propria villa fatto prigione; e condotto in Firenze, fu esaminato dal magistrato de' dieci e degli otto, e così fu data notizia del caso alla signoria, essendo gonfaloniere Domenico Bartoli uomo mansueto.' Nardi (1838–41), 14. '[. . .] che la verità è che io sono venuto solo per fare in favore e bene per questo Stato, e per fare contro a Piero de' Medici; sperando per l'opere mie da questa Signoria trovare grazia [. . .] E che e' sia vero, vedete che per insino, credo, del mese di gennaio passato, cominciai a scrivere a Francesco Valori, sendo gonfalonieri, e contro alla casa de' Medici [. . .]' Villari (1861), II: xi.

the arrest of Bernardo del Nero, Giannozzo Pucci, Lorenzo Tornabuoni, Niccolò Ridolfi, and Giovanni Cambi.

The basic plan as told by Lamberto involved the five *ottimati* secretly bringing Piero into the city, gaining access to the Signoria and restoring him to power, after winning over the people by distributing free grain.[95] According to Lamberto, Piero de' Medici and the plotters envisioned a bloodbath for their special enemies. Lamberto repeatedly stated in the trial records of the *Otto* that he overheard the plotters boast that the executions after the Pazzi conspiracy in 1478 and the exiles enforced after Cosimo's return in 1434 would appear trivial compared to the vengeance they had planned. Among the special enemies, of course, was the house of Valori.[96] Iacopo Nardi confirmed this in his history, writing that Piero would destroy to the foundations the houses of their enemies, in particular the Valori, Strozzi, Nerli, and Giugni.

The conspiracy seems to have genuinely frightened the city and its magistrates. Piero Parenti, no admirer of Valori, described the conspirators as ambitious, cruel, and greedy men, especially Bernardo del Nero.[97] Iacopo Nardi reported that the results of Lamberto's interrogation, conducted in accordance with the law, caused agitation and fear throughout the entire city, especially for those who had participated in the expulsion of the Medici.[98] The lawyer who defended the five conspirators, however, with access to more information than Parenti or Nardi, saw things differently. One of the four or five most

[95] '[. . .] e per forza o per amore avendo ottenuto il palagio, con consentimento della signoria si facesse il detto Piero signore assoluto della città, facendoli promettere ubbidienza dal detto popolo [. . .]' Nardi (1838–41), 118; see also Martines (1968), 441–8.

[96] 'E sappiate che uno di loro, non voglio per ora nominarlo, ma più volte gli ho udito dire, che il ritorno loro, alle uccisioni degli uomini, el 78 non fu nulla: e lo esilio de' confini, fu una piccola favilla di fuoco quello del 34, che fè il bisavolo suo, rispetto a quello che, se e' ritornono, faranno loro. Prima se e' tornassi per forza, fa pensiero spianare queste case [. . .] La prima e' Nerli tutti, e' Capponi la maggior parte, e' Nasi ancora buona parte, e' Gualterotti, e' Bardi, Pagolantonio Soderini e 'l figluolo, e' Giugni tutti, e' Corsi tutti, e' Rucellai parte, gli Scarfi, e' Valori, e' Pazzi, e' degli Albizi qualcuno, e moltissimi altri spicciolati, e maxime Girolamo Martelli [. . .]' Villari (1861), II: viii.

[97] '. . . si rispecto alle loro qualita in odio a gran parte de buoni cittadini. Imperoche Bernardo del Nero, homo crudelissimo si reputava, inoltre ambitiosissimo . . . ' Parenti (1994), 208–9.

[98] '[. . .] fatte che furono l'esamine, e formati i processi secondo l'ordine della giustizia, udendosi la cosa di fuora per il popolo, per la grandezza del pericolo universale, ne rimase spaventata tutta la città, e massimamente quei cittadini, che con le fresche opere loro nella espulsione della casa de' Medici sapevano d'aver rinnovato la memoria dell'ingiurie vecchie.' Nardi (1838–41), 115–16.

authoritative lawyers in Florence, Guidantonio Vespucci saw no clear danger to the republic, a regime whose most novel feature, the Great Council, Vespucci disliked and did not support.[99]

The controversy escalated after the conspirators insisted on their right of appeal, citing a fundamental law of 1494 that had been strongly supported by Savonarola and his followers. The law declared that people sentenced to death were entitled to appeal the verdict to the Great Council.[100] As Parenti noted, the context was capable of multiple interpretations, and thus engendered a great debate.[101] The accused were entitled by law to an appeal, but the Signoria was also entitled to disallow the appeal if delay in executing the sentence jeopardized public security.[102] Nerli and Cerretani both noticed the hypocrisy of the Savonarolans, who pushed for the suspension of a law they had initially and strongly supported. Nerli recorded that the conspirators were entitled to an appeal by the recent law that Savonarola had so ardently endorsed in his sermons, and remarked that Valori vigorously opposed the appeal even though he had supported the law only a few months earlier.[103]

Machiavelli knew that the Savonarolans had lobbied for the law establishing the right to appeal. In the forty-fifth chapter of the first

[99] Martines did concede that Vespucci expressed a minority opinion and that he acknowledged some issues of state emergency. Martines (1968), 441–8.

[100] For the details of the 'law of six beans', as the appeal law was called, see Gherardi (1887), 108–12.

[101] 'Ma qui grandissima disputa nacque, se havere o no dovessino tale appello. La legge sopra di cio disponente variamente secondo le vogle s'interpretava.' Parenti (1994), 208.

[102] '[. . .] furono consigliati i prigioni che da tal sentenza appellassero al consiglio grande, secondo che concedeva la legge, e così fu fatto. Il che avendo inteso il popolo, ne prese grande alterazione e molto maggior paura, considerando che per favore della gran parentela ch' essi si tiravan dietro, non era cosa molto difficile che, appellando, fussero dal consiglio liberati, e massimamente perchè, eziando di fuora, a Roma e Milano, e insino alla corte di Francia, da gli amici e parenti si faceva gran procaccio dello scampo loro [. . .] che quando la signoria avesse voluto ammettere tale appellazione, essi erano disposti a farle resistenza con la forza e con l'armi [. . .]' Nardi (1838–41), 115–16.

[103] 'Quest esecuzione ebbe nel deliberarsi molte difficultà, perchè i cinque condannati nella vita, secondo la legge fatto molto di fresco dell' appello delle sei fave tanto predicata e favorita dal Frate, al consiglio grande s' appellarono, al quale appello il Valori, Carlo Strozzi, i Frateschi e la maggior parte de' più caldi di quella setta molto vivamente s'opposero, non ostantechè di pochi mesi innanzi il Frate, il Valori e la loro parte tutta a questo insieme unita avessero molto favorita quella legge, come manifestamente, quanto al Frate, si può in molti luoghi, leggendo le sue prediche, vedere [. . .]' Nerli (1859), 119–20. 'E cimque primi vistisi im pericolo di mortte chiesono l'apello al consiglio grande, per virtù della leggie fe' fare frate Girolamo, speranddo per aiuto de' parenti et amici campare [. . .]' Cerretani (1994), 235–40.

book of the *Discorsi*, Machiavelli criticized Savonarola for failing to observe his own laws. Machiavelli records that the friar had lobbied for the appeal law for a long time and with great difficulty. But the failure of the *piagnoni*-dominated Signoria to allow the appeal of the five conspirators, according to Machiavelli, did more to undermine Savonarola's influence than any other event (including, evidently, the trial by fire). Particularly damaging also was Savonarola's silence about the subsequent executions; he neither condemned nor defended Valori and the priors, which Machiavelli saw as evidence of Savonarola's ambitious and partisan nature.[104]

The Signoria convened a *pratica* to consider the rights of the accused. Open enemies of the Medici and supporters of the current regime united together. According to Guicciardini they appointed Valori as their leader, who vigorously argued for and obtained the suspension of the appeal law in an almost unanimous decision.[105] Lauro Martines, however, has challenged the integrity of the unanimous decision. He points out that the appeals of the accused should have been immediately processed as the law required. The government, dominated by supporters of the new regime, instead convened the special commission that produced the unanimous verdict. Consulted in an atmosphere of intimidation, members of the *pratica* were asked individually to vote on

[104] 'Essendo Firenze, dopo al 94, stata riordinata nello stato suo con lo aiuto di frate Girolamo Savonarola [. . .] ed avendo, intra le altre costituzioni per assicurare I cittadini, fatto fare una legge, che si potesse appellare al Popolo dalle sentenzie che, per casi di stato, gli Otto e la Signoria dessono; la quale legge persuase più tempo, e con difficultà grandissima ottenne; occorse che, poco dopo la confermazione d'essa, furono condannati a morte dalla Signoria, per conto di stato, cinque cittadini; e volendo quegli appellare, non furono lasciati, e non fu osservata la legge. Il che tolse più riputazione a quel frate, che alcuno altro accidente [. . .] E tanto più fu notato questo accidente, quanto che il frate, in tante predicazioni che fece poi che fu rotta questa legge, non mai o dannò chi l'aveva rotta, o lo scusò; come quello che dannare non la voleva, come cosa che gli tornava a proposito, e scusare non la poteva. Il che avendo scoperto l'animo suo ambizioso e partigiano, gli tolse riputazione, e dettegli assai carico.' Machiavelli (1971), 127.

[105] 'Da altro canto, tutti quegli che si erano pe' tempi passati scoperti inimici de' Medici, eccetti e' Nerli, avendo paura grande della ritornata loro, tutti quegli a chi piaceva el vivere populare ed el presente governo, uniti in grandissimo numero volevano tôrre loro la vita. Di questi era fatto capo Francesco Valori el quale, o perchè si vedessi battezzato inimico a' Medici, o perchè volessi mantenere el consiglio nel quale gli pareva essere capo della città [. . .] vivamente gli perseguitava [. . .] lo effetto di questa pratica fu che quasi per tutti unitamente si conchiuse che e' fussi tagliato loro el capo [. . .] Capi di questa risoluzione erano Francesco Valori, capo di tutti, Guglielmo de' Pazzi, messer Francesco Gualterotti, messer Luca e Piero Corsini, Lorenzo Morelli, Pierfrancesco e Tommaso Tosinghi, Bernardo Nasi, Antonio Canigiani, Luca d'Antonio degli Albizzi, Carlo Strozzi [. . .]' Guicciardini (1931), 140–1.

the appeal. The members were watched as their replies, given *viva voce*, were recorded. In spite of any ambiguities in legal context, Martines' study concluded that disallowing the appeal violated the law.[106]

Valori not only helped ensure that the *pratica* would recommend immediate execution; he also intimidated the Signoria to reverse their decision to allow the appeal. The Signoria had to approve the *pratica*'s recommendation before carrying out the sentences. Guicciardini reported that five priors openly voted down the *pratica*'s recommendation. After vain attempts to persuade the priors, Valori rose furiously from his seat and declared that either he or the conspirators would die, using his influence and authority to provoke such a tumult that many members of the *pratica* began to abuse and menace the Signoria. In particular, Carlo Strozzi (whose house was also on the Medici hitlist targeted for systematic destruction upon their return) threatened to defenestrate Piero Guicciardini. The subsequent vote of the Signoria, carried out without the presence of the defence lawyers, then endorsed the *pratica*'s call for immediate execution.[107] Not only did Valori successfully suspend the appeal; he also engineered a show of force to prevent a rescue mission by the conspirators' family and friends. He posted Giovanni della Vecchia, the constable of the Signoria, on guard and deployed 300 soldiers to

[106] Martines (1968), 441–4. Martines' account is based on the chronicles of Parenti, Cerretani, Nardi, as well as the *Consulte e pratiche*. The register from the *Otto di guardia* which contained deliberations from this case is missing. Parenti and Cerretani confirm Martines' description. 'Et per piu unitamente in questa causa procedere, accio nessuno poi scusare si potessi, richiesti a uno a uno e cittadini ragunati di sententia, publico notaio in publica forma nota ne facea.' Parenti (1994), 208. 'Ultimamente Francesco Valori, capo de' frateschi, havenddo statuito che morissino ordinò cogl'amici sua signori et de' colegi et otto che si fece una praticha di 200 ciptadini, tutti inimici loro o la maggiore partte et amici de frateschi [. . .]' Cerretani (1994), 235–40.

[107] 'E finalmente faccendo la pratica questa conclusione, ed essendo più volte proposta nella signoria da Luca Martini che era proposto, vi erano solo quattro fave nere, quella del gonfaloniere, di Luca di Tommaso, di Niccolò Giovanni e di Francesco Girolami; gli altri cinque, che erano Piero Guicciardini, Piero d'Antonio di Taddeo, Niccolò Zati, Michele Berti e Bernardo Neretti, apertamente la contradivano. Per la qual cosa non si vincendo, poi che nella pratica furono dette, e senza frutto alcuno, molte parole perchè la signoria vi concoressi, in ultimo Francesco Valori levatosi furiosamente da sedere, e dicendo che o morrebbe egli o morrebbero loro, concitò con la autorità sua tanto tumulto, che molti, inanimiti, cominciorono a svillaneggiare e minacciare la signoria; fra' quali Carlo Strozzi prese pella veste Piero Guicciardini e minacciollo di gittare a terra dalle finestre, perchè gli pareva che essendo Piero di più autorità che alcuno de' compagni, rimosso lui, la cosa fussi fatta. Veduto adunque tanto tumulto, di nuovo si cimentò el partito e si vinse con sei fave nere; perchè Niccolò Zati ed uno degli artefici, o impauriti di loro propri, o dubitando non si facessi qualche maggiore disordine, calorono.' Guicciardini (1931), 141–2; for the absence of defence lawyers, see Martines (1968), 444.

guard the streets that opened into the piazza.[108] The five conspirators were beheaded that night, although appeals had been granted to those of lesser rank, such as Filippo Corbizzi, Giovanni Benizzi, and others.[109]

In Guicciardini's interpretation of the events of August 1497, Valori exploited Bernardo del Nero's legal vulnerability more to destroy a political rival than to pursue justice. After Valori's election as *gonfaloniere*, Savonarola's enemies began to support Bernardo del Nero, judged to be the only man left of sufficient authority (after Piero Capponi's death) to oppose Valori. To Guicciardini's explanation, Nerli adds that Savonarola's enemies lent support to del Nero to prevent Andrea Cambini, a man entirely under Valori's sway, from becoming *gonfaloniere*.[110] Del Nero's election as *gonfaloniere* followed Valori's; recognizing each other as leaders of rival parties, a great hatred was born between them.[111] Guicciardini, himself a lawyer, concluded that del Nero's guilt was minor and that he would have been pardoned had it not been for Valori's excessive hatred of him. He attributed the

[108] 'Seghuenddo im questa forma Francesco Valori, capo della parte, havendo facto condurre a la guardia della piazza Giovanni della Vecchia conestavole della signoria più giorni avantti con 300 fantti, cosa odiosa a l'università, la nocte gli fe' pigliare le bochche della piazza et guardarlle acciò che tumultto o di parentti o amici non nacessi; [. . .]' Cerretani (1994), 238–9. Parenti and Guicciardini confirm Cerretani. 'Francesco Valori inpie si levo et ito a piedi della Signoria con uno bossolo in mano (da partiti) forte picchio sul desco loro davanti dicendo, che justitia si observassi, altrimenti scandolo seguirebbe. Erasi commessa la guardia del palagio la nocte a (piu che) XX giovani armati. Medesimamente la guardia della piazza tutta armata era ad ordine, se adoperare si bisognassi [. . .]' Parenti (1994), 211. Guicciardini confirms the presence of an infantry detachment, though without mentioning Valori. 'Così confermato per questo severo giudicio el vivere populare, fu messo per sicurtà dello stato alla piazza de' Signori una guardia di fanterie, la quale vi stette di poi insino a' casi del frate.' Guicciardini (1931), 145.

[109] '[. . .] e così sendo, el dì sequente, giudicati per partito della signoria, e per comandamento loro, dagli otto, fu dimandato da' congiunti loro l'appello, secondo la legge fatta nel 94, ed osservato in Filippo Corbizzi, Giovanni Benizzi e gli altri.' Guicciardini (1931), 141.

[110] 'Venedosi dunque, secondo l'ordine alla fine di febbraio all' elezione della nuova Signoria, ebbero tanta paura i nemici del Frate e i Compagnacci, che non venisse fatto Gonfaloniere Anton Canigiani, uomo tutto Fratesco, e tutto del Valori, che si gettarono unitamente tutti a favorire senza alcun rispetto Bernardo del Nero, uomo tutto de' Medici e molto riputato nella parte de' Bigi [. . .]' Nerli (1856), 116.

[111] '[. . .] gli inimici del frate non avendo un capo di tanta autorità da opporgli, poi che era morto Piero Capponi, voltorono el favore a Bernardo del Nero, el quale benchè fussi dello stato vecchio, era già stato fatto de' dieci e ritornato in riputazione, ed era vecchio con credito grandissimo di essere savio e di tanta pratica ed autorità, che in Firenze non pareva altro uomo da opporre a Francesco Valori; e lo creorono in scambio di Francesco, gonfaloniere di giustizia; e così sendo già battezzatto capo della altra parte, nacque fra Francesco e lui emulazione ed odio grandissimo.' Guicciardini (1931), 131.

particular ferocity of Valori's denial of the appeal to Valori's legitimate suspicion that del Nero would be pardoned. Backed by the Savonarolans and having secured the execution of the only man deemed capable of challenging his authority, Valori remained absolute head of the city until his death.[112]

Finally, the details of Valori's death indicate the degree to which Mediceans and *arrabbiati* blamed Valori personally, and not the members of the Signoria formally responsible, for the deaths of the Medici conspirators. After the debacle of the trial by fire, an angry mob besieged San Marco and the Savonarolan leaders were rounded up, arrested, and interrogated. Only Savonarola and his two closest Dominican followers, Domenico da Pescia and Silvestro Maruffi, were condemned to death by the Signoria. After a brief period of disgrace, most Savonarolan *ottimati* continued to play prominent roles in the Florentine political world. Francesco Valori, however, was assassinated by members of the house of Ridolfi and Tornabuoni, relatives of the recently executed conspirators, while being marched under armed guard to the Signoria. The assassins and an angry mob then went on to sack Valori's house, where they slew his wife and smothered his young nephew.[113]

From this interpretation of Machiavelli's sketches of Francesco Valori, several conclusions emerge.

The relationship between Machiavelli and the Valori family was more elaborate and subtle than simply an immediate friendship with Niccolò. Machiavelli saw himself as affected by the memory and republican 'myth of the Valori', based on Francesco's 'martyrdom' for the republic. Machiavelli also perceived a connection between his own political standing in Florence of the 1520s and the standing of the *setta Valoriana* that had formed around Francesco and that were, like Machiavelli, well-known supporters of Piero Soderini.

Machiavelli's attempt to regain the patronage of the Medici and to return to Florentine political life involved more than dedicating and presenting literary works to the Medici. It also involved rewriting

[112] '[. . .] nondimeno fu sì piccolo lo errore suo, che a ogni modo sarebbe campato, se non fussi suto lo odio in che si trovava con Francesco Valori, ed el desiderio che Francesco aveva levarsi dinanzi questo concorrente. Di qui nacque che Francesco sì immoderatamente dissuase lo appello, dubitando che la grazia sua e la fede soleva avere col popolo non fussi tanta che, aggiunta allo errore piccolo, lo facessi assolvere [. . .] E così, fatto questo giudicio e morto Bernardo del Nero, Francesco Valori rimase assolutamente capo della città insino alla morte sua, avendo seguito massime da tutta la parte del frate in genere [. . .]' Guicciardini (1931), 144–5.

[113] Villari (1861), II: 168.

aspects of Florentine history that were politically awkward for him and his immediate circle. His later sketch of Francesco Valori did not fulfill its task of presenting information available in the extant historical narratives. Quite the contrary, Machiavelli's sketch distorted and recast contemporary judgements of Valori. The only documents that corroborate Machiavelli's sketch were eulogies of Francesco, written by his nephew and designed to rehabilitate the memory of Francesco to the Medici. Machiavelli seems in this case to have subordinated historical objectivity to contemporary political context; the purpose of the Valori sketch was to obscure Machiavelli's connections to the *setta Valoriana* that had ardently supported the Soderini regime. Machiavelli and Niccolò Valori both faced the problem of political survival under the Medici and they both sought solutions to that problem in the reconstruction of Florentine history.

Finally, we have seen that aftershocks of Francesco's tumultuous life, his severing of ties with the Medici and enthusiastic embrace of the Savonarolan party, involved many other people, were recognized by many other people, and endured well into the sixteenth century, a point little appreciated in Florentine historiography. As a result of his tough and aggressive style of politics, the memory of Francesco's identity became politicized, a loaded term for allies and opponents alike that conjured up memories of harsh factional conflict. Niccolò Valori and Machiavelli both had to deal with their former connections to Francesco to present themselves to the triumphant Medici. Whereas Niccolò Valori solved this problem by writing about everyone in his family except for Francesco, Machiavelli solved the problem by reinventing Francesco's career and identity, recasting him from a anti-Medicean Savonarolan stalwart into a patriotic political conservative.

4

The Valori Family and Luca Della Robbia's *Vita di Bartolomeo*

We have seen already that the Valori family's ties to Marsilio Ficino and their commitment to neo-Platonic philosophy grew in the late fifteenth century, even in the face of opposition and criticism from within the Savonarolan faction. The works either written or commissioned by the Valori, Niccolò in particular, all suggest that the family prized Ficino's neo-Platonism and the family's association with it. They also show that the family continued to emphasize the connection between political virtue and the study of neo-Platonic philosophy after the return of the Medici. Indeed, through Niccolò's *Vita di Lorenzo*, they attempted to persuade the Medici of their fidelity through precisely such an argument.

This chapter examines the parallel question of the Savonarolan legacy for the Valori family, examining their connections to Savonarolan circles and literary composition after the restoration of the Medici. In particular, it examines the relationship between the Valori and Luca Della Robbia, who wrote a biography of Bartolomeo *il vecchio* Valori (*gonfaloniere di giustizia* in 1402). Della Robbia's intellectual and political connections, much like the Valori's, overlapped between Savonarolan and Ficinian groups. Della Robbia was a committed Savonarolan whose biography of Bartolomeo Valori defended the political implications of Savonarolan convictions, much as Niccolò Valori's biography of Lorenzo had done for neo-Platonism. In addition, again much like Niccolò's *Vita*, the biography helped reconcile the Valori family to the recently restored Medici, positing a lasting family tradition of public service, consistently rising above factional politics out of concern for a Savonarolan and Ficinian vision of concord and consensus. Republican politics and restored Medici power are as evident in Della Robbia's biography as they were in Machiavelli's sketches of Francesco Valori and in Niccolò Valori's *Vita di Lorenzo*.

Luca Della Robbia came from a relatively prosperous and culturally prominent family. Luca was the nephew of Marco Della Robbia, brother of the more famous ceramicist Luca Della Robbia. His family belonged to the wool guild and had a workshop on Via del Palagio, and several members served terms as consuls of the guild. Another Della Robbia, Luca di Andrea, was also an accomplished sculptor, working on various commissions at the Vatican.[1]

Della Robbia inclined more towards literary than sculptural activity. He became a prominent humanist, after studying at the school of Benedetto Riccardini, known as the 'philologist'. From Riccardini's school, Luca went on to study with Ficino's pupil and the sixteenth-century heir of Florentine neo-Platonism, Francesco da Diacceto. He received a translation of the correspondence between Petrarch and Boccaccio from Taddeo Ugolini.[2] At twenty-three, Della Robbia began a prolific relationship with the Florentine Giunti press. He first published an edited and corrected edition of Quintus Curtius Rufus' history, dedicated to Alessandro Acciaiuoli. Six years later, in 1513, he published another edition of Cicero's *Opere Morali*, dedicated to Pierfrancesco de' Medici. In 1508, at the behest and funding of Niccolò Valori, Della Robbia edited the *Commentaries of Caesar*, as well as Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, dedicated to the Savonarolan and former pupil of Ficino, Girolamo Benivieni. In 1514 Della Robbia turned to another Ciceronian work, *De Oratore*, dedicated to Lorenzo Segni.[3]

Della Robbia, as well as other members of his family, became strong supporters of Savonarola and helped propagate Savonarolism after the friar's excommunication and execution. Two of his cousins were Dominicans at San Marco during Savonarola's period of prominence there. His fidelity to the Savonarolan cause is evident in his literary community. All of the people to whom he dedicated his works or by whom his works were commissioned were *piagnoni*, many with political pasts openly hostile to the Medici: Alessandro Acciaiuoli, Girolamo Benivieni, Pierfrancesco de' Medici, Lorenzo Segni, and, of course, Niccolò Valori. The translator of Della Robbia's *Vita di Bartolomeo*, Piero della Stufa, was also part of the Valori circle and shared many

[1] On the Della Robbia in general, see Baldini (1965); Bertela (1979). On Luca in particular, see Bigazzi (1843), 235–7; manuscript copies of Della Robbia's biography are preserved in BNCF, Magliabechiano xxx.8 and BNCF, Palatino, 487; Polidori (1842), 275–81.

[2] BNCF, Magliabecchi xvi.22.

[3] Polidori (1842), 275–8.

of their friendships.[4] Although a *piagnone*, Della Robbia nevertheless managed, like many other Savonarolans, to reconcile himself to the restored Medici regime. His name also appears on a list from 1519 that established those citizens politically eligible for a seat in the Council of Seventy.[5]

Niccolò Valori and Luca Della Robbia shared common intellectual attitudes, given the patronage relationship between the two. Given their Savonarolan sympathies, it comes as no surprise that they both shared political attitudes, most clearly evident in their sympathy for the Boscoli-Capponi conspiracy.[6] It remains unclear to what extent Valori was genuinely implicated in the plot, though the Medici felt certain enough at least of his sympathy for the plotters that they had him condemned and incarcerated in Volterra for two years. The principal conspirators, Pietro Paolo Boscoli and Agostino Capponi, had been planning to assassinate Giuliano, Lorenzo, and Giulio de' Medici and had composed a list of people considered hostile to the Medici, which included both Valori's and Machiavelli's names.[7] The list was carelessly misplaced, discovered, and brought to the *Otto di guardia*, who promptly had the hapless Boscoli and Capponi arrested. They confessed to the plan and admitted that the only people they had approached were Niccolò Valori and Giovanni Folchi, both of whom, they asserted, refused to play any role in the attempted murders, though that detail failed to satisfy the Medici.[8] The historian Iacopo Nardi believed that the only reason Niccolò's life had been spared was that his nephew Bartolomeo had played an instrumental role bringing down the

[4] He was the friend, as was Baccio Valori, of Benedetto Varchi and Don Silvano Razzi. In the last days of his life, Varchi entrusted Della Stufa and Razzi with the publication of his comedy *La suocera* and his *Dialogo delle lingue*. Bigazzi (1843), 235. Razzi later wrote a biography of Varchi. BNCF, Magliabecchi xxx.11. Varchi wrote a biography of the Platonist Francesco da Diacceto that he dedicated to Baccio Valori. BNCF, Magliabecchi xxx.14: 'Vita di messer Francesco Cattani da Diaceto. Al molto magnifico e suo osservandissimo Messer Baccio Valori.'

[5] Polidori (1842), 278.

[6] On Pietro Paolo Boscoli and the conspiracy, see the two editions of Luca della Robbia's account of Boscoli's last night. Della Robbia (1843), 283–309 and (1943). For a discussion of the manuscript variants see Frazier (forthcoming). Also see Weinstein (1989), 88–104 and Trexler (1980), 198.

[7] Nardi (1858), II: 21. On Boscoli, see *DBI*, XIII: 219–21.

[8] For an account of the conspiracy, see Ridolfi (1954); on Machiavelli's possible involvement see Stephens and Butters (1982). According to Iacopo Nardi, neither Boscoli nor Capponi confessed to conspiring against the regime, though they did admit to a strong desire for liberty and for speaking imprudently about the regime. Nardi (1858), II: 25.

regime of Piero Soderini, thereby earning good favour with the Medici.[9] Although unconfirmed by Niccolò himself, Nardi's theory is eminently plausible considering the recent actions of Francesco and Niccolò Valori against the Medici. Popular perceptions about Niccolò seem to be best represented by Piero Parenti, who recorded in his history that there were three principal conspirators, Boscoli, Capponi, and Niccolò Valori.[10]

We can infer Niccolò's sympathy for the conspiracy from his entry in the family *ricordanze*. He denies having played any role in the conspiracy, though his preceding diary entry, a harshly critical account of the Medici's return to Florence, suggests that he would be favourable to any plan to bring down the Medici. Having initially promised to behave as private citizens, Niccolò writes, the Medici not much later convened and violently coerced a *parlamento*, establishing an 'impious' *balìa*—note the Savonarolan use of religious language for communal politics—that subjected the city's freedom to their will, in spite of their promise. After establishing the *balìa*, the Medici then sought out every opportunity for vengeance, banishing all those who loved liberty or who were substantial enough citizens to be leaders, surrounding themselves with a multitude of corrupt and dependent followers.[11] Niccolò confessed that he had considered abandoning Florence after the restoration of the Medici, since he wanted nothing to do with regimes that had come to power through force, but that concern for the consequences for his wife and daughters compelled him to remain.[12]

As Catherine Kovesi pointed out in her discussion of this passage in the *ricordanze*, Niccolò's general condemnation of Medici power reflects distinctly Savonarolan convictions, the same source of political inspiration that animated the bookish Pietro Paolo Boscoli. The Medici *balìa* is impious, rather than simply unconstitutional, because it dismantled the republican regime that Savonarola claimed would

[9] Nardi (1858), II: 25. [10] BNCF, MS. II. IV.171, fol. 84r.

[11] BNCF, Panciat. 134, fols. 17r–v: '[. . .]et non molto di poi dopo la fede data, i Medici feciono uno violentissimo parlamento [. . .] et feciono una balìa così inpia et fuori d'ognia promessa et così la libertà si ridusse nello arbitrio loro [. . .] et sempre ciercavano occasioni di potere vendicarsi et mandarne tutti quelli che amavano la libertà o haveano qualche substantia da potere pasciere loro et una moltitudine grandissima di falliti et malistanti haveano intorno.' On the fall of Soderini, see Cooper, (1985), 225–60. On the 1512 restoration of the Medici, see Cerretani (1993); Cambi (1785–86), II: 308–10; Nardi (1858), I: 428–30; Vettori (1972), 143–4; and discussions by Butters (1985), 167–85 and Devonshire Jones (1972), 66–76.

[12] BNCF, Panciat. 134, fol. 17v.

usher in the imminent millennium. The condemnation of the violent *parlamento* also reflects Savonarola's continued influence on Niccolò, since Savonarola had frequently from the pulpit warned Florentines against the convocation of *parlamenti*; his injunctions had also been turned into verse and engraved in the hall of the Great Council.[13]

Niccolò's account of the events surrounding the arrest and conviction of Boscoli and Capponi is detailed and generally intended to refute any guilt on his part. He asserts that the only reason his name was on the list of potential collaborators is that Boscoli and Capponi both assumed that he was one of several politically discontented *ottimati*, though they should have known that he carried the burden of responsibility for the Valori family and children and that he had had sufficient honours and offices that he was both content and inclined towards peace.[14] When Boscoli and Capponi approached Niccolò, he rejected their plans on multiple grounds: the city had grown to abhor blood and political violence, he himself had never liked violence, they were hardly men well-suited for such actions, and because the assassination of Giuliano would hardly achieve anything substantive, with Cardinal de' Medici, Lorenzo, and Giulio all capable of action.[15] Upon hearing of their plans, Niccolò relates that he revealed their plans to the archbishop of Florence, though that would hardly have been an effective way to put a stop to the conspiracy: the archbishop was Cosimo de' Pazzi, who Iacopo Nardi claims was a well-known opponent of the Medici and a relative of the Valori (Caterina de' Pazzi had married Niccolò's father, Bartolomeo).[16] In the end, however, Niccolò returns to the theme of the arbitrary and tyrannical nature of Medici power, relating that Capponi and Boscoli were beheaded and that he himself had suffered a most cruel and iniquitous judgement, after torture being condemned to

[13] See examples from Villari (1861), 312.

[14] BNCF, Panciat. 134, fol. 18r: '[. . .] in questa città carico di famiglia et maxime di fanciulle [. . .] grande benestante, et per havere havuto tanti officii et honori ch'io ne ero satio et volto tutto alla quiete.'

[15] BNCF, Panciat. 134, fol. 18r: '[. . .] et subito gli soggiunsi: Hor non sai tu quanto questa città aborrisce dal sangue, fa che mai più intenda ragioni di cose simile, prima perchè mai mi piacque la violentia, apresso perchè non erano di uomini da simile facciende, in ultimo perchè la morte di Iuliano non faceva effecto alcuno rimanendo il cardinale che poi fu papa Leone X, Lorenzo figluolo di Piero et Messer Iulio figliuolo naturale di Giuliano de' Medici, zio di Iuliano di chi si parlava. Et così si partì da me tutto quieto.'

[16] BNCF, Panciat. 134, fol. 18v: '[. . .] et di più ero ito, come Pietro Paolo si partì da me, a trovare l'arcivescovo di Firenze e pregatolo rimediassi con Pietro Paolo, che gli era amicissimo [. . .]' Nardi (1858), II: 22.

imprisonment in the dungeon of the tower of Volterra and to life exile thereafter in Città di Castello.[17]

The most compelling document indicating the Savonarolan conviction of Della Robbia is without a doubt his *Recitazione del caso di Pietro Paolo Boscoli e di Agostino Capponi*, Della Robbia's account of Boscoli's last hours.[18] Della Robbia greatly sympathized with the conspirators, and his actions on the night before Boscoli's execution suggest both that Valori was involved and that Della Robbia was a significant ally of Niccolò. Della Robbia reports that Boscoli confessed to having told his interrogators certain damaging details about Niccolò Valori that he feared would lead to Niccolò's execution. He then interceded with a certain Ser Zanobi, currently serving a term as a member of the *Otto di guardia*, the magistracy entrusted with the investigation. According to Della Robbia, he confronted Ser Zanobi and asked him to strike from the official record Boscoli's compromising confessions regarding Niccolò;[19] Ser Zanobi agreed, yet another reason why Niccolò's life was spared.

Judging from his account of Boscoli's last night, Della Robbia's sympathy for Boscoli stemmed from a shared conviction that Savonarola was a prophet and holy figure, suggesting that both Niccolò Valori and Della Robbia were part of a shared network of Savonarolans. Delio Cantimori and Roberto Ridolfi have described Boscoli as a Savonarolan, but that opinion has recently been challenged by Lorenzo Polizzotto, who has '. . . found no evidence to support the contention . . . that Boscoli was a Savonarolan'.[20]

On the contrary, there is considerable circumstantial evidence that Boscoli was *piagnone*. In Nardi's account of the conspiracy and its fallout, there are Savonarolan undertones. He recounts an exchange between Boscoli and Anton Francesco degli Albizzi, one of the investigating magistrates of the *Otto di guardia* and in private life an old friend of Boscoli's. Confronted with the instruments of torture, Boscoli turned

[17] BNCF, Panciat. 134, fol. 18v: '[. . .] Et dua ne furono decapitati cioè Pietropaolo Boscoli et Agostino Capponi. Di me si fece uno crudelissimo et iniquo iudicio che per dua anni fui confinato nel fondo della torre di Volterra et per sempre a Città di Castello.'

[18] It should be noted, however, that there is no extant autograph manuscript. For a translation of the text, along with analysis and a detailed discussion of the manuscript variants of this text as well as the *Vita di Bartolomeo*, see Frazier (forthcoming).

[19] '[. . .] Poi m'entrò nell' examina, conferendomi certe cose di Niccolò Valori, parendogli averlo morto; e commessemi ch'io dicessi a ser Zanobi che sta agli Otto, che levassi via certe parole: e così fu fatto.' Della Robbia (1842), 289.

[20] Polizzotto (1994), 238; Ridolfi (1952); Cantimori (1927), 251.

and said to his friend: 'Anton Francesco, today it is me, but tomorrow it will be you.' Nardi reports that these words were perceived by many as a certain prediction of the ill-fated future of Anton Francesco degli Albizzi.[21] Boscoli's statement implies that he viewed the restored Medici regime as other *piagnoni* did: tyrannical, arbitrary, and coercive.[22] What it will do one day to a perceived enemy, it will do the next to its own supporters. It is also telling that Boscoli, a political agitator against the Medici, makes a remark that is understood as an instance of prophecy, the central legitimating feature of Savonarola's mission in Florence.

Consider also the circumstances of Boscoli's last night and the identities of those who surround him. He is comforted by Luca Della Robbia, a well-known *piagnone*, who spends the night spiritually preparing Boscoli for death even though the Compagnia de' Neri is present, the confraternity that regularly accompanied criminals awaiting execution. In addition to Della Robbia, Boscoli asks for a Dominican confessor from the convent of San Marco, still a stronghold of Savonarolism. Della Robbia warns him that he may not be able to get a friar from San Marco, as they are under strong suspicion by the Medici and will be therefore hesitant to enter the Bargello. While they discuss the possibility of obtaining a confessor from the Badia, a certain Stefano, also present, offers to go to San Marco to see if a friar could be persuaded to comfort Boscoli.[23] To help Boscoli prepare for his fate, Della Robbia reads from passages from the 'prophet' Savonarola's first sermon on Amos that stress the finite nature of earthly life.[24] Moments later a friar arrives from San Marco, who makes explicit parallels between the fate and last days of Savonarola and Boscoli, in the ultimate effort to inspire and move Boscoli. Della Robbia urges Boscoli to recognize his sins and to have faith in God's mercy, explaining that although Boscoli did not deny Christ as Peter had done, he nevertheless denied him through ingratitude and petty sins, as most people do. Boscoli responds by explaining to Della Robbia

[21] Nardi (1858), II: 25.

[22] On the *piagnone* view of the restored Medici state, see chapter 5 of Polizzotto (1994).

[23] '[. . .] ma voi avete a intendere ch'io non so se voi potrete aver un Frate di San Marco, perchè sapete che sono assai a sospetto; sì che dubito non vorranno qua venire [. . .] E mentre disse queste parole, venne quivi Stefano miniatore, e offersesi d'andar a San Marco, e provare che lui fusse consolato.' Della Robbia (1842), 287.

[24] '[. . .] E così cominciai a leggere [. . .] e per questo il Profeta diceva: *notum fac mihi, Domine, finem meum, et numerum dierum meorum quis est*. E queste parole gli esposi secondo che espone Fra Hieronimo nella prima predica d'Amos sopra il psalmo *Dixi custodiam etc*.; ancora che sia esposizione di Sant' Agostino *super psalmos*, ma piu dal Frate facilitata [. . .]' Della Robbia (1842), 295.

that a great man such as Savonarola was capable of preparing himself for death, but that he is not able.[25] It is difficult to see how such an exchange would provide any comfort for Boscoli were he not *piagnone*.

The two conspirators were led to the city's judicial palace on 23 February 1523, where the sentence of death by decapitation was carried out. Della Robbia adds the gruesome detail that he examined Boscoli's face after the decapitation, reassured to find no trace of despair—Boscoli's expression had retained its decorum.[26]

Some weeks later, Della Robbia travels to Prato to speak regarding other matters with Fra Cipriano di Pontassieve, a San Marco friar who had joined Boscoli and Della Robbia the night before his execution. They soon turn to a discussion of Boscoli and the question of the righteousness of his cause. Fra Cipriano draws on Aquinas' distinction between licit and illicit plots. Where the people are complicit in tyrannical rule, no plots against the regime are to be condoned; however, where tyrants seize power suddenly, by force, and against the wishes of the people, dissent becomes permissible, even a duty. Della Robbia and Fra Cipriano clearly believe that Boscoli was in the latter category, for Fra Cipriano declares that he firmly believes that Boscoli is in heaven, that he did not have to pass through purgatory, and that he is without a doubt a martyr, since his intentions were so noble.[27] The two people closest to Boscoli understood his political actions as religious: his intent to overthrow the tyrannical Medici ensured his martyrdom, much as Savonarola's perceived actions against the Medici had ensured his.

The network of political connections and intellectual sympathies between the Valori, Della Robbia, and Savonarolism emerges more

[25] '[. . .] Pietro Pagolo, un valent' huomo che si trovò ancor lui nel grado che siete ora voi, fu il Savonarola. E lui: l' v' ho inteso [. . .] O Luca, questa esposizione m'è ita. Fra Hieronimo fu il grand' uomo: cotestui distingueva bene, ma io non posso far così. Et io: Non fa caso 'l distinguere; abbiate pur fede, speranza e carità [. . .]' Della Robbia (1842), 269 and 297.

[26] On this detail, see Trexler (1980), 204.

[27] '[. . .] li domandai quello gli era parso del Boscolo [. . .] Cominciò a lacrimare, e disse: Oh, se 'l fusse vivo! Ma iddio coglie e' frutti al tempo. I' non trovai mai più vigoroso ingegno [. . .] Dimandolo dell' opinione aveva dell' anima sua. Mi rispose: Io credo al fermo ch' e' sia beato, e che non abbia avuto purgatorio. E, a dirti la mia oppenione [. . .] io credo che lui sia stato martire senza dubbio alcuno, perchè trova' in lui una buona e gagliardissima intenzione: tale che io stupì . . . E quanto a quello mi dicesti la notte, ch' io gli ricordassi che le congiure non son lecite, sappi che San Tommaso fa questa distinzione: o che il tiranno i popoli s'el sono adossato; o che a forza, in un tratto, a dispetto del popolo, e' reggono. Nel primo modo, non è lecito far congiura contro al tiranno; nel secondo, è merito [. . .]' Della Robbia (1842), 309.

strongly upon consideration of the composition and content of Della Robbia's biography of Bartolomeo Valori *il vecchio*. Della Robbia's biography is a significant intellectual and political source for the history of late Renaissance Florence, shedding light on the nature of humanist biography in the sixteenth century, the impact of Savonarolism after the 1512 restoration of the Medici, and the political culture of both the period of its composition (1513) and the period it analyses, the post-Ciompi oligarchy (*c*. 1390–1430).[28]

The exact date of composition is not clear, though after 1512 appears most likely. The biography includes 'prophetic' warnings that the avarice and self-interest of the Florentine nobles would surely bring an end to the republic, which suggests a date of composition sometime after the 1512 collapse of the republic.[29] The opening paragraphs praise the principal statesmen of the early fifteenth century—Niccolò da Uzzano, Neri Capponi, and Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, 'head and founder of the great family of Medici'—as among the greatest men of the world. The original Latin text also adds a paean to Cosimo de' Medici.[30] These adulatory opening remarks further suggest a composition date after the Medici restoration of 1512, and even possible Medici readers. It is likely that the work was commissioned, or at least supported, by

[28] The biography has received relatively scant attention, owing most likely to the dominance of fifteenth-century issues in Florentine historiography, for which Della Robbia's account provides a rather distant perspective (written a century after the events it describes). For example, Gene Brucker and Dale Kent use this as if it were a direct testimony to the early years of the oligarchic regime (though Kent misdates its composition by about sixty years, confusing the author with his eponymous uncle, the more famous sculptor and ceramicist). Kent (1975), 575 and Brucker (1977), 284.

[29] '[. . .] e che questa avarizia che predomina parte de' nobili, a lungo andare non partorisca un dì la rovina della Repubblica! [. . .]' Della Robbia (1843), 252. The biography ends with an exhortation to Florentines to emulate Bartolomeo so that the republic might be restored once again. '[. . .] Questo fine ebbe il nostro Valori: la vita del quale se molti si proporranno a imitare de' cittadini che governano oggi, si potrà vedere un dì gloriosa la Repubblica fiorentina.' Della Robbia (1843), 283.

[30] '[. . .] Ed invero, chi considererà i gesti e le opere di Niccolò da Uzzano, Neri Capponi e Giovanni di Bicci, autore e capo della chiara e gran famiglia de' Medici, gli conterà agevolmente fra i primi uomini del mondo.' Della Robbia (1843), 240. The Latin text reads: 'Nam si quis Nicholai Auzanii, Nerii Capponi et Ioannis Medices, Cosmi illius potentissimi patris, pulchrae preclaraeque sobolis auctoris, cum gravitate virtutem atque modestiam consideraverit; illis mehercle primum inter mortales locum assignabit.' The shift in praise in the Latin and volgare editions from Cosimo to Giovanni is probably due to sensitivity to a Medicean audience; when Della Robbia was writing, the first line of the Medici family, Cosimo's descendants, was prominent; by the time Della Stufa was translating the work, the second line that descended from Giovanni was prominent.

Niccolò Valori, who was involved in the circulation of a variety of texts after 1512 that were all designed in some way to demonstrate that the family's intellectual and political traditions were not hostile to Medici authority. Della Robbia's earlier written works for Niccolò, their shared Savonarolan beliefs, and the subject matter of the biography all suggest a direct connection between Niccolò and Della Robbia in the composition. More telling still, Della Robbia remarks in his biography that he offers certain details on the basis of Valori family account books, which indicates that on at least one occasion, Niccolò Valori participated in the composition and furnished Della Robbia with source materials.[31]

Della Robbia's biography was a complex commentary on the present and historical role of the Valori in Florentine politics and the Savonarolan movement, and here the problematic memory of Francesco Valori loomed as large for Della Robbia as it had for Machiavelli. On the surface, the biography simply narrated the life and accomplishments of one of the central statesmen of the early Florentine republic. In the process, however, Della Robbia pursued several other objectives. First, he helped publicize and extend the family's republican identity and traditions—many of the biography's themes reiterate themes from Niccolò's passages in the family diary. Much like Niccolò's *Vita di Lorenzo*, the biography demonstrated the value of the Valori family's political credentials: it demonstrates a tradition of political pre-eminence and a commitment to Florentine civic and religious traditions dating back almost a century. The biography also implicitly defended and praised Francesco Valori by emphasizing parallels in the two men's lives and attributing to them similar political temperaments and accomplishments.

But at the broadest level, the biography defended in principle and in general the political implications of Savonarolan conviction and

[31] '[. . .] ma solamente diremo di Taldo, che essendo compagno della maggiore ragione che facesse mai la nazion fiorentina (di quella, dico, de' Bardi in Inghilterra), e perciò venuto così ricco, che, come si vede a' libri della ragione, potè prestare di suo ben trenta mila ducati al Re [. . .]' and '[. . .] per commuovere il popolo contro di lui, parlò in questa sentenza, come si vede a un libro di varie sue memorie . . .' Della Robbia (1843), 242 and 272. If Della Robbia did indeed consult such a book, it must be now lost. In his *Storia degli scrittori fiorentini*, Negri also mentions a ricordanza kept by Bartolomeo. The *ricordanza* in the BNCF also mentions a private diary kept by Francesco *il vecchio* Valori, though that too seems to be lost, or was possibly destroyed by the Valori. BNCF, Panciat. 134, fol. 14r: 'Memoria sia come havendomi qualche volta decto Cappone di Bartolomeo Capponi per conti vecchi havere da noi qualche [ducati], truovo per uno libro di Francesco Valori, decto ricordanze, [. . .]'

attempted to demonstrate that the historical Valori's political careers anticipated and were consistent with Savonarola's message, and hence implied that Bartolomeo's descendants, Francesco and Niccolò, were the natural leaders of the *piagnone* movement. By imbuing his portrait of early fifteenth-century Florence with Savonarolan vocabulary and imagery, Della Robbia implicitly portrays the Valori as examples of the friar's vision prior to his period of ascendancy, rather than merely one of many families that converted to Savonarola's cause after 1494. Both points suited the intellectual inclinations of Della Robbia and the Valori: the first was a restatement of sentiments Della Robbia had expressed in his *Recitazione del caso di Pietro Paolo Boscoli* and the latter upheld the family's *piagnone* tradition.[32]

There is clear evidence of a distinctly Savonarolan and republican reading of political events and Florentine traditions. The circumstances of the translation and dissemination of the biography further suggest its close connections to a Savonarolan circle centred around the Valori. The work was translated into Tuscan by Piero della Stufa, a humanistically inclined parish priest entrusted with the church of San Martino in the Mugello and then made a canon of the Florentine cathedral.[33] Della Stufa was closely connected to several friends of Baccio Valori, and may have been commissioned to translate the biography by Baccio himself. Passages in Latin from Della Robbia's biography are transcribed in Baccio Valori's *zibaldone*, as well as a summary in Tuscan of the Valori

[32] I am thus largely in agreement with Catherine Kovesi's interpretation of the biography in Kovesi (1987), 301–25. I agree with her point about the text reinforcing the family's private writings and that praising Francesco Valori was a key part of the text. It seems implausible, however, that the entire biography was a commentary on Francesco that had to be set a century earlier because his recent republican notoriety had made it politically unsafe to praise him directly. If Francesco's memory was too controversial or damaging to discuss in Medicean Florence, why bring him up at all? If it was possible for Della Robbia to praise Francesco's actions and defend his intentions in the biography of Bartolomeo, why not simply write a biography of Francesco? We have seen that Machiavelli had precisely the problems that Kovesi attributes to Della Robbia, compounded by the fact that Machiavelli's history had been commissioned by the Medici, and hence was under the direct scrutiny of the family most hostile to the Savonarolan tradition. The Valori were not reluctant to have a biography of Francesco published in Florence under the Medici, as their friend Silvano Razzi's later biography attests. Or consider, still later, Scipione Ammirato's collection of family biographies that he dedicated to Grand Duke Cosimo II, which includes an extended account of the careers of Francesco *il vecchio* and Niccolò Valori, the family's two most outspoken Savonarolans. See Razzi (1602), 181–98; Ammirato (1969), 97–107.

[33] Bigazzi (1843), 236.

family origins as described by Della Robbia.[34] Benedetto Varchi, a correspondent of Baccio and the subject of his biography, entrusted the editing and publication of his comedy *La suocera* and his *Dialogo delle lingue* to Silvano Razzi and Piero della Stufa.[35] Silvano Razzi was a Dominican and committed Savonarolan who wrote a *piagnone* biography of Francesco Valori.[36] That Razzi and Della Stufa were both approached by Varchi suggests that Della Stufa was most likely *piagnone*.

Bartolomeo was one of the most prominent political figures of the early fifteenth century, playing a notable role in all of the major issues besetting the Florentine republic: the major conflict with Giangaleazzo Visconti's expansionist ambitions in the peninsula, its attendant problems of relations with the Malatesta and other local *signori* over possession of strategic locations in the Romagna, the complex question of the Great Schism and its attendant problems of relations with France and the papacy, to the recurrent crucial problem of the acquisition of Pisa.[37]

He served on the Ten of War during the republic's 1389 war with Giangaleazzo Visconti, fearlessly urging his fellow patricians to resist the tyrant from the north. The battle against the expansionist Milanese state created an unprecedented escalation of the city's expenditure and a serious fiscal crisis. Of the various solutions proposed, Bartolomeo supported the most classically 'civic' solution: while various belligerent methods were proposed to force citizens to pay, Valori was one of three patricians who suggested that the priors set a patriotic example by making the first voluntary contributions towards the costs of war.[38] During the republic's conflict with Giangaleazzo in 1402, made famous by Hans Baron as the catalyst of Florentine civic humanism, Bartolomeo Valori was the Standard-Bearer of Justice. In the wake of Giangaleazzo's sudden death in 1402, Bartolomeo was an outspoken supporter of a defensive and generally pacific foreign policy: in a *pratica* of 27 November 1402, he urged the Signoria to pursue a settlement with Venice and to re-establish friendly relations with hostile towns of the *distretto*.[39] He played critical roles in several attempts of the Florentine republic to remove Pisa from Visconti hands. First, Bartolomeo was instructed by the Ten to negotiate the purchase of Pisa from the Visconti.[40]

[34] BNCF, Rinuccini 27, cassetta 3, unfoliated documents. [35] See note 3.
[36] Razzi (1602), 181–98. [37] See De Angelis and Pirillo (1996).
[38] Bartolomeo proposed this on two occasions, 24 May 1390 and 15 February 1391. ASF, CP 28, fols. 69v–70v and 126r.
[39] ASF, CP 35, 151r, 159r, and 169v.
[40] ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Carteggi, Missive: Legazioni e Commissarie, 3, fols. 28v–29r.

Shortly after the failure of an economic solution, in 1405, and as a consequence of patriotic service against the Visconti, Bartolomeo was again appointed to the Ten on War, currently engaged in the war of Pisa. During Bartolomeo's service on the Ten, Pisa capitulated to Florentine forces. He was frequently called to give advice to the priors, speaking in more than fifty *pratiche* between 1403–14.[41]

We have in Bartolomeo an ideal example of the political optimate, attested both by political records and by public perception.[42] In addition, Bartolomeo provides an ideal test of the Baron thesis.[43] He participated as a central political actor in the crucial conflict against Milan: what did that conflict mean to him? Did the successful resolution of that war instill in Bartolomeo a distinctive self-conscious affirmation of civic loyalty to a secular and republican way of life? His contribution to the family's *ricordanze* suggests a different example of civic virtue. To Scipione Ammirato, writing over a century later, Bartolomeo's entries in the family diary began at such an unusually young age that they indicate his exceptional civic and familial responsibility: at an age when most Florentines would be wiping their mothers' milk from their lips, he wrote, Bartolomeo was diligently recording data for future generations.[44] But his autobiographical statements suggest that he saw his notable and prominent public service neither as a central feature of his identity nor as indispensable information for the proper memorializing of the family's honour.

Like most Florentines, he viewed his entries in the *ricordanze* as a familial duty; he 'made memory' of the important events of his life for the benefit of subsequent generations of the Valori.[45] His entries commence with a statement of piety. He begins with a short prayer 'in the name God, the Virgin mother Madonna, and Saint Mary and all the saints of the celestial court of paradise who through their mercy and goodness have earned the salvation of body and soul'.[46] We

[41] Brucker (1977), 265.

[42] In addition to prominence in the *Consulte e pratiche*, see also the central role accorded Bartolomeo by Scipione Ammirato (1969), 96–8.

[43] Baron (1966). [44] Ammirato (1969), 98.

[45] BNCF, Panciat. 134, 1r: 'Questo libro è di me Bartolomeo di Niccholò di Taldo Valori di Firenze in sul quale principierò a scrivere a dì 29 di novembre anno mccclxxx, facendo memoria di più cose da questo che adietro le quali a me scrittore sono di piacere scriverle: però m'partengono saperle e così conseguentemente a hi de' miei rimarrà [. . .]'

[46] BNCF, Panciat. 134, 1r: 'Il nome di dio e della sua madre vergine madonna e santa maria e di tutti santi e sante della cielestiale corte di paradiso che per la loro misericordia bene e guadangno con salvamento della anima e dal corpo amen [. . .]'

learn that both his education and business began modestly. He learned grammar at the school of Maestro Manovello, staying until 1367; in June of the same year he learned the abacus from Maestro Tommaso di Davuzzo de' Corbizzi, remaining under his tutelage until February 1368 (new style). He worked with his brother in the *mercato nuovo* at the counter of Bernardo di Cino Bartolini, a banker. He remained there through April 1369, neither asking for nor receiving any pay. Later that year, he became too busy to remain with Bartolini, and so moved to the neighbourhood of San Martino, where he was entrusted with the liquid assets of the firm.[47] Contemporary testimonies place him within the circle of scholars who met at the convento degli Angeli to study with Ambrogio Traversari, though he does not include that detail in the *ricordanze*.[48]

The only political honours recorded by Bartolomeo belong to his father, Niccolò di Taldo, appointed Standard-Bearer of Justice in January 1366, shortly thereafter one of the Dodici Buonuomini, a term as prior, and, finally, a captain of the Guelf party.[49] He records the marriage arrangements of his sisters in detail. In April of 1360 he married his sister Margherita to Niccolò di Paolo Litti de' Corbizzi, a member of his former business partner's family. Ten years later, he married his other sister, Francesca, to Rinaldo di Filippo Rondinelli.[50] The remaining economic details concern a loan incurred by his father in 1369, who borrowed one thousand gold florins from Niccolò di Iacopo degli Alberti. The

[47] BNCF, Panciat. 134, 1r: 'Io Bartolomeo mi puosi a imparare gramaticha a la schuola del maestro Manovello et stetivi sino al anno mccclxvii per tutto il mese di maggio, et poi in kalendi giungno anno detto mi puosi a imparare albacho per sapere fare di ragione col maestro Tomaso di Davizzo de' Corbizzi, e stettivi in fino a febraio anno 1367 e detto dì mi puosi a la tavola di Bernardo di Cino Bartolini banchiere in merchato nuovo [. . .] e con guaio suo fratello stetti per infino per tutto aprile ano mccclxviiii, sanza avere domandato o voluto alquno salario [. . .] Et l'anno mccclxviiii in calen di maggio parendomi perdere il tempo di stare più a la tavola mi puosi in San Martino a la botegha di Bartolomeo di Niccholaio d'Ugo degli Albizi per tenere la chiave de la cassa [. . .]' This passage is now published in Black (2004), 833.

[48] Della Torre (1902), 226.

[49] BNCF, Panciat. 134, 1r: '[. . .] Memoria che in fino l'anno mccclxvi in calendi gennaio che Niccholò di Taldo mio padre fu gonfaloniere di giustizia: et avanti più tempo era stato di cholleggio cioè de l'uficio de' dodici buoni huomini et anche gonfaloniere di compangnia et dopo i detti due mesi del priorato fu capitano di parte guelfa [. . .]'

[50] BNCF, Panciat. 134, 1r–v: '[. . .] Et l'anno mcclx a dì [. . .] [his blank] d'aprile si maritò la Margherita mia (serocchia) a Niccholò di Paolo Litti di Corbizzi. Ebbe di dota in tutto fiorini dec. d'oro, onde aparischie carta per mano del Martino Tancredi Datignano [. . .] Ricordo che [. . .] l'anno mccclxviii dì xxiiii di gennaio mando a marito

ricordanze contains several renewals of the loan confirmation, resulting in Bartolomeo himself making the latest confirmation to repay Niccolò. The loan is repaid in April 1372, with the funds transferred to Niccolò by Azzolino di Spina and Bartolomeo Capponi of the company of *tavolieri*.[51]

The character profile that emerges from pages of the *ricordanze* is the ideal example of the selfless and Spartan citizen of classical republicanism. These passages are a model in the suppression of private interests, chronicling only familial and economic obligations. In this sense, what Bartolomeo does not say about himself is as telling as what he does. He has no political agenda to advance; he has no factional loyalties or private interests to pursue; he does not attempt to establish any particular political traditions for future members of the family to pursue. The private citizen and *pater familias* Bartolomeo Valori appears in his diary entries as an entirely different figure from Bartolomeo Valori the patrician politician, emissary, ambassador, prior, and advisor to the republic. There is quite simply no trace of his distinguished and significant record in public affairs, even though he was a veteran politician of the conflict with Visconti Milan. Bartolomeo's priorities and sense of identity undermines Hans Baron's vision of the Florentine patriciate defining itself in terms of a strident, secular activism. On the other hand, he provides a model of J. G. A. Pocock's virtuous classical republican, who distinguishes completely between his private identity and his political identity.[52]

The image of citizenship reflected a century later in Niccolò Valori's passages in the *ricordanze* differs dramatically. Devoid of his political career and his public actions, Bartolomeo's list of relevant family details consists of three folio pages. Niccolò Valori's identity, however, is an elaborate fusion of the public and private and a detailed account of the factional politics unleashed by the collapse of Medici power. His

la Franciescha mia serocchia a Rinaldo di Filippo de Rondinelli, ebbe di dota fiorini dec. d'oro, la carta inbreviata per mano di ser Martino Tancredi Datignano [. . .]'

[51] BNCF, Panciat. 134, 2r: 'Ricordo che il detto anno mccclxviiii [. . .] Niccholò di Taldo mio padre ebbe in prestanza da Messer Niccholaio di Iacopo degli Alberti fiorini mille d'oro e fecene una scritta di sua mano a la quale fu malevadore Filippo di messer Alamanno Chavicciuli e la detta scritta fu riconosciuta per carta di mano di ser Goro di ser Griso da Chastello San Giovanni [. . .]'

[52] In addition to a number of articles on this subject, Pocock elaborated this argument in the first three chapters of (1975); on Pocock's work and the Italian republican tradition, see Jurdjevic (2001): 721–43.

entry consists of over twenty folios, chronicling every public office he held, every *pratica* he attended, and with whom. His political and intellectual affiliations are recorded in detail and are presented as a matter of family tradition. He bluntly states as a matter of pride his political loyalties: the expulsion of the Medici in 1494, which Francesco's prudence and reputation greatly assisted, was an act that liberated the city from tyranny. He notes that their family had formerly been close allies with the Medici, but that they quickly became mutually hostile after it became apparent that the Medici were aspiring towards tyranny.[53] He defends the righteousness of the republic's execution of five conspirators in 1497 and links that event to Francesco's assassination in 1498.[54] He discusses his service as General Commissioner in Pistoia, chronicling his attempts to pacify a city riven by factional conflict.[55] Both accounts are republican, and Niccolò's is overtly Savonarolan; Bartolomeo's passages, however, devoid of politics, show him as an apolitical figure, a private citizen with no special interests to pursue—the quintessential passive citizen described by John Najemy in his discussion of civic humanism's role in the consolidation of power by elite oligarchs.

Given Niccolò's commitment to a particularly Savonarolan vision of republicanism, the importance that he attributed to presenting that vision as a family tradition, and his desire to set down in detail the public political actions of family members, the need for a biography of Bartolomeo *il vecchio* becomes apparent. Here is a family member who was a leading member of the ruling regime, who played an acknowledged critical role in defending the city's liberty from foreign tyranny (much as Francesco and Niccolò had done in the face of domestic tyrants), whose political priorities and sensibilities could be presented as entirely and innately consonant with Savonarola's political priorities, and who,

[53] BNCF, Panciat. 134, fol. 12r.: '[. . .]fu liberata la città dal tiranno nella quale opera maxime giovò la prudentia, auctorità et gratia di Francesco Valori nostro zio, et padre per affectione et io secondo la età seguendo sempre le orme sua [. . .] la casa nostra fu loro [Medici] amicissima ma subito che e' si vidde aspiravano alla tirannide et aldominio diventammo loro inimicissimi.'

[54] BNCF, Panciat. 134, fol 17v: '[. . .] perché pochi anni di poi [. . .] congiurano contro la libertà et vivere populare, di che nacque che cinque furono decapitati [. . .] e non molto poi la medesima parte con parte del popolo (vagho sempre di cose nuove) [. . .] come persone di poco iudicio fatto tumulto all'improviso amazzarono Francesco Valori [. . .]'

[55] BNCF, Pantiat. 134, fol. 18r: '[. . .] et in questo tempo fui fatto commessario generale a Pistoia, a rimettere la parte Panciaticha con forze di 200 cavagli et con fanti et rimessogli dentro molto quietamente [. . .]'

therefore, is a precocious example of the continuity of Valori political tradition.

Della Robbia's biography begins with an account of the role played by the early fifteenth-century oligarchs in the expansion of the city. Their prominence is particularly notable since the city, in all periods, has produced excellent and noble men, equally skilled in the art of war as in the arts of peace and civic prudence.[56] The oligarchy of which Valori formed a part is singled out for praise, however, because they were responsible for the city's dramatic territorial expansion at the turn of the century. Della Robbia explains that most significant expansion occurred between 1390–1433, acquiring Cortona, Pisa, and a number of other cities and castles now subject to the Florentine commune.[57] Good fortune played a role in the city's growth, but no greater a role than the wise counsel of the leading citizens, whom Della Robbia considers equal to the most wise Romans of the classical past. The leading lights of these citizens are the captains of the emerging Medici party: Bartolomeo Valori, Niccolò da Uzzano, Neri Capponi, Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici, and Cosimo de' Medici.[58] Of this group, Bartolomeo Valori, in particular, demonstrates the virtues of the ideal citizen: in the Christian and contemplative life, he pursued truth, while in the active political life, he pursued the common good.[59]

For Della Robbia, this vision of the unity of religious contemplation and benevolent political action becomes the theme of Valori's life. Valori's inclination towards piety, humility, and spiritual reflection

[56] 'Questa per l'amenità ed opportunità del sito tantosto cresciuta d'abitatori, fiorì di maniera, che potè dare ai popoli d'intorno indizii assai chiari di futura grandezza, col produrre in varii tempi varii uomini eccellenti, la particolar memoria de' quali per poco si può dire spenta; ma non per tanto è ferma opinione aver lei di novero superato tutte l'altre d'Italia, così nell' arte della Guerra e vita cavalleresca, come nell' arte della pace e prudenza civile.' Della Robbia (1843), 239.

[57] '[. . .] Ma come ch' ella semre fiorisse, ciò fu massimamente dall' anno 1390 fino all' anno 1433, come si vede dale cronache di que' tempi, ne' quali più che mai veggiamo ampliato il nome di lei, il circuito delle mura e la sua giurisdizione; finalmente per l'acquisto di Cortona, Pisa e d'altre città e castella soggette al Comune di Firenze, non pure per lo favore di buona fortuna, come per consiglio de' buoni cittadini allora preposti al reggimento [. . .]' Della Robbia (1843), 240.

[58] See note 27.

[59] 'Appresso, chi risguarderà le azioni di Bartolommeo Valori [. . .] come potrà egli non giudicarlo degno d'eterna lode? E fermamente si deve credere, un tal uomo così nella contemplative vita e cristiana avendo per oggetto il vero, come nell' attiva avendo per oggetto il bene, godere oggi e fruire per sempre li beni del cielo.' Della Robbia (1843), 240.

are revealed in his political actions, which are consistently irenic and above faction. Della Robbia presents the family as the single most powerful force for political cohesion between the city's classes. In his youth, we are informed, Bartolomeo was educated in the humanities, studies which he pursued even though he was occupied by domestic, mercantile, and political responsibilities. Later in life, however, he became consumed by the study of sacred Scripture, much of which he learned from Don Ambrogio da Portico, skilled in Latin and Greek and an acknowledged authority on theology, and with whom Valori became a close friend.[60] He inherits his political traditions from his father, Taldo, who, we are told, was a wise politician, welcomed by all ranks of the city, and skilled in the pacification of disorders and the unification of the lower ranks with the city's patricians. His skills in these political arts were so well-known that a proverb emerged in moments of political crisis and conflict: God and Taldo will provide.[61]

Both Taldo and Bartolomeo were considered popular citizens because of the moderation they showed in their political ambitions and appetites. Such moderation was particularly significant given the political turbulence of those years: the Ciompi revolt had recently been quelled, a powerful oligarchy was systematically dismantling the guild regime of the Trecento, and that oligarchy itself was riven by internal factional discord, eventually resulting in the Medici triumph of 1434.[62] Della Robbia demonstrates the truth of Valori moderation by asserting that in the midst of such a period of political trial and tribulation, chequered fortunes, and changes of regime, the faction in power never regarded

[60] '[. . .] Bartolommeo [. . .] fu ne' primi anni sotto la cura e disciplina del M. Emanuelle, solenne nell 'arte d'insegnare lettere d'umanità, ed amato oltre modo per li suoi dicevoli e buoni costumi: i quali studii Bartolommeo non tralasciò mai del tutto, ancorchè occupato nelle cure domestiche et mercantili, ed implicato negli affari pubblici, se non quando in età più matura pervenuto, quel tempo che potè, tutto nella Scrittura Sacra andò consumando, con participare i suoi studii con i teologi di quell' età suoi domestici, e specialmente con Don Ambruogio da Portico, generale di Camaldoli, delle latine e greche lettere peritissimo, e maestro in divinità assai celebre: col quale egli usò così familiarmente, che, come si dice, non appariva fra loro disgiunta nè anco l'anima dal corpo; come testimoniano ancora oggi molte delle sue lettere [. . .]' Della Robbia (1843), 241.

[61] '[. . .] ed aveva dato già saggio da sperarne giovamento alla sua Città, non minore che si avesse fatto Taldo: persona tanto savia ed accetta all' universale, e così destra nel quietare ogni tumulto, ed attissima sopra gli altri di chi s'abbia memoria a riunire la plebe colla nobiltà, in guisa che era venuto in proverbio, in tutti gli accidenti di pericolo, dire:—Dio provederà e Taldo—.' Della Robbia (1843), 242.

[62] On these years, see Ravel (1978) and (1981); Kent (1978).

the Valori family with suspicion and their reputation never suffered.[63] Their position in successive regimes was made equally secure by their manner of governance, which never alienated the people. In spite of their marriage alliances with the Bardi and other elite families, they nevertheless maintained a reputation for being supporters of the *popolo minuto*—in all the tumults of the city in these years, no member of their family was banished or declared a rebel.[64] In the personalities and actions of Bartolomeo and Taldo, we see the quintessence of the appeal Savonarola would later make for unity. They were people who formed a constructive bond between proponents of *governo largo* and *governo stretto*. In addition, in the context of Medici power in the sixteenth century, Della Robbia advances the political credentials of the family: their former prominence in the republican regime of Piero Soderini is less the result of anti-Medicean sentiment than a reputation for responsible governance that made them as useful to Soderini as the Medici before him.

Della Robbia's Bartolomeo understands that the stability and strength of the republic depends on respecting the popular base of the citizenry. In the wake of the conquest of Pisa, the Florentine Republic was heavily indebted, both to its own citizens and to its mercenary armies.[65] The city recognized that its traditional system of imposing a head-tax on all its citizens was problematic, given the exceptional costs incurred. They consulted Bartolomeo on this problem to determine how to maintain the republic's finances without oppressing the citizenry. Bartolomeo responded that in such times, he ought to be taxed at twice his normal rate (an implicit statement about how other patricians should conduct themselves as well), so that it would not be necessary for the

[63] '[. . .] Nè ci mancano perciò di quelli che dicono, lui ed il figlio essere stati, anzi che no, cittadini popolari, per l'egualità che mostrò sempre ciascuno di loro di desiderare nello stato. Segno assai manifesto di ciò può darsi, che in tanti travagli e mutazioni di governo, e fortunevoli casi seguìti nella Città, questa casa non fu mai a sospetto alla parte superiore; anzi ricevuta in tutti i reggimenti, si mantenne in una medesima riputazione, almeno poi che si disse de' Valori [. . .]' Della Robbia (1843), 242.

[64] '[. . .] E fu questa sua lode precipua, per governarsi in modo che non ne diffidò mai il popolo; comecchè ella fusse non pur nobile, ma congiuntissima di parentado con i Bardi ed altri Grandi più sospetti: li quali altresì non ne diffidarono, perciocchè ella aparisse così fautrice del popolo minuto; di maniera che non si conterebbe pure uno di tal schiatta confinato in tanti garbugli, non che ribelle . . . ' Della Robbia (1843), 242.

[65] Pisa was, in Della Robbia's words, 'ricca e magna, antichissima inimical dal nostro Comune, non altrimenti che si fusse già Cartagine a Roma'. Della Robbia (1943), 250. On the significance of the conquest for the regime, see Mallett (1968); Brucker (1977), 202–8.

republic to demand too much from the *popolo minuto* and the artisan classes.[66] Bartolomeo announces that the republic consists of citizens, not walls—and that those who defend the *patria* with their blood have contributed enough. With public affairs organized rightly and equitably between the *popolo grande* and *minuto*, private affairs will inevitably follow without discord or factional strife.[67] As proof that Bartolomeo correctly understood the desires of the people, Della Robbia includes an anecdote about a popular song. While Martin V was in Florence (26 February 1419–9 September 1420), consecrating the church of Santa Maria Novella and elevating the bishop of the Florentine church to the archiepiscopal dignity, children in the streets began to sing a song that praised three men as the best leaders of the republic, according pride of place first to Bartolomeo Valori, second to Vieri Guadagni, and third to Piero Guicciardini.

The profile of Taldo as a virtuous citizen in a Savonarolan mode is amplified by his rejection of big Florentine banking activity. Taldo had been a partner in the English branch of the medieval Bardi bank, upon whom Edward III was relying heavily to fund his military campaigns in Normandy. Taldo had lent Edward thirty thousand ducats and lost it all when Edward defaulted on his payments, as did all the merchants who had invested in the first phase of the Hundred Years War. When Taldo finally lost any hope of getting the loan back, he neither lost heart nor attempted to exploit his standing with the lower ranks of Florentine society to recoup his losses from the Bardi or other Florentine partners. Rather, Della Robbia asserts with pride, he simply lost all desire to work in the great merchant businesses, which was the traditional occupation for the Florentine elite. Instead, Taldo gave himself entirely to the civic life.[68]

[66] 'Sopra che domandato Bartolommeo da' ministri pubblici, o per comandamento del supremo magistrato o per lor proprio discorso, se a lui paresse però passato i termini, e soverchio oppressato la cittadinanza; rispose, che, quanto a sè, in un tempo simile si tassava egli stesso nel doppio più, purchè e' non si scendesse a gravare i minuti e i meccanici; e questa era la mente sua.' Della Robbia (1843), 251.

[67] 'E per certo, la Repubblica non consiste nelle mura, ma ne' cittadini; e se questi soli non la difendono ancora col proprio sangue, non pure offendono loro medesimi, ma vengono a privarsi del nome di buoni cittadini, che è un mancare della propria forma: dove che, stando bene il pubblico, non possono mai i privati se non vivere felicemente.' Della Robbia (1843), 251.

[68] '[. . .] E potrei io con verità narrare particolari a dimostranza della bontà di questa stirpe: ma solamente diremo di Taldo, che essendo compagno della maggiore ragione che facesse mai la nazion fiorentina (di quella, dico, de' Bardi in Inghilterra), e perciò venuto così ricco, che, come si vede a'libri della ragione, potè prestare di suo ben trenta

Turning to Bartolomeo, Della Robbia recounts a number of notable examples of his heroism, generosity, and voluntary sacrifice for the patria; he interprets these acts as instances of Bartolomeo's love of holy liberty, '*santa libertà*', a term which sanctifies and renders holy the city's traditional independence. By doing so, Della Robbia places Bartolomeo squarely within a Savonarolan conception of Florentine politics, seventy years before Savonarola's arrival in Florence. The term '*libertà*' had of course been the object of constant praise in Florentine literature throughout the Renaissance. During the late communal period, *libertà* was defined in a restricted sense of political independence. The term emerged initially as a way of denoting political independence from foreign powers. By the fifteenth century, the term had expanded its focus to include an implication of republican self-government in particular. As republican self-government became a tradition in Florence, the term acquired another implication: freedom from destructive factional politics.[69] It was only after the collapse of the first Medicean republic in 1494 and the appearance of Savonarola, however, that the term became sacralized. Throughout the fifteenth century, Florentines had viewed their city as a natural point of origin for movements of spiritual regeneration, but there had not been the specific connection made between a state of godliness as a precondition for political liberty. Savonarola initially adopted humanist rhetoric when he argued that the new republic was ideally suited to the protection of collective and individual liberty.[70] He then expanded on that theme, arguing that a state of holy liberty was indispensable if the city was to play its divinely appointed role in the imminent millennium.[71] By making 'holy liberty' the main concern of Bartolomeo Valori's career in Florentine political life, Della Robbia inserts a tradition of Savonarolan sensibilities that predates the friar's arrival in the city and that therefore buttresses the credentials of the family as the leaders of the movement.

mila ducati al Re, implicato nella Guerra di Filippo di Valois; ed avendo perduto la speranza, insieme con gli altri mercanti in quell'isola, di valersi del suo, non per ciò sbigotti d'animo, o mancò di sollevare la plebe nelle sue necessità. Mancò bene di volere più travagliarsi in gran negozii mercantili, de'quali pure si travagliò sempre la nobiltà fiorentina; anzi si diede egli tutto alla vita civile.' Della Robbia (1843), 243.

[69] Baron (1960): 440–51; Witt (1971), 173–200; Rubinstein (1952), 21–45 and (1986), 3–27; Becker (1962), 393–406; Holmes (1973), 111–34.

[70] Savonarola (1969–74), II: 213–16 and (1965), 144–6 and (1958), 441–2; and Bartolomeo Redditi in Schnitzer (1902), I: 38–9.

[71] Weinstein (1968), 15–44.

Bartolomeo's love of holy liberty is introduced in the context of a beleaguered Florence's conflicts with Galeazzo Visconti of Milan and King Ladislas of Naples. Because the city's forces in the recent conflict against Milan had undergone such hardships, undertaken so many risks, and suffered so many losses, many citizens, for a variety of more and less noble motives, advised the government to sacrifice its freedom rather than risk total ruin.[72] In the first Milanese conflict, Bartolomeo delivers a rousing speech to the republic's governing council that rejuvenates the government's sense of purpose and optimism and that exalts the city as the most worthwhile object of sacrifice.[73] In the second Milanese conflict, Bartolomeo argues that the city's liberty must be protected at all costs, and that their defence of liberty is aided by divine favour.[74] With the republic facing bankruptcy, Della Robbia tells us, Bartolomeo provided not only the sum asked for by the republic, but as much as he could spare to help the city fight for its holy liberty; his passionate love of the city's sacred freedom, beyond any other inspiration, inspired his words and deeds.[75] For an early sixteenth-century Florentine audience, such an argument echoed

[72] '[. . .] E nella passata guerra con Galeazzo Visconti, dove la milizia sopportò tanti disagii, corse tanti rischi e fe' tante perdite che avvilì ciascuno, da quell' esercito vittorioso; adoperò egli, dico, virilmente, non ostante il ghiado che si vedeva in tutti i cittadini: de' quali chi per rispetto, chi per dispetto, chi per sospetto consigliava il Comune ad accettare ogni accordo purchè la libertà stesse in piè, per fuggire una manifesta ruina [. . .]' Della Robbia (1843), 244.

[73] '[. . .] aspettò Bartolommeo che a lui tocasse la volta, e parlò brevemente in questa forma: "'. . . Dico io bene questo cotanto, che se noi la considereremo seguìta non per ingegno o scienza militare del nemico, ma per fortuna meritamente, ripiglieremo più l'animo; ed in questo ci assimiglieremo alla palma, che quanto è più soppressa, tanto più forza acquista e poderosa diviene. Ed io, per me, sono uno di quelli che, post giù questo mantello e cappuccio, sarò pronto, bisognando, a pigliare altro abito, mettendo a ripentaglio la propria vita. E di vero, qual più gloriosa fine che averla spesa per la patria? Oltre che non saria questa un morire, ma più tosto mutar vita bassa e manchevole con una sempiterna e suprema."' ' Della Robbia (1843), 245.

[74] '[. . .] Senza che, il vederci così riuniti a difesa della nostra libertà, sarà per avventura bastante non pure a straccarlo, ma a farlo ritirare dal primo proponimento. Laonde a voi sta il porgere aiuto nel suo maggiore uopo alla nostro Repubblica [. . .] Imperocchè non fummo mai tanto forzati a pigliare, nè tanto aiutati da un giusto favore divino, quanto oggi [. . .]' Della Robbia (1843), 274–5.

[75] '[. . .] propose egli, per cosa necessaria, una gravezza, a tutti i cittadini, abbienti però, per sovvenire la patria nel suo maggior bisogno di soldar genti e spedire capitani: ed esso come primo a proporre questo aiuto, così fu il primo a metterlo a esecuzione per la parte sua. E non solo offerse, ma aveva pronti scudi [. . .] a tale effetto. E soggiunse d'avere portato non quella somma che avrebbe voluto, ma quella che gli era possible di mettere insieme per allora, a difesa della santa libertà: l'amore della quale, e non altro, gli dettò di mano in mano questo ragionamento [. . .]' Della Robbia (1843), 246.

directly Savonarola's vision of an imminent millennium contingent upon a pious, virtuous, and republican configuration of the city's political order. It also echoed Savonarola's argument that tyranny led to moral degeneracy by encouraging pride, lust, and avarice.[76] Hence, Bartolomeo's piety was inextricably linked to his republican patriotism.

Bartolomeo's commitment to republican liberty and his antipathy towards tyranny inform all of the events in which he participates. The final years of the Great Schism form the backdrop to peninsular politics of his day. The fifteenth session of the 1409 Council of Pisa deposed both rival popes, Benedict XIII and Gregory XII,[77] electing in their place Alexander V. The recently deposed Gregory turned to King Ladislas of Naples for support, offering substantial territory in the Papal States. Ladislas then attempted to generate support by forming a league on behalf of the deposed antipope, turning first to the Florentines. Bartolomeo was elected one of the ambassadors to negotiate with Ladislas. He frankly informs the Neapolitan king that the city will not join such a dishonourable league,[78] to which Ladislas responds with increasingly menacing threats, pointing out that the city will have a difficult time finding a capable *condottiere* to defend itself, since so many are already on Ladislas' payroll. Bartolomeo's stirring rejoinder makes two points that echo Savonarola. The first is that, although many tyrants have threatened the city's liberty in the past, the city has always emerged victorious, and even in some cases expanded its borders. Because of the principle at stake, the city's citizens are always ready to engage in battle.[79] Regarding the question of *condottieri* and the unequal balance of forces, Bartolomeo explains that the Florentines themselves will fight if the alternative is to ally against

[76] Savonarola (1963); Redditi in Schnitzer (1902), I: 49.

[77] The Aragonese Pedro de Luna and Venetian Angelo Corraro, respectively.

[78] 'Ma di già eletto, con libera commessione, Bartolommeo uno delli ambasciadori a trattare col Re quanto occorreva in questo negozio; sentendo il suo Comune invitato a una lega poco onorevole, disse apertamente al Re, che la nostra Città non intendeva entrar seco in lega [. . .]' Della Robbia (1843), 254.

[79] 'Potette di qui risolversi l'imbasciadore della intenzione del Re: ma tuttavia, non mancando egli al tempo, non ebbe mica paura a dirgli, che in tutte le guerre mosse al Comune di Firenze s'era sempre avanzato; e non pure avere la Repubblica difeso la sua santa libertà contro a molti imperadori e tiranni, ma ampliati i suoi confini, e, questo anco varcati, ardito più far la Guerra a casa d'altri, con suo grand' onore: però non sarieno i cittadini questa volta di manco valore pronti ad ingaggiare battaglia [. . .]' Della Robbia (1843), 255.

Rome and the true Vicar of Christ.[80] Della Robbia further implies that should war occur, Bartolomeo would be an ideal candidate to lead florentine forces, all the more remarkable since few nobles at that time were entrusted with the city's militia. Though docile by nature, when required to lead troops he displayed a fiery spirit and strong heart, virtues particularly appreciated by soldiers.[81] Bartolomeo's confidence that the courage of good citizens can overcome any army, no matter how well paid, echoes the argument made by Savonarola and then Machiavelli about the virtues of citizen-militias over mercenary armies.[82]

In a speech Bartolomeo makes to a council convened to consider the Visconti threat, Della Robbia makes explicit the connection between Bartolomeo's Savonarolan vision of holy republicanism and the republic's success against Milan. In stirring rhetoric, Bartolomeo explains that Milan's cessation of diplomatic relations with Florence signals the Duke's commitment to subvert and tyrannize the Florentine republic, but that the Florentine love of liberty, no less alive now than it was for their ancestors, will not allow them to risk the city's independence. Part of Duke Filippo's strategy is to weaken the city's defenses by fomenting and encouraging internal discord.[83] To foil the duke's machinations, Bartolomeo argues, the republic must do two things, both of which echo Savonarola and his calls for *governo largo*. First, the republic must

[80] '[. . .] non volendo intendere altro in suo sentimento, se non che il Comune di Firenze fusse tanto potente, e i cittadini di là entro così destri e d' ingegno, da trovar modo di persuadere a' capi, che poco onore sia loro militando contro una città di Roma e vero Vicario di Cristo; e quindi ricor cagione di fargli rinunziare alla condotta, invitando gli eserciti interi e soldati a maggior soldo coi danari de' suoi buon cittadini, vigilanti il bene essere dell' universale.' Della Robbia (1843), 255.

[81] '[. . .] Ma come che egli fusse mansueto nel suo porgere, era però a tempi animoso e di buon cuore, se bisogno fusse venuto di maneggiar armi. Però, poco fu curata da' nobili di quel secolo la milizia; chè egli per certo saria stato atto a ogni maneggio, non mancando delle virtù più richieste ai soldati [. . .]' Della Robbia (1843), 243.

[82] For a Savonarolan call for a citizen militia, see Mazzone (1988); on Machiavelli and the fifteenth-century tradition, see Bayley (1961); on Machiavelli's use of Savonarolan interlocutors in his analysis of citizen-militias, see Colish (1998), 1151–68.

[83] '[. . .] co' quali per non venire a conclusione e tenere la cosa in lungo, raccolse cagione di non ricevere a Milano l'orator nostro; temendo forse di non si ristringere a qualche appuntamento che gli troncasse i disegni, e per tôrre a lui occasione d'informarsi della disposizione delle cose di là entro e penetrare qualche segreto: indizii tutti che tendono contro a questa libertà. L'amore della quale se potrà tanto in voi quanto potè già negli avoli vostri, son sicuro che non vi lascerà soffrir mai di correr rischio di perderla [. . .] E' non è d' oggi nè di ieri questo suo pensiero d'aspirare alla tirannide di questa Città, indottovi, e mantenutovi più, da qualche divisione de' cittadini [. . .]' Della Robbia (1843), 273–4.

ensure that justice is administered fairly and equally to the great and lowly alike.[84] Second, the republic should ensure that its citizens remain united in spirit, for without such union, no republic can stand. To ensure the spiritual and political unity of the polity, and to ensure that the republic proceeds with divine favour, the city should hold public processions and celebrate the Mass so that the citizens can directly intervene with the Divine.[85] By praying to God and demonstrating faith, they will receive divine protection and will be suitably inspired to plan for battle, readying their militia for combat as their ancient Roman ancestors had done.[86] Bartolomeo's arguments are the same as Savonarola's, some twenty years before the publication of the biography: a pious regime, dependent on God's grace, cannot succumb to tyranny.

Like his father Taldo, Bartolomeo frequently goes to great lengths to suppress discord, sedition, and conspiracies, using his considerable influence not just for the benefit of his own family, but also for other citizens.[87] The ardour with which Bartolomeo represses conspiracies against the state echoes the recent actions of Francesco against the Medicean conspirators of 1497. Della Robbia demonstrates this in several contexts. In the first, Salvestro Adimari, a noble, powerful, but highly seditious citizen, was conspiring against the Florentine regime, soliciting support from a group of Florentine exiles and from the counts of Bagno and Modigliana. Adimari attempted to recruit Bartolomeo to his cause. He failed, but not before Bartolomeo brought Adimari

[84] Savonarola had argued that impartial administration of justice was the central distinction between a civil government and a tyrannical regime. Francesco Valori made the same argument in government *pratiche*. For Savonarola, see (1958), 477–9. For Francesco Valori's remarks, see ASF, CP 63, fol. 43r–v.

[85] '[. . .] Per lo che, due cose sono da vegliare principalmente: l'una, che la giustizia vada retta pel grande e pel piccolo; l' altra che gli animi si riuniscano: senza la quale unione non ebbe mai repubblica che durasse. E per indirizzare ogni cosa con l' aiuto divino, e meglio assicurare l'universale (chè poco possa sperare chi bada a soffocare un popolo religioso e dependente dalla grazia di Dio), sarà bene che si pubblichi processioni, e che si celebri messa solenne, dove intervenga la cittadinanza a pregar la Divina Maestà, che ci riceva in sua protezione [. . .]' Della Robbia (1843), 274.

[86] '[. . .] e quindi andarsi riparando a ripulire ogni sorte d'arme e rassettare tutti gli strumenti bellici, rassegnare tutti i cittadini, disporre i gradi della milizia, e nel raccomandare andar ritrovando la virtù dove ella è, coll' esempio de' nostri antichi Romani [. . .]' Della Robbia (1843), 274.

[87] '[. . .] Ma per tornare alla carità della patria, usò egli di giovar sempre non pure a' parenti (chè di ciò lo stringeva l'obbligo), ma ad altri cittadini [. . .]' Della Robbia (1843), 248.

to the Signoria and forced him to divulge his plans. As the plot was unravelled, it became clear to the city that the good health of the republic was due entirely to Bartolomeo.[88] On another occasion, Bartolomeo intervenes in a conflict between Giovanni Barbadori, then Standard-Bearer of Justice, and Niccolò da Uzzano. Bartolomeo recognizes that Bardadori's imminent attempt to destroy Niccolò da Uzzano is particularly dangerous because Uzzano was immensely popular with the *popolo minuto*. If they rallied to his cause, dangerous tumults would ensue; furthermore, considering Uzzano's sway with the middling ranks, the regime would emerge more secure if the two could unite. A master rhetorician, Bartolomeo is able to persuade the two to set aside their quarrels.[89]

Della Robbia uses Bartolomeo's death as another opportunity to demonstrate a pre-Savonarolan tradition of *piagnone*-style piety in the Valori family. Having helped to finish the last war with Filippo Maria Visconti, Bartolomeo began to remove himself from public affairs so that he might devote more time to his spiritual side. Before doing so, however, he settled all his accounts, down to the smallest detail.[90] Having prepared his will and disposed of all his earthly goods, in part

[88] 'Aveva Salvestro di messer Filippo Adimari, cittadino nobile e potente sì, ma tuttavia sedizioso molto, macchinato una congiura contro lo stato; trattovi diverse persone per diverse cagioni e speranze, fomentate da' Conti di Bagno e di Modigliana, e qualche fuoruscito [. . .] [Bartolomeo] lo condusse con destrezza nel Palazzo de' Signori, e di quivi pure alle loro stanze; dove giunto, ed a lui rivolto, disse: "Be", Salvestro, non sarà male che voi sponghiate qui alla Signoria per filo e per segno tutto quello che a me conferito avete; con ciò sia cosa che de' casi pubblici più seco che non i privati convenga participare [. . .]' Da che scoperto a poco a poco la congiura condotta in Bologna, a lui solo fu attribuito questa volta la salute della Repubblica [. . .]' Della Robbia (1843), 246–74.

[89] '[. . .] essendo Giovanni di Barbadori Gonfaloniere di Giustizia, e portando segreto odio a Niccolò da Uzzano, ad altro non badava che di farlo incalappiare: il che conoscendo Bartolommeo, che prima d'ogni altro esaltò le virtù e la bontà di colui, vegliando i progressi del Gonfaloniere, scoperse che dei modi che si terrebero per ricôrre cagione di abassarlo [. . .] [Bartolomeo explains to Giovanni] che a lui [Niccolò] stava di considerarla bene, rispetto all' autorità che aveva l'Uzzano nella plebe, che si portava pericolo che tutta non si sollevasse in favore di lui per difenderlo con tumulti, non mai profittevoli al reggimento. E potè di maniera col suo dire, che trattolo di proposito, s'interpose con gli suoi avversarii, e fu causa d'unirgli insieme [. . .]' Della Robbia (1843), 248.

[90] 'Finita pertanto detta guerra, conoscendosi Bartolommeo molto oltre coll' età, si andò sequestrando da' negozi pubblici: e per potersi con più quiete dare all' anima, cercò in un tempo medesimo d'accomodare i casi suoi domestici, col saldare con tutti i mercanti con i quali per alcun tempo avesse avuto a travagliare, e finalmente tutti i coati, ancora che menomi, con ciascuno [. . .]' Della Robbia (1843), 278.

by leaving many pious legacies, he promptly took Communion. From that moment on, he rarely conversed with other citizens, particularly avoiding those in office and Palazzo della Signoria. Weary from age and worldly matters, he retreated from public life and spent all his time in his house, studying Sacred Scripture at all hours and learning how to die.[91] The details Della Robbia includes are all evocative of the *piagnone* approach to death. Savonarola had taught the whole of man's life should be a preparation for death, and that since death gives meaning to life, death and the thought of death should govern men's actions. As a result of this conviction, manuals that helped men 'prepare' for death circulated rapidly and diffusely through the Savonarolan movement. The preparation of one's will and the actual and symbolic moment of renouncing one's material possessions became a spiritually meritorious act since it cut the testator off from the world and encouraged him to dwell on the after-life.[92]

Judging from the circumstances surrounding the composition of the *Vita di Bartolomeo* and the nature of its content, it appears that maintaining and defending the family's tradition of Savonarolism was no less important for Niccolò than maintaining their Ficinian and Platonic traditions. We have seen that Niccolò and Della Robbia shared a number of intellectual connections sympathetic to Savonarola, and some to Ficino as well: Piero della Stufa, Girolamo Benivieni, Pierfrancesco de' Medici, Silvano Razzi, and, later in the century, Benedetto Varchi. We have seen Niccolò's enthusiasm, however privately asserted, for anti-Medicean conspirators Pietropaolo Boscoli and Agostino Capponi, and the manifestly *piagnone* account Della Robbia wrote of Boscoli's last night (which contained a remark that implicitly incriminated Niccolò Valori). Della Robbia's *Vita di Bartolomeo*, which Niccolò furnished sources materials for, at the very least, and more probably commissioned, was structured around

[91] '[. . .] fe' rogare un testamento disteso di suo pugno, dove lasciò molti legati pii [. . .] Nè prima ebbe disposto de' beni temporali, che, tutto scarico, la medesima mattina si communicò divotamente: e da questo tempo in là, usò di rado la conversazione de' cittadini, rarissimo quella delli statuali, e non mai il Palagio Pubblico, come che e' ne fusse gravato più volte. Ma egli infiacchito dagli anni e stracco delle cose del mondo, dimorava in casa il più del tempo, studiando a tutte l'ore la Scrittura Sacra, e (come egli diceva) imparando a morire [. . .]' Della Robbia (1843), 279–80.

[92] See Polizzotto (1989), 28–46; Weinstein (1989), 88–104. Such attitudes were enthusiastically promoted by Savonarola, but they were not exclusive either to the *piagnoni* or to Florence. See Eire (1995).

Savonarolan political themes of concord, sacrifice, and piety. The principal political function of that text was to demonstrate the political virtues of a Savonarolan vision of Florentine politics and to link that particular vision to the Valori family's pre-existing political traditions.

5

The Valori Self-Portrait Under the Medici Grand Dukes

This chapter returns to the Valori's private papers and their development of their self-image under the Medici dukes. In the late sixteenth century, the Florentine senator, Knight of Santo Stefano, and Medici librarian Baccio Valori compiled a collection of testimonies about and histories of the Valori in Florence, their relationship to the Medici, and their relationship to the city's intellectual elite.[1] From a variety of perspectives, Baccio's miscellany took up all the major themes and events of the family's political history, occasionally reinterpreting the biggest conflicts to suit the new ducal political culture but always respecting the intellectual traditions of the family and their friendships with Savonarola, Ficino, and Machiavelli.

Although Baccio began to craft a political narrative of the family's relationship to the Medici that privileged the moments of concord and friendship over the moments of conflict—in the next chapter we will see that narrative set out publicly and formally by Scipione Ammirato—it is nevertheless striking the degree to which the civic traditions, values, and sensibilities of the late fifteenth-century Valori persisted strongly in Baccio's mental landscape.[2] Like his fifteenth-century predecessors, Baccio's principal concern was to establish an exalted family history that paid special attention to the family's political service to the common good and to humanist patronage. There is no dynastic sense of family, no sense of inherited political privilege, no sense of nobility of blood—in Baccio's *zibaldone*, the status of each

[1] BNCF, Rinuccini 27, cassetta 3, *Zibaldone di uso appartenente alla famiglia Valori di vari*, unnumbered folios. Baccio is best known by historians as a patron of the arts and as a biographer. See Williams (1993), 209–43; Pegazzano (1992), 51–71; Lo Re (1998); and Salvini (1717), 169–79.

[2] In his analysis of the republican statesmen of the façade of *palazzo* Valori, Williams comes to similar conclusions. Williams (1993), 227–40.

generation of the family is legitimated by their public service, carefully chronicled just like the Valori family diary, and in some cases filling in the diary's gaps.

Yet some reinterpretations of Florentine history emerge, linked to the political transformation of republic to duchy. Savonarola's impact on Florence and the Valori's participation in the Savonarolan movement are never characterized as millenarian and radical republican revivals, as they had been in the Valori family diary entries from the late fifteenth century, but are presented in legal and constitutional terms. In the *zibaldone*, Savonarola's goal was to have the constitution modified through legal channels, and the Valori's anti-Medicean activities during the Savonarolan period become stripped of political overtones; rather than indicating republican ardour, their apparent enmity to the Medici merely represented the subordination of individual will to the rule of law.[3] Baccio's *zibaldone* is thus a revealing window into the troubled process of adaptation to a court culture in which all Florentine elite families had to engage. The civic language and outlook of the fifteenth century was not replaced or superseded by the new aristocratic court culture, but it nevertheless had to be translated and redefined, with points of emphasis shifted from republican self-government to a tradition of public service.

The mere fact that Baccio was inclined to collect family documents and memorialize their contributions to Florentine political history while trying to win the favour of the ruling Medici, a difficult task since they had executed Baccio's father and uncle after the battle of Montemurlo in 1537, suggests a continuity in family outlook between the republican and ducal eras. The overwhelming majority of extant family books—whether labelled *zibaldone*, *ricordanza*, *libro di famiglia*, *libro segreto*, or *libro dei ricordi*—are Florentine and date from the communal and republican eras, suggesting a close relationship between the Florentine variation of republicanism and a precocious sense of individual, familial, and collective civic consciousness. The most

[3] It is not clear, however, that an emphasis on obedience to the rule of law and the subordination of individual appetites was not a political gesture inherited from the humanism of the fifteenth century. The Valori *zibaldone* reflects precisely the image of the ideal citizen promoted by civic humanism, as interpreted by Najemy: '[the citizen] who suppresses his own ambition, who steadfastly exhibits deference toward the reggimento (or, simply, those who govern), whose willingness to cooperate borders on unquestioning obedience, and who has no ideas or policies or interests to promote or defend in the civic arena'. Najemy (2000), 88.

famous example of this is the fifteenth-century *zibaldone Quaresimale* of Giovanni Rucellai, in which Rucellai ruminates on the histories of family and city, while revealing his intellectual familiarity with the humanism of Donato Acciaiuoli and Marsilio Ficino and the civism of Leon Battista Alberti and Matteo Palmieri.[4] Fewer family books were written during the mid- to late-sixteenth century, but Baccio's *zibaldone* reveals that for some families the memorializing instinct remained and was not intrinsically inconsistent with the new ducal culture.[5]

The catalyst for this *zibaldone* was political flux—for the Valori, the Medici, and for Florence. From several decades remove, and while enjoying considerable political and cultural prosperity under the Medici Duke Francesco I, Baccio tried to make sense of his family's complex relationship to Florence and the Medici during the late fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth centuries. A significant part of this historical initiative required gathering and responding to judgements about the family made by other historians. The Valori *zibaldone* engages all of these historians: Machiavelli, Guicciardini, Bernardo Corio, Scipione Ammirato, Paolo Giovio, Giorgio Vasari, and Jean Bodin. It compares and sometimes sets these historians against each other in an interpretation of the family's history that integrates the Medicean and republican past as

[4] Perosa (1960) and the companion volume, Kent, Perosa, Preyer, Sanpaolesi, and Salvini (1981).

[5] On Florentine *ricordanze* under the Lorraine grand dukes, see Pandimiglio (1991). Baccio's collection of documents supports the functionalist interpretation of family books by Martines, Cherubini, and Sestan. They had argued that the proliferation of family books dating from the Florentine Renaissance stemmed from the particularly Florentine context of economic precocity and political instability. For merchants engaged in numerous transactions, the family book was a repository of financially useful memories, details of transactions that might be easily forgotten (merchants' books were common both to Florence and Venice). Unlike Venice, Florence was a politically mobile society in which family *ricordi* helped to establish political credentials, enabling the patrician to demonstrate a family tradition of public service. This 'functional' interpretation sees the family book literature of the Florentine Renaissance, therefore, as discrete and separate from apparently similar writings from different periods and regions. The real significance of these works was not so much the family as authors, readers, and inspiration, but in what the information contained in them told others about the family—how text related to and explained context. Martines (1963); Cherubini (1989), 567–91; and Sestan (1989), 246–7. James Grubb implicitly supports this approach to such texts, when he argues that Venetians did not keep *ricordanze* because the city had a formally established political aristocracy. Grubb (1994), 375–87. For an opposing view of how to interpret these sources, see Cicchetti and Mordenti (1986); (1984), 1117–59; Pezzarossa (1979): 63–90; Pezzarossa, (1980), 39–148; of Petrucci's considerable bibliography, see, for example, (1986) and (1995); for Branca, see (1962–67).

part of a larger narrative of consistent political virtue and participation in a proper political order.[6]

This was no easy task under any circumstances, but it was a particularly sensitive political context in which Baccio began to compile these raw materials for family history. In his youth a political outsider owing to his father's republican loyalties, Baccio suffered the scorn of Medici partisans and, he tells us, found solace in learning.[7] In part owing to grandfather Niccolò's biography of Lorenzo he eventually was favoured with a ducal appointment. From that moment on, Baccio's political career prospered. He studied law, became a knight of Santo Stefano in 1578, a senator in 1580, commissary to Pistoia in 1591, and grand ducal high commissioner of Pisa. In 1589 he became the librarian of the Laurenziana and was twice appointed Consul of the Florentine Academy, in 1563 and 1587. As a patron of the arts, Valori corresponded on a wide range of subjects with Florentine literati, including Vincenzo Borghini, Andrea Cesalpino, and Francesco Patrizi.[8] For a man initially perceived as an enemy of the Medici ducal regime, but who emerged as a central figure in the Florentine political and cultural world in the later sixteenth century, constructing a family tradition in a way that accommodated the family's proudest republican moments with loyal service to the Medici family was an obvious political as well as family priority.

The documents are grouped around four main overlapping subjects: their relationship to the Medici, the career and memory of Francesco *il*

[6] For this reason, it fits squarely in the tradition of political reflection discussed by Phillips (1983), 191–206, though Baccio appears to have approved of the Medicean political order, in spite of the executions of his father and uncle. The passages in the Valori *ricordanze* written by Baccio's grandfather, Niccolò Valori, however, express the sense of betrayal and alienation Phillips emphasizes in the writing of Dino Compagni, Alamanno Acciaiuoli, Giovanni Cavalcanti, Alamanno Rinuccini, and Francesco Guicciardini. BNCF, Panciat. 134, fols. 17v–18.

[7] '[. . .] bastandomi non vivere ozioso, guadagnare honestamente e spartir il tempo in modo che li studi a me più propri non si dismettessino del tutto e la sanità havesse le sue hore del esercizzio, e la pratica dei letterati galanthuomini si conservasse per recreamento [. . .]' BNCF, Panciat. 134, fol. 2. Valori was befriended early in life by Benedetto Varchi and Piero Vettori. For a discussion of the sources, see Williams (1993), 212.

[8] See Borghini's letters to Baccio Valori and Silvano Razzi in BNCF, Rinuccini 23, unfoliated; Baccio's letters to Borghini in ASF, Strozziane, 1.133; ASF, Bardi, 3.33 and some of which is published in Bottari, Martini, Buonaventuri (1745). On Borghini, see also Gavitt (1997), 230–70. For sources documenting his contact with Cesalpino and Patrizi, see note 7 to Williams (1993), 212. Antonio Benivieni dedicated his biography of Piero Vettori to Baccio Valori, Benivieni (1583). Baccio was also the dedicatee of Massimo Aquilani's treatise on spice, Aquilani (1602).

vecchio, the family's connections to Savonarola, and their relationship to Marsilio Ficino and neo-Platonism.

The collection of documents concentrates most intensely on the family's troubled relationship to the Medici, which followed apparently steady cycles of close collaboration followed by bitter hostility. Baccio attempted to explain the tumultuous relationship in a manner that was politically neutral, without undermining the reputation of his ancestors. The principal function of the *zibaldone* was to explain and interpret the significance of the family's relationship to Florence and the Medici over a century and a half of chronic and turbulent political change.[9]

The document that deals with the political aspects of their relationship is a five folio history, written by a copyist, that considers the relationship between the two families from the early fifteenth century onward. It begins with the straightforward assertion that those who place the Valori family among the ranks of Medici opponents reveal their ignorance of Florentine history.[10] The history begins in the wake of the Ciompi revolt, during the first decade of the fifteenth century, when a triumphant oligarchy governed Florence. We are informed that the first Bartolomeo Valori was an ally of Giovanni d'Averardo de' Medici. The document refers the reader to the biography of Fra Angelico in Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Artists*.[11] Angelico left two pupils after his death, Benozzo Gozzoli and Zanobi Strozzi. Gozzoli is now most famous for the dynastic fresco in the Medici chapel. Vasari lists Strozzi's commissions, concluding with a commission from the Medici duke, whose wardrobe features a double portrait of Giovanni de' Medici and Bartolomeo Valori. Zanobi Strozzi's double portrait, now lost, is part of a civic tradition in Florentine painting in which *uomini famosi* of the regime are shown

[9] Cooper (1987), 301–25, argues that in spite of 'apparent allegiance' to the Medici, the Valori retained complementary Savonarolan and anti-Medicean loyalties throughout the sixteenth century. Her judgement, however, is based on a selective sampling of family members and selective sources. A broader perspective suggests that the Valori distinguished between the particular virtues and vices of different Medici rulers, and that opinions about the importance of the republic differed among family members, though their Savonarolan affiliation does appear consistent.

[10] 'Chiunque ha messo la famiglia de Valori tra le principale contrarie al Primato, e Principato de Medici si mostra poco pratico nelle storie, e notitie Fiorentine [. . .]' BNCF, Rinuccini 27, cassetta 3, unnumbered folio.

[11] '[. . .] il primo Bartolomeo Valori fu di maniera unito con Giovanni d'Averardo detto Bicci che non altro, leggesi nelle Vite de Pittori di Giorgio Vasari le effigie d'amendue essere in quei tempi in un quadro medesimo, e così haverla veduta egli in guardaroba del palazho publico [. . .]' Ibid.

united in portraiture.[12] The painting, and Vasari's widely read account of its contents and location in the Medici duke's cloakroom, constitute a powerful iconographic statement of the intertwined political roots of the two families.

In his biography of Masaccio, Vasari relates further evidence of Bartolomeo Valori's friendship to Giovanni de' Bicci. Masaccio painted a memorial of the consecration of the Carmine church that took place in the convent's cloister. The memorial featured portraits of the civic dignitaries who participated in the procession, wearing mantle and hood. Among the artists present were Filippo Brunelleschi and Donatello. The three principal politicians present were Niccolò da Uzzano, Giovanni de' Medici, and Bartolomeo Valori.[13] Again, we have powerful iconographic evidence of close association between Bartolomeo Valori and the leading figures of the early oligarchic regime. Niccolò da Uzzano was frequently described as the most influential politician of his day and, Machiavelli reminds us, was one of the few members of the oligarchy who advised against forcing a showdown with Cosimo de' Medici in the early 1430s.[14] The document also informs us that Bartolomeo's son, Niccolò, was a close friend and follower of Cosimo de' Medici, *pater patriae*, referring Ammirato's history of the family and family tree.[15]

The history skips over the middle decades of the fifteenth century, picking up the narrative during the tumultuous days in early November 1494, in which Francesco Valori and a handful of other patricians expelled the Medici from Florence. Francesco's participation in the republican revival of 1494 was the first time that a Valori formally

[12] According to Martin Wackernagel, the forerunner to this tradition is a small picture in the Uffizi, painted about 1400, that unites three painters of the Gaddi family. Castagno, Uccello, Fra Filippo, and Masaccio all undertook works of this genre, continuing the fresco cycles of *uomini famosi* and portraits of the jurists from the Palazzo del Proconsolo. The lost Zanobi panel belongs in this tradition as a posthumous double portrait of famous men. Wackernagel (1981), 170.

[13] Vasari (1987).

[14] Machiavelli (1989), I: 265. For Uzzano's prestige in the regime, see Dainelli (1932–33): 35 ff. and 185 ff. and Kent (1975), 579–81.

[15] '[. . .] e Niccolò figlio dell' istesso Bartolomeo dall' storico Ammirato sopra l'Albero dei Valori che egli mandò alla stampa è messo per amico e aderente a Cosimo de' Medici, detto Padre della Patria [. . .]' The family tree is among the collected family documents in ASF, Panciatichi, *Patrimonio Valori*, cassetta 1, 1, reprinted here on p. xiii. See also Niccolò's extensive correspondence with Cosimo in A.S.F., MAP. On the basis of that correspondence, Luigi Passerini described Niccolò as particularly partial to the Medici and, in the year of Cosimo de Medici's return from exile (1434), one of the most outspoken Medici partisans. Ademollo (1845), IV: 1289.

and aggressively entered ranks against the Medici, though not the last. The document asserts that it ought not be said that Francesco was opposed to the glory of Piero di Lorenzo, which, as we have seen, most contemporary accounts asserted. In this passage, Francesco is transformed from a significant catalyst in Piero's expulsion to an obedient and therefore patriotic servant of the republic's orders.

The document attempts to defuse the political implications of this episode in two ways. Paolo Giovio and other historians are cited to defend the assertion that Piero de' Medici had tempted fortune, relying not on the support of Florentine patricians, but on the arms of his Orsini relatives. Francesco's role in the expulsion, which by most accounts appears to have been seminal, is described here as a response to a pre-existing crisis. The text acknowledges that Francesco rode into the city with followers to assist in the expulsion; but here Francesco strikes out for Florence because he has heard that the Signoria and the people have already declared Piero de' Medici an enemy. The cause of the expulsion is the standard one, though expressed with a flourish: because of his rash behaviour, it was as if Piero de' Medici had given Charles VIII the Signoria of Pisa itself, from which one could foresee the ruin of the Florentine Republic.[16] In defence of this selective account of Piero's expulsion, the document cites Machiavelli's assertion that it was through no fault of Francesco's that the Medici government fell and that Francesco defended the Medici regime after Lorenzo's death—and we have seen that Machiavelli's verdict was coloured by his well-known connections to the Valori.

The document concludes its assessment of Francesco's life by reasserting that his prominence in the republican government does not constitute evidence of anti-Medicean convictions. We are told that it followed from Piero's actions that political favour was transferred from Piero to Francesco, considered a better guardian of the popular regime than all others, a perception that only increased after his alliance with Savonarola.[17] To hammer the point home, we are told that one should

[16] 'dico Francesco con gran seguito cavalcare la per la Città perchè all' hora la Signoria col popolo s'era già dichiarato nemico di Piero per la ricevuta ingiuria di havere lui concesso a Carolo ottavo può dirsi la Signoria di Pisa, e altri luoghi donde si prevedeva la rovina della Repubblica [. . .]' BNCF, Rinuccini 27, cassetta 3, unnumbered folio.

[17] '[. . .] e n'era seguito che il favore del governo tolto Piero da se per quella attione si rivolgette a Francesco stimato autorevole sopra tutti gli' altri a mantenere lo stato populare, come segue con l'unione seco di Fra Girolmao . . .' BNCF, Rinuccini 27, unnumbered folio.

conclude from this narrative that Francesco was advanced by the people only after Piero had been exiled from the city and after he had been declared a rebel. We are also reminded that the same Francesco had previously supported the greatness of Piero's father, Lorenzo *il magnifico*.[18]

The family history then moves from Francesco to the next generation of Valori: his two nephews, Filippo and Niccolò di Bartolomeo Valori. Lorenzo's inner circle all acknowledged that Filippo was among those closest to Lorenzo and that Lorenzo looked to Filippo first and foremost for council.[19] Niccolò, Filippo's brother, composed the life and deeds of Lorenzo in Latin, published by the Giunti press and which, the document proudly boasts, is available to the public in the Laurentian library. In Niccolò's biography, the two brothers emerge again as close confidants and advisors of Lorenzo.[20] The Lorenzo biography played a critical role rehabilitating the good standing of several Valori after their participation in republican revivals. Niccolò returned to Florentine affairs six years after the return of the Medici in 1512, holding office as one of the *Consoli dell' arte dei mercanti*, then one of the *Sei di mercanzia*, and finally as *podestà* of Arezzo. The biography was no less significant for subsequent generations: Niccolò's son Filippo translated it into Italian and dedicated it to Lucrezia Salviati, Lorenzo's daughter, and Baccio dedicated his father Filippo's Italian translation to Duke Cosimo I. Baccio himself acknowledged that his dubious position in Florence began to improve after the Medici duke expressed interest in the biography.[21]

The narrative then moves forward to the children of Niccolò and Filippo, Francesco and Bartolomeo, respectively. For the history of the

[18] '[. . .] Perciò conchiudesse che Francesco fu promosso dall' universale doppo che Piero era già fuoruscito del governo, come fu poi chiaramente dichiarato ribello, debbesse avvertire di più il medesimo Francesco haver per adietro aderito alla grandezza del Magnifico Lorenzo padre di detto Piero [. . .]' Ibid.

[19] '[. . .] et eredi non havendo Francesco figlioli, Filippo Valori essere stato uno de' più intimi di detto Lorenzo, e come s'usò dire all'hora, del cerchiellino; perciò l' storico Venetiano scrivendo di Lorenzo e Filippo in proposito lasciò scritto: cuius consilio in primis utebat Laurentius: [. . .]' Ibid.

[20] On the biography, see Chapter 3. '[. . .] E Niccolò fratel di Filippo pur' ne distese la Vita e l'attioni in lingua latina da vedersi per ognuno l'originale nella libreria di San Lorenzo, se bene leggasse stampata da Giunti detta opera vulgare tradotta da Filippo figlio di Niccolò in grazia di Madonna Lucretia de' Medici ne' Salviati, quindi può vedere il Ritratto de detto Magnifico Lorenzo nel mezho de' medesimi dua fratelli con questa inscrittione: Unius fratrum consilio, alterius calamo, usus [. . .]' BNCF, Rinuccini 27, cassetta 3, unnumbered folio.

[21] See Niccolini (1991), 10–11; Mehus (1749), x–xii.

Medici, in and out of Florence, these two nephews were the two most important members of the Valori family. They were among the first young Florentine *ottimati* to become disaffected with the government of Piero Soderini; they were also the first, therefore, to realign the family's political orientation back towards Medicean lines, since Francesco *il vecchio*'s sudden conversion in 1492. Bartolomeo and Francesco were principal figures in the restoration of Florence to Giovanni and Giulio de' Medici. From that moment on, Bartolomeo's status in the renewed Medici regime grew ever stronger, culminating in his appointment as Apostolic commissary-general of the Medici pope Clement VII's army during the siege of Florence. Through military skill, diplomatic finesse, and tireless industry, we are told, Bartolomeo liberated Florence from the siege, principally led by Orange and the imperial army. The document records with pride the ambassadorship to Charles V to which Bartolomeo's cousin Francesco was appointed after the victory, sent in the distinguished company of Palla Rucellai to negotiate the reform of the government in 1532.[22] Both Francesco and Bartolomeo had earned their place in the inner circle of Medici statesmen, where they remained until their defection to Filippo Strozzi's band of exiles in Bologna.

Of activity by the Valori against the Medici in the sixteenth century, only Niccolò Valori's complicity in the Boscoli-Capponi conspiracy is mentioned.[23] The history first asserts that the disgrace incurred by Niccolò for not having revealed Boscoli's conspiratorial intentions

[22] '[. . .] Baccio e Francesco loro respettivi figlioli furono instrumenti certissimi al principato d'Alessandro, e prima Baccio, fin l'anno 1512, a farsi capi e fautori a deporre il Gonfaloniere Soderini per mettere il governo in mano a' figlioli di detto Piero . . . e così l'anno '27 Baccio Generale Commessario Apostolico dell'esercito Imperial con la sua ostinata industria e fatica incomparabile preparò la vittoria, e conchiuse l'accordo liberando la città dall'assedio, e Francesco suo cugino figlo di Niccolò fu spedito in compagnia di Palla Rucellai ambasciadori a Carlo qquinto per la riforma del governo che segue l'anno 32 . . . ' BNCF, Rinuccini 27, cassetta 3, unnumbered folio.

[23] This appears odd at first, since for Baccio di Filippo, the compiler of these documents, Bartolomeo and Filippo's support of Filippo Strozzi's exile army against the Medici and their subsequent public execution after the Battle of Montemurlo must have been the most crucial moment of opposition. After all, it was on suspicion of sharing his grandfather's political sentiments that the Medici excluded the young Baccio from political and cultural prominence. But Baccio had already established a public commemoration of his father and uncle, a series of busts set into the façade of the Valori palazzo, along with an explanation of the iconography, published by Baccio's son Filippo. Having already explained the motivations of the first Valori opponent of the Medici, Francesco *il vecchio*, it remained only to defend Niccolò di Bartolomeo's actions to complete the political history of the family. Williams (1993).

cannot compare to the deeds undertaken by the Valori on behalf of the Medici. Niccolò's silence was not the result of approval for the conspiracy or the conspirators, nor was it simply to avoid censure. Niccolò simply did not consider Pietro Pagolo Boscoli and Agostino Capponi clever enough to carry through the undertaking.[24] The Niccolò Valori presented here is one whose actions are not determined by hostility to the Medici, which Baccio must have known contradicted the family's *ricordanze*. It includes seven and a half folios of Baccio's entry, following Niccolò's harsh criticism of the Medici for failing to observe their promise of operating within traditional Florentine constitutional restraints.[25]

As a final consideration, the document adds that Niccolò wished to avoid the scandal that he would cause by becoming the cause of the conspirators' destruction.[26] This must be a reference to Francesco *il vecchio*'s controversial role in the execution of the five Medici conspirators in 1498. Francesco actively lobbied for the execution of conspirators against the state and was deeply resented by many citizens for it. The passage implies that Niccolò was reluctant to repeat the steps that had brought his uncle so much hostility. We have already examined the widespread indignation and resentment that the executions caused in 1497; the Valori appear to have felt as much need, if not more, to justify the executions in the late sixteenth century as they had in the fifteenth. Shortly after the event, Francesco's great admirer and nephew Niccolò wrote a straightforward and relatively simple Savonarolan defense of Francesco's actions, arguing that Francesco had to condemn the conspirators because they were opposed to liberty and the popular regime.[27]

[24] 'Non può dunque o spegnere o scancellare le attioni così benemerite verso il signore Medici la disgratia nella quale incorse il med[esimo] Niccolò per non havere palesato il segreto communicatoli da Pietro Pagolo Boscoli contro il Cardinale Giovanni poi Leone decimo, se egli se ne ritenne così per non crederlo punto habile con Agostino Capponi a tentare no[n] che eseguire il suo cattivo animo come p[er] sfuggire biasimo [. . .]' BNCF, Rinucinni, 27, cassetta 3, unnumbered folio.

[25] '[. . .] non molto di poi dopo la fede data, i Medici feciono uno violentissimo parlamento [. . .] et fuori d'ogna promessa et così la libertà si ridusse nello arbitrio loro [. . .]' BNCF, Panciat. 134, fol. 17v.

[26] 'se no[n] infamia d'esser causa col darne notitia della destruttioni loro e forse altri nobili cittad[ini] [. . .]' BNCF, Rinucinni, 27, cassetta 3, unnumbered folio.

[27] '[. . .] perchè pochi anni di poi congiurano contro la libertà et vivere populare, di che nacque che cinque furono decapitati et non molto poi la medesima parte com parte del popolo (vagho sempre di cose nuove) et con parte di questi che haveanno concorso alla cacciata del tiranno et alla morte de' cinque, come persone di poco iudicio,

Almost a century later, Baccio's *zibaldone* undertakes a much more elaborate and legalistic defence of the execution of the 1497 conspirators. Arguing against Paolo Giovio and others, the document recalls that the judgement of execution followed proper judicial procedure and that, therefore, Francesco was merely enforcing the law. We are informed that *Otto di guardia* had been given its commission by the *Signoria* and the *gonfalonieri*. Their deliberations incorporated the judgements of the Colleges, the Ten, the Council of 80, and other magistrates numbering 156 in total. And finally, the executions of the charged and convicted were carried out by the proper officials. Contemporaries of this event, even Guicciardini, himself a lawyer, debated the justice of the executions, but rarely the legality.[28] We will see in the next chapter that Silvano Razzi made the same argument more publicly and formally.

Consider also the way in which the *zibaldone* remembers the relationship between Savonarola and the Valori. Baccio respected and honoured his family's tradition of Savonarolism; he associated with and patronized the literary activities of the two Dominican and Savonarolan brothers, Serafino and Silvano Razzi.[29] The family decorated the site of Savonarola's execution with flowers for as long as the lineage existed in Florence (1687).[30] Baccio must also have had a personal interest in reading Savonarola's sermons, as he preserved a letter from his agent in Rome assuring him of the legality of his Savonarolan texts. Composed while Sixtus V lay on his deathbed and the election of Urban VII was imminent, Valori's contact in Rome assures Baccio that he has a copy of a letter from Cardinal Santa Severina, head of the Holy Office, to the Florentine Inquisitor, requesting that the Inquisitor return Baccio's

fatto tumulto alla improviso, amazzarano Francesco Valori . . . ' BNCF, Panciat. 134, f. 17–17v.

[28] 'Il Giovio, e altri, che dannano sì atrocemente la resolutione fata pe[r] cittadini condennati a morte, negandosi loro l'appello domandato, mostrano non sapere come il giudizio seguisse; presupponendolo di pochi, e così cattivo, dove la verità è che la cosa andò giustificata, e che sotto dì 21 d'agosto 1497 gli otto, avuto la commissione de' Signori e gonfalonieri, che deliberarono servatis servandis col parere de' Collegi, x, otto di balìa, e altri magistrati, Consiglio delli 80, e altri arroti che furono tutti di numero 156, commissero al Capitano della piazza, et egli al Maestro di giustizia l'execuzione, e morte di Bernardo del Nero, Niccolò Ridolfi, Lorenzo Tornabuoni, Gianozzo Pucci e Giovanni Cambi imputati e convinti ribelli per havere trattato di rimettere Piero de' Medici nimico, e rebelle dello stato.' BNCF, Rinuccini 27, cassetta 3, unnumbered folio.

[29] See their works commemorating Savonarola and notable statesmen of the fifteenth century. BNCF, MS II. III. 172: Serafino Razzi, *Vita del Rev[eren]do Padre Fra Girolamo Savonarola*; Silvano Razzi (1737) and (1602).

[30] Gherardi (1887), 366–7.

books, since other Savonarolan works pointed out to him were not prohibited.[31]

Yet little reference is made to the millenarian strain of republicanism associated with the Savonarolan movement, though ample testimony exists in Niccolò's entries in the *Ricordanze*.[32] The emphasis here is on Savonarola's political objective: the establishment of a government along Venetian lines. Although explicitly republican, the Venetian system, with its closed aristocracy, doge, and senate, shared basic structural similarities with Florentine government under the Medici dukes, with the Knights of Santo Stefano, the duke, and the senate. By portraying Savonarola's political goals in Venetian terms, this document transforms Savonarola's reputation for radical moral and political reform into an association with political conservatism, order, and stability—ideal associations in Grand Ducal Florence. Furthermore, the document links the establishment of a *gonfaloniere a vita* with Savonarola's lobbying for a Grand Council, which reinforces the ducal parallel, though of course Soderini was not created *gonfaloniere a vita* until four years after Savonarola's death—Savonarola's ducal counterbalance to the council was Christ.[33]

The relationship between Francesco Valori and Savonarola is characterized as a political necessity, rather than as a natural alliance of like-minded reformers. Much of this account appears to be based on the Savonarolan trial documents discussed in Chapter 3, though a few changes have been made. Whereas Savonarola had asserted in 1498 that Francesco Valori had approached him first, this account suggests that Savonarola was the first to recognize that the faction-ridden movement had to be united behind a single leader.[34] The document reaffirms several other details: that the relatively small family size of the Valori and Francesco's lack of children made him an ideal candidate for party leader, that Savonarola used Francesco as intermediary between himself

[31] '[. . .] Havremo una lettera dal Card[inal]e Santa Severina capo della Congregatione del Santo Offitio, all' Inquisitore di Fiorenza, che li renda li libri che tiene di V. S., poiché altre opere del Savonarola, che le notate, non sono prohibite. . .' BNCF, Rinuccini 27, cassetta 3, unnumbered folio. On Savonarola's writings and the Congregation for the Index, see Rubertis (1953), 54–8.

[32] BNCF, Panciat. 134, fols. 16–17v.

[33] 'Fra Girolamo approvava in Fir[en]ze governo civile al modo Veneziano in quella maniera che si potesse, cioè crearsi un Doge, o Gonfaloniere à vita. . .' BNCF, Rinuccini 27, cassetta 3, unnumbered folio.

[34] 'Fra Girolamo, vedendo i grandi disuniti, procurò unione fra loro, la quale non potendo durare senza capo, giudicò più a proposito del bene publico, più di alcuno altro, Francesco Valori, e lo favorì [. . .]' Ibid.

and princes and ambassadors, and that Savonarola frequently dealt with criticism of Francesco from other party leaders.[35] Finally, reinforcing the political necessity that underlay the relationship between the two, the document reminds the reader that Savonarola, although at times concerned about Francesco's ambition, was unable and unwilling to try to establish a regime without him and others, as he lacked Francesco's political expertise and connections.[36]

The memory of Francesco *il vecchio* and his role in Florentine history is brought up again in a folio devoted to Jean Bodin's treatment of Florence.[37] The point of departure is a passage in Bodin's *Methodus* of 1566 that discusses the type and evolution of the Florentine empire. Bodin bases his account of Florentine political development on Machiavelli's *Istorie fiorentine* and employs it to demonstrate the dangers of fragmented sovereignty.[38] Bodin's account of Florentine history between 1215 and 1512 is characterized by constant, divisive, and violent class conflict. Each 'stage' of history features a different variation on aristocratic domination followed by violent popular upheaval. In Bodin's estimation, two evils account for the chronic turbulence of Florentine political life: Florentines tended to prefer popular rule to aristocratic rule and the effective functioning of government depended on frequently rotated offices, rather than a stable senate. Bodin uses Florentine history to provide a cautionary tale

[35] '[. . .] sicuro non si potesse, né anche volesse [Francesco] fare Tiranno non havendo figluoli maschi, nè seguaci per la sua severità, e in due modi lo favorì: l'uno per celebrarlo in tutte l'occasioni, che si gli offerivano, e in rimettere a lui tutti i personaggi de Re, e Principi, che venivano a trattare seco e facevano capo a lui; l'altro con confortare Gio[van] Bat[tist]a Ridolfi, Alamanno, e Iacopo Salviati, e simili cittadini principali a stare seco uniti [. . .]' Ibid.

[36] 'Se bene fra Gir[ola]mo sospettò alcuna volta che Fran[ces]co, ristrettosi con alcuni pochi, non facesse uno stato a suo modo senza lui, come inesperto de cose di stato, rispettò non solo a Fran[ces]co, ma a Gio[van] Bat[tist]a Ridolfi, e Pagol Ant[oni]o Soderini, e loro aderenti . . . ' Ibid.

[37] It is unclear whether this passage was written by Baccio Valori or Silvano Razzi, about whom Eric Cochrane asserts 'Silvano read through the historical works of Guicciardini, Nardi, and Varchi . . . for the impeccably humanist purpose of defending the honour of his fellow Florentines from the unflattering judgements of Jean Bodin.' Cochrane (1981), 417. I think it is more likely that the historiographical and biographical initiative to refute Jean Bodin came from Baccio Valori, who collected testimonies of almost everyone who wrote about Francesco Valori and who clearly assisted Razzi with his biography of Francesco. A draft for Francesco Valori's life is preserved in the *zibaldone* in Baccio's hand, parts of which reappear in Razzi's life of Francesco, suggesting that Razzi had solicited information on Francesco from Baccio—discussed in detail in the last chapter.

[38] Machiavelli's *Istorie fiorentine* appeared in French in 1577. Cochrane (1981), 321.

about allowing sovereignty to reside in the masses; the wealthy and wise citizens will always be driven from the city, leaving power either in the hands of the mob or in the hands of tyrants.

Bodin uses Valori as one of several examples of this rule. After the expulsion of the Medici in 1494, according to Bodin, the mob stampeded back and forth like a flock without a shepherd, fearing the designs of men and of wild beasts. After the establishment of the popular government, pushed through by Savonarola's 'rioting throngs', the people began to be oppressed by Soderini and Francesco Valori. Again, the mob revolted and drove 'the most powerful classes' from control, which must be a reference to the turbulent events of 1498, during which the Savonarolan movement fell from power. The catalyst for this particular round of violence was Francesco Valori's tyranny, made clear when he 'checked an appeal to the people'.[39]

Bodin incorporated his reflections on Francesco Valori and Florence into the larger interpretation of sovereignty advanced in his *Six Books of the Republic* of 1576–77. Elaborating on the nine true marks of sovereignty in book one, Bodin identifies the right of last appeal as the fourth mark. All states exercising true sovereignty have a system of appeal from the judgements of magistrates, which Livy called the foundation of popular liberty. According to Bodin, it was Francesco Valori's (misidentified as Duke of Florence—perhaps a confusion between Valori and Soderini, the *gonfaloniere a vita*, or *doge*, in Venetian terms) obstruction of a basic judicial appeal that resulted in his assassination. Bodin frequently refers to Valori's 'tyranny', using it to illustrate several points: the honour and prestige conveyed by princely titles becomes undermined when the 'worst men' arrogate to themselves those titles; for example, the immoderate ambition of Francecso Valori made the name *gonfaloniere* hateful to the Florentines. The greatest evil in governments of aristocratic rule occurs when an ambitious politician incites the people against the nobility; again, for example, in Florence Francesco Valori and Piero Soderini armed the people against the nobility, which led to the 'certain destruction' of the aristocracy.[40]

There are obvious inconsistencies in Bodin's various interpretations; in one chapter he used Valori as an example of aristocratic tyranny, hated by the people; in another, he used Valori as an example of the dangers posed by aristocrats who become leaders of the people and

[39] Bodin (1966), 244–9. [40] Bodin (1962), 429.

incite them against the aristocracy. In the context of Bodin's sprawling and eclectic work, inconsistencies in a relatively minor subject are not of considerable significance. However, for Baccio Valori, Bodin's less than perfect command of Florentine history and his frequent use of Francesco to illustrate the instability and danger of republican politics required refutation. In all of the previous examples, Bodin has used Francesco Valori and Florence to illustrate his central and recurring thesis: that regimes organized around competing sovereign institutions result in damaging political consequences.

The documents in Baccio's *zibaldone* that address Bodin set out to demonstrate, in systematic fashion, Bodin's misunderstanding of Florentine history. We are informed that Bodin and other authors, such as Paolo Giovio, who fashion tyrants out of Soderini and Valori are mistaken. The defence here takes up Niccolò's Savonarolan interpretation from the late-fifteenth century, that of the civic martyr Francesco, who suffered and died for the common good, as attested by the people.[41] The document attributes Bodin's remarks to a misreading of Machiavelli's *Discorsi* and Guicciardini's *Storia d'Italia*. Machiavelli the historian must have furnished considerable evidence for Bodin's interpretation of sovereignty, as the two themes Machiavelli repeatedly returns to are the proper republican construction of rival corporations and the chronically faction-ridden turbulence of Florentine political life. The document points to the seventh chapter of the first book of the *Discorsi*, in which Machiavelli uses both Valori and Soderini as examples of 'how much rebellion' Florence has experienced when 'popular rage' against one of its citizens cannot be vented in a lawful way.[42] Adjacent to this folio, Baccio has included a brief summary of commentaries on Francesco written by the Dominican biographer Silvano Razzi. In addition to the Machiavelli and Guicciardini, Razzi includes testimony by the Milanese historian Bernardo Corio, who identifies Valori as the leader of Savonarola's followers. Unlike Machiavelli and Guicciardini, however, Corio's interpretation of Savonarola

[41] '[. . .] Queste sono le parole di Gio[vanni] Bodino nel suo *methodo di Istoria*, dove parla dello stato, et conversione de l'imperio fior[entin]o, ma inganna se, et altri a fare questi due Tiranni ciasc[hun]o de' quali patì sempre pel ben publico, e morì, come si dice pel populo [. . .]' BNCF, Rinuccini 27, cassetta 3, unnumbered folio.

[42] '[. . .] et se gli ultimi storici, da lui allegati per guida, parlano dell' uno, e dell' altro, come capi della Republica in particolare di Fran[ces]co, l'uno nel settimo cap[itol]o del primo libro esemplifica così *come intervene ne' tempi di Fran[ces]co Valori, che era come Principe della Città* [. . .]' BNCF, Rinuccini 27, cassetta 3, unnumbered folio. (Text underlined by Baccio to indicate direct quotation of Machiavelli.)

is entirely *piagnone*—it presents Savonarola as a genuine prophet, reformer, and wise man.[43] But, we are not unreasonably told, none of these testimonies argue for tyranny, but speak of legitimate power in a republican state—being like a prince and having considerable authority does not support Bodin's interpretation of tyranny, nor does his account of the popular classes driving the powerful elite from the city.[44]

Finally, but not least significantly, the *zibaldone* memorializes the close relationship between the Valori family, Marsilio Ficino, and Florentine neo-Platonism. In one of the few documents written in Baccio's hand, we have a brief biography of Francesco Valori that emphasizes his commitment to Platonic philosophy and Marsilio Ficino, and that also adopts the argument set out by the fifteenth-century humanists and Niccolò Valori's biography of Lorenzo that the study of Platonism prepares citizens for responsibility in government. Baccio asserts that in his youth Francesco was devoted to the study of Platonism, that his precocity was admired, and that he esteemed and favoured Marsilio Ficino, whose gratitude to the Valori he expressed formally and publicly on several occasions. Having studied such philosophy in Ficino's company, it is no surprise that Francesco became a great statesman and understood how to apply his wisdom in practice, which all good citizens recognized.[45] The following folio announces with

[43] 'Et perché il processo dil predicto è memorabile, diremo che ne li giorni passati a Firenze si ritrovò lo Savonarola, homo callido et acutissimo de ingegno e di sì profundo sapere ne la Sacra Scriptura quanto a tempi nostri sia stato un altro, il che se approba per le dignissime opere componute per lui. Costui faceva vita più austera che non lo astringeva la sua regula e nel templo di Sancto Marco con tanto fervore e spirito de profetia predicava, che haveva incredibile concorso e per commune voce era existimato sancto homo. Predixe molte cose, come fu la venuta de Galli, la expulsione de Pietro de Medici e molti altri successi, e tanto fu lo ingengo de costui che tutto il populo avezò al suo favore . . . Il perché con odio incredibile ne la città si suscitorono doe factione nominate Piagnoni, interpretate ypocriti, capo de quali era Francesco Valore; l'altra era dicta Bigi: questi sono homini che vano vestiti de biso e dentro sono lupi rapaci . . .' Corio (1978), 1611.

[44] '[. . .] parole che non arguiscono più tiranni, che potenza legittima, oltre che quell fatto, dove ne parla, si giustifica assai legittimo dal sapere quello, che non seppe lui, né volle sapere il Giovio, o altri che li difetti.' BNCF, Rinuccini 27, cassetta 3, unnumbered folio.

[45] 'ma il suo principal studio, pervenuto che egli fu agl'anni della sua giovinezza, pose intorno alla Filosofia Platonica, la quale, ammirando etiandio in altrui, e massimam[ent]e nel suo Maestro, fu cagione che egli cotanto amasse e benificasse il gran Platonico Ficino, quanto mostra esso in più luoghi e maggiorm[ent]e in una l[ette]ra a Niccolò Valori figlio di Bartolomeo suo fratello, dedicandoli il suo Comento sopra il Palmenide, che ancor oggi si trova nella libreria di S[an] Lorenzo, dove egli confessa riconoscer[e] da lui tutto che havea da poter vivere and attendere a' suoi studi [. . .] Di maniera che

pride Ficino's affection for the Valori family, publicly affirmed in the *Proemio* of the *Platonic Commentaries*, and introduces a transcription made from the copy in the Laurentian library.[46]

During the Florentine sixteenth century, there was an indisputable transformation, at least in status, of citizens into nobles.[47] Feudal and chivalric elements of heraldry and lineage had always been present throughout the Renaissance, but these signals of status took on additional significance after the increased and consistent involvement of the Habsburg and Valois dynasties in Italian politics. The Italian sixteenth century witnessed the birth and proliferation of treatises and guidebooks for manners, court etiquette, and aristocratic conduct, both public and private. Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano* and Giovanni della Casa's *Galateo* are the most famous examples of this genre, but many others circulated in the sixteenth century.[48]

Contemporaneous with court literature was the publication of numerous treatises on the genealogy of Florentine patrician families: Francesco de Vieri's *Primo libro della nobiltà* of 1572, Lorenzo Giacomini's *Della nobiltà delle lettere e delle armi* of 1576, Vincenzo Borghini's heraldic treatise *Delle armi delle famiglie fiorentine* of 1585, and Paolo Mini's *Discorso della nobiltà di Firenze e dei fiorentini*.[49] After the foundation of the Order of Santo Stefano in 1562, which required 'proof' of nobility for admission, a five-fold increase in patents of nobility were registered in the *Pratica segreta*.[50] For scholars such as R. Burr Litchfield and Furio Diaz such developments reveal a genuine transformation in the patriciate's self-identity.[51]

However, it is unclear to what extent such events indicate discontinuity in the traditional political culture of Florentine patricians. The

havendo apparato dalla politica e viva voce di Maestro a governar la Rep[ubbli]ca, non fu gran fatto che egli, che se gli offersero in tanti, maneggi di stato, sapesse cotal scientia metter in pratica. Il che tutto fu ottimamente conosciuto a buoni e dalli altri lasciato per esempio [. . .]' Ibid.

[46] '[. . .] e prima da lui il gran Marsilio Ficino nel proemio di suoi Commentari Platonici, che si conservano nella libreria di San Lorenzo, del quale proemio è qui inserto la copia transcrito.' Ibid. Much of this passage is also repeated almost verbatim in Razzi's *Vita di Francesco Valori*.

[47] Diaz (1980), 527–87.

[48] For example, see BNCF, Capponi, 261, 1, *Diario e Cerimoniale della Corte medicea, tenuto da Cesare Tinghi, aiutante del Granduca Ferdinando I (dal 22 Luglio 1600 al 9 Novembre 1623)*. See also Baker (1972), 582–616; Berner (1971), 203–46.

[49] Borghini's heraldic treatise was dedicated to Baccio. ASF, Carte Strozziane, 1.107; another copy in BNCF, Magliabecchi, 190.

[50] Litchfield (1986), 28.

[51] Litchfield (1986); Diaz (1980) and (976).

great houses of Florentine politics had of course first emerged in the late Middle Ages as feudal and chivalric aristocracies. The triumph of guild republicanism resulted in the Ordinances of Justice of 1293, which required Florentine aristocrats to renounce their magnate status to remain eligible for political office.[52] Most families found that formal renunciation of status caused little change in habits of thought and political values. The Ordinances were followed by the decline of the corporate commune, inaugurating a steady, seemingly inexorable, process of oligarchic, elitist entrenchment, arguably the single greatest continuity in Florentine politics throughout the Renaissance.[53] Florentine patricians had been establishing genealogies as far back at least as Dante, who traced his family to Cacciaguida in the twelfth century. Writing about the Medici court of the mid-sixteenth century, Litchfield observed that nobility 'began to be thought of as an inherited quality'.[54] Yet one of his principal examples, the foundation of the knightly Order of Santo Stefano, served principally as a vehicle for the advancement of new men.[55] One further wonders if Litchfield is describing a genuinely novel development in patrician self-identity when Gene Brucker, in his authoritative study of Trecento political culture, concluded that '[b]lood—not wealth nor professional status nor personal virtue—was the basic criterion for locating individuals on the ill-defined rungs of Florence's social hierarchy'.[56] If Giovanni Morelli wrote in his *Ricordi*, cynically observing his peers in the late fourteenth century, that 'today everyone is descended from ancient origins, so I want to record the truth about ours'[57] (and this in a regime which penalized magnate status), how much more apparent obsession with status would naturally emerge in the ducal regime of the 1560s?

For many reasons, the Florentine concept of nobility was amorphous, shifting its emphases and nuances with the frequent shifts in regime. The veneer of titles (or absence thereof) found in official court documents is perhaps not the best place to gauge the degree to which the Florentine patrician's mental landscape changed as a result of Medici ducal hegemony. Private documents, particularly the autobiographical, biographical, and familial, provide the historian a more direct glimpse into patrician values and identity.

[52] Najemy (1982), 44–8.
[53] See Stephens (1983).
[54] Litchfield (1986), 31.
[55] See Guarnieri (1966), vol. IV. See also Angiolini (1996).
[56] Brucker (1977), 31.
[57] Branca (1956).

It would be difficult to make sense of Baccio's *zibaldone* without a functional and contextual interpretation of the various documents. During the fifteenth century, patricians carefully recorded the exact details of their office-holding to establish political credentials in a regime with an ill-defined and amorphous political elite. Political flux and instability inspired Florentine patricians to commemorate their actions, to associate themselves with the forces of political continuity in the regime. The same characterization is true for the later sixteenth century, though from Baccio's perspective the instability had changed from the fluctuations in the composition of the ruling elite to the status of the Medici in Florence. Expelled from the city in 1494 and 1527, the nascent regime of the 1530s hardly seemed assured of its status; Duke Alessandro de' Medici had been assassinated in 1537, followed immediately by the mustering of the *fuorusciti* army to wrest the government from Cosimo, the young and surprised inheritor of Alessandro's position.[58] These events, and the Valori's relationship to them, form the core of the *zibaldone*. Without the imposing prospect of continued Spanish occupation after 1537, many Florentines would have been disinclined lightly to accept Medicean authoritarian rule. It was only after the successful outcome of the War of Siena in 1557 and the formal investiture of Cosimo with Siena, by Philip II of Spain, that the regime began to appear secure on all fronts.[59] The ebb and flow of Medici power, more than any other factor, lay behind Baccio's compilation of family records.

Baccio demonstrated the political standing of his family in the same way that patricians of the fifteenth century had done: proven experience in political office. In Baccio's case, this involved demonstrating that his family, throughout the oscillating fortunes of *casa* Medici, had consistently identified the common good with Medici ascendancy. The *zibaldone* scrupulously set out on paper the offices held and functions performed by the Valori, consistent in their service and loyalty in spite of the fluctuations of fortune. In many cases, the *zibaldone* provided a record of the political services rendered by members of the family who failed to record their actions in the family *ricordanze*. Reflecting the current post-Baronian concept of fifteenth-century civic humanism, the *zibaldone* presents the family as devoid of special interests and particular policies, willing and grateful to serve, and whose moments of influence

[58] On the perceived fragility of the Medici regime, see Jurdjevic (2006).
[59] Albertini (1970), 280–305.

and participation in political life are the result of loyalty and virtue, rather than indisputable rights of nobles.

The points of cultural emphasis do not suggest that the aristocratic court culture established by the Medici dukes significantly altered Baccio's conception of the family's history and traditions. Baccio includes a letter informing him of the legality of the friar's texts in the eyes of Inquisitorial censors, he elaborates on the constitutional reforms proposed by Savonarola, and chronicles the testimony of contemporaries who understood that the friar's influence was dependent, in significant ways, on his friendship with Francesco Valori. Their friendship with and loyalty to Marsilio Ficino and their part in the revival of Platonic philosophy receives special attention; the value and importance of neo-Platonism, we are explicitly told, lies not in its utility for contemplation nor its encouragement to redirect the individual from corrupting worldly affairs, but in its practical moral utility as a guidebook for citizens about to shoulder the responsibilities of public office.

6

The Last Portraits of the Valori Family

Florentines remained no less fascinated with the history of their city and its great families in the early seventeenth century as they had been in the fourteenth and fifteenth, but the transformation from republic to duchy had correspondingly transformed the nature and style of that fascination. The tendency of some communal historians and humanists of the early Renaissance to view the conceptual heart of the city in terms of republican institutions and vocabularies from which the great families derived status, rank, and pride gave way to a more aristocratic conception in which the city derived its status and pride from the lineage and nobility of its great families. Specialists in genealogy and heraldry such as Vincenzo Borghini and Paolo Mini became the kind of intellectual hubs in the Grand Ducal period that humanists such as Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni had been during the oligarchical republican period.[1]

All of these changes of course reflected the primacy and security of Medici power. In the new centralized Medici state, noble status was a precondition for a position at court, and most Florentine families expended considerable energy attempting to establish their nobility, often in the form of patents granted by the Medici dukes. But a family's eagerness to demonstrate to the Medici and their peers a proper aristocratic and courtly posture necessarily involved a ceremonial invocation of the city's republican past and the family's special role in it, since service in high republican office was one of the standard barometers of the Florentine variety of nobility. All Florentine families thus had to reinterpret their republican past in ways that suggested broad continuities in political priority and values with the new Medici state. The tone adopted was usually a neutral statement about the family's longstanding tradition of political service, without specific ideological or constitutional loyalties, though occasionally open discontent with

[1] Litchfield (1986), 30–5.

the Medici regime and ducal culture flared, such as the conspiracy of Roberto Pucci.

This chapter looks at the last two histories of the Valori family written in the early seventeenth century, Scipione Ammirato's *Delle famiglie nobili fiorentine* and Don Silvano Razzi's *Vita di Francesco Valori il più vecchio*, that reveal the often difficult process of accommodation to Medici court culture.[2] Razzi's book (1602) was published before Ammirato's (1615), but since Ammirato died in 1601 the exact date of composition is unclear. Both works were clearly written with the blessing and assistance of Baccio Valori. They are laudatory, sympathetic, and apologetic, where appropriate, certain passages in both were written after evident consultation of private family papers, and both place special emphasis on the family's prized tradition of Savonarolan and Ficinian loyalty. Certain passages in both are virtually identical, which further suggests collaboration with the Valori themselves: both Razzi and Ammirato quote in detail Machiavelli's later sketch of Francesco Valori from his *Nature di huomini fiorentini*;[3] both Razzi and Ammirato cite Verino and Cristoforo Landino on the family's origins; and both invoke in identical ways Luca della Robbia and Vincenzo Borghini on the family's lineage.

They are notably different, however, in political substance and style. As the court historian to Grand Duke Ferdinand and therefore dependent on Medici patronage himself, Ammirato's history avoided discussing the awkward issue of the family's many moments of hostility to the Medici. He surveyed the entire family's history, situating the family's notable republican moments within a broader context of fairly consistent alliance with the ruling family and explaining those moments without invoking a Savonarolan anti-Medicean political ideology. Indeed, in most instances the turbulence of the Valori family's political life during the Savonarolan years is evidence for Ammirato of the dangers of populist politics and the fickleness of the populace. He did, however, discuss the defection of Bartolomeo and Filippo from the Medici camp in the 1530s and the disastrous outcome of their battle

[2] Razzi (1602), pp. 181–98. Razzi first published the book without Francesco's life under the title *Vite di quattro huomini illustri* (1580). The other four biographies were of Niccolò da Uzzano, Farinata degli Uberti, and Averardo and Cosimo de' Medici; he also wrote biographies of Countess Matilda of Tuscany and Piero Soderini.

[3] Since the *Nature di huomini fiorentini* was not published until the nineteenth century, I suspect that Razzi and Ammirato consulted Machiavelli's *quadernuccio* or Baccio Valori's transcription.

against Cosimo I at Montemurlo in 1537. Most notably, Ammirato used the consequent executions of the Valori father and son as a vehicle for elaborating and defending absolutist political theory.

In contrast, Razzi, a Dominican and Savonarolan apologist, fashioned his biography of Francesco Valori into an uncompromising defence of Francesco's political career and opposition to Piero de' Medici, revealing the persistence in the family's patronage circle of a powerful undercurrent of republican and *piagnone* resentment of Medici power. Razzi's choice of Francesco for the biography had a polemical dimension itself, given Francesco's role in the expulsion of the Medici in 1494, his vocal endorsement of the execution of the Medicean conspirators, and his prominence in the Savonarolan movement.

As the official court historian in Florence and a cultural insider of the Grand Ducal state, it is perhaps unsurprising that Scipione Ammirato's history of the Valori family treats their historical relationship to the Medici with far more political sensitivity than Razzi's biography. Razzi was firmly entrenched in Savonarolan circles, relatively far from the centres of power, whereas Ammirato had been appointed court historian by Cosimo I in 1569 and was the director of the *Accademia Fiorentina*. He was Neapolitan, and hence in his historical writings about Florence was considerably freer than many Florentine patricians who were often directly or indirectly implicated in the events they discussed by virtue of their ancestors' participation in them. Ammirato spent most of his adult life in monarchic Naples and ducal Florence, and so was relatively out of touch with the republican sensibilities of many Florentines. And most famously, he was the author of the *Discorsi sopra Cornelio Tacito*, the monarchical answer to and refutation of most of Machiavelli's maxims from the *Discorsi sopra Tito Livio* and a key foundation text for the emerging political theory of *ragion di stato*.[4]

On cultural and intellectual issues, Ammirato's history of the family is entirely consistent with the family mythology as expressed in Niccolò Valori's *Vita di Lorenzo*, Della Robbia's *Vita di Bartolomeo il vecchio*, and Razzi's *Vita di Francesco*.[5] Ammirato draws on those texts as sources and places special emphasis, much as they do, on the family's loyalty

[4] On Ammirato's political writings, see de Mattei (1963); and Cochrane (1973), 116–48.

[5] Though with minor aristocratic details lacking in the earlier works such as detailed analysis of the family coat-of-arms. Ammirato disputed the claim that it is easier to date and define nobility in kingdoms and principates. Since nobility consists of antiquity, splendour, and similar things, its far easier to trace such things in prominent republican

to and friendship with Girolamo Savonarola and Marsilio Ficino. His summary of Bartolomeo *il vecchio* portrays him as a stoic, disinterested politician with a keen appetite for Platonic philosophy, for which he was specifically praised by Ficino.[6] He quotes correspondence between Ficino and Niccolò Valori in which Ficino praises Niccolò's patriotism and Platonic patronage and he observes that Filippo's decision to fund the publication of Ficino's translations of Plato and Platonic writers was emblematic of the family's larger commitment to Ficino and philosophical study, and also of the currently fashionable aristocratic virtue of liberality.[7]

But Ammirato's history notably differs from the major texts in the family tradition in its political style, stripping the narrative almost entirely of its republican dimension. In his discussion of Francesco *il vecchio*, the crucial figure in so much of the family's own writing on their history, Ammirato avoids analysis of Francesco's conflict with Piero de' Medici in 1494 and interprets the infamous trial and execution of the conspirators in 1497 as a conflict between Savonarolans and *arrabbiati*, not between Savonarolans and Mediceans. The primary theme in his broad analysis of the family's political history from 1400 to the present is a shift from popular to aristocratic alliances. In his discussion of the other crucial figure in the Valori–Medici relationship, Bartolomeo, who helped topple Soderini's government and restore the Medici in 1512 but who marched against Duke Cosimo with Filippo Strozzi and the Florentine exiles in 1537, Ammirato interprets his political oscillation as the product of vanity and an idle, ultimately destructive desire for novelty, not as a republican repudiation of Medici centralization in Florence. And he uses the disaster that befalls the family following the battle of Montemurlo as the occasion to deliver a set-piece oration on absolutist political theory.

Ammirato surveys most members of the family briefly and concisely. He begins his family history with an account of the emergence of the Valori as central citizens in the fourteenth-century commune. Taldo Valori participated in the international banking of the Bardi, one of several Florentines who had loaned substantial sums to Edward III to finance his campaigns in Normandy. After Edward defaulted on his loans and it became clear that no profits would be realized, Taldo

families, since republics have pronounced traditions of public writing and records such as the *priorista*. See Ammirato's comments in his *Avviso a lettori*, Ammirato (1615), 4–6.

[6] Ammirato (1615), 99–100, 104. [7] Ibid., 103.

abandoned business matters and devoted himself to the affairs of the republic, much as Lorenzo de' Medici had done in the 1480s, Ammirato tells us. After Taldo, one of the recurring themes is the family's alliance with the Medici. Of Taldo's grandson and great-grandson, Niccolò and Bartolomeo *il vecchio*, Ammirato explains that in the factional division of the city between adherents of the Medici and the Albizzi, the Valori were central figures in the Medicean *reggimento* and committed, consistent office-holders in the republic.[8] Drawing on Niccolò Valori's *Vita di Lorenzo*, Ammirato explains that Niccolò's brother Filippo was a close ally and friend of Lorenzo de' Medici who worked hard to win over Lorenzo's enemies and upon whose loyalty Lorenzo crucially depended during the Pazzi conspiracy of 1478.[9]

Ammirato devotes considerably more detail to the two crucial figures of Francesco *il vecchio* and his brother Bartolomeo, around whom the most volatile political periods in the family's history and relationship to the Medici occurred. Ammirato and Razzi wrote about Francesco's relationship to Lorenzo in similar, and occasionally identical, terms. They both point out that Francesco and Lorenzo entered politics at the same age, they both outline the various ways in which Francesco provided crucial assistance to Lorenzo with his Florentine and peninsular policies. Relating the circumstances surrounding Francesco's third appointment as Standard Bearer of Justice, they both use the identical term that it occurred while 'Piero ruled the city as boss and prince'.[10] And they both concluded their accounts of Francesco with the judgement that he was one of the great citizens of the Florentine *patria*, recognized by many as a statesman of exceptional natural judgement, long experience in statecraft, and impeccable honesty.

The two accounts begin substantially to diverge after Piero de' Medici's accession. Razzi increasingly structures his narrative as a conflict between republican liberty and Medici tyranny, discussed in detail below. Ammirato, on the other hand, elides the question of Francesco's anti-Medicean actions in 1494 and 1497, structuring his narrative instead in terms of a moral tale about the dangers of popular politics.[11] He mentions the expulsion of Piero de' Medici only in passing, explained as the result of Piero having conceded key

[8] Ammirato (1615), 100. [9] Ibid., 104.
[10] Ibid., 101; Razzi (1602), 184.
[11] Ammirato's thesis in his history of the Valori about the dangers of popular politics is thus part of his larger quarrel with Machiavelli about the nature of the *popolo* and the value of conflict for stable regimes. See Cochrane, (1973), 116–48.

Florentine fortresses to the French, and without any of the more standard references in other accounts to resentment of Piero's autocratic tendencies.[12]

According to Ammirato, Francesco devoted his greatest energy to stabilizing the turbulent internal politics of the post-Medicean republic. Always volatile, Florentine republican politics in the 1490s were complicated still further by peninsular warfare, and in particular by Florentine mistrust of French support, the Duke of Milan, and Venetian obstruction of the Florentine campaign against Pisa. Ammirato's Francesco was more concerned with Florentine internal political instability, however, than with any external dilemmas.[13] In Francesco's estimation, the success of the popular regime depended critically on a smoothly functioning and swiftly deliberating Great Council, and here Ammirato follows Razzi and most of the historians surveyed in Chapter 3 by emphasizing how difficult it had become by 1497 to generate the necessary quorum in the council required for legislation. During his tenure as Standard Bearer of Justice in 1497, Francesco solved this problem by lowering the minimum age for participation in the council, thereby filling up the vacant seats with young men. Although this solution made Francesco a hero to advocates of the popular regime, Francesco incurred the resentment and enmity of the city's powerful citizens, who doubted—correctly, Ammirato suggests—that young men with so little experience in governing and providing counsel could master the challenges facing the city. Whereas Machiavelli, Guicciardini, and others had concluded that Francesco sealed his bloody fate by lobbying so aggressively for the immediate execution of the Medicean conspirators, Ammirato concluded that the disruptions and problems that led to Francesco's downfall and death all stemmed from his desire to keep the Great Council as 'open and full as possible'—thereby transforming the more standard interpretation of Medicean factional conflict into a critique of the wisdom of Francesco's own policies.[14]

Ammirato sees Francesco's support of Savonarola also as the product of his commitment to a popular regime, and consequently considers it just as damaging. In marked contrast to Razzi, Ammirato strips Francesco's alliance with the Dominican preacher of any moral and religious *piagnone* dimension, instead emphasizing its purely political dimension, the product of their common commitment to a popular

[12] Ammirato (1615), 105. [13] Ibid., 101. [14] Ibid., 102.

constitution. By becoming a follower of Savonarola, Francesco made as many enemies as friends. Problematically for Francesco, the former were more powerful than the latter, since, Ammirato suggests, many Florentines resented Savonarola's ranting about vices but the powerful aristocrats especially hated him as a partisan advocate of *governo largo*.[15]

Ammirato interprets the complex debate about the legitimacy of an appeal and the executions that followed the infamous conspiracy of 1497 as a conflict not between Mediceans and republicans, but between followers of Savonarola and their opponents. As we will see later, Razzi went to considerable effort to demonstrate the legality of Francesco's position, the degree to which it was widely shared, and the degree to which standard republican procedure had been followed. Ammirato, by contrast, implied that Francesco adopted his position as a directive from Savonarola, and that their argument to suspend the appeal was in evident violation of the popular regime's own laws. As a result of their success, the conspirators were executed and Savonarola's enemies became more ambitiously roused against him, and by extension Francesco, than ever before. After the debacle of the trial by fire, Savonarola and Francesco's enemies moved against them. The kinsmen of the recently executed conspirators had powerful allies in the Signoria, where Savonarola's opponents also dominated, and the two worked in concert to incite the fickle plebs against Francesco and Savonarola, whose participation led to the successful siege of San Marco and the sacking and burning of Francesco's palazzo. Ammirato extracts from the downfall of Savonarola and Francesco a political lesson about the dangers of popular politics: 'such is the price of the people's friendship'.[16]

For Ammirato the most crucial Valori, about whom he provides the most detail, is Francesco's brother, Bartolomeo di Filippo. The political stability of the family and their relationship to the Medici oscillated dramatically as a result of Bartolomeo's early loyalty and later enmity to the city's ruling family. Ammirato faced a particularly delicate challenge in narrating Bartolomeo's political career because Bartolomeo's cousin's son—Ammirato's friend and patron Baccio Valori—had himself only recently regained the trust of the Medici, after having spent much of his youth and part of his adult life in political disgrace as a direct result of his father's defection to the exile camp. Ammirato resolved this dilemma by avoiding any ideological or constitutional interpretation

[15] Ammirato (1615), 102. [16] Ibid., 103.

of Bartolomeo's motives, both for and against the Medici, instead portraying him as psychologically defective, as vain and restless, given to political novelty for novelty's sake rather than out of substantive political or ideological dissatisfaction. By structuring the narrative as a critique of Bartolomeo's decisions, Ammirato resolves the political tension, concluding by putting in Bartolomeo's son Filippo's mouth a realization and belated acceptance of absolutism.[17]

Ammirato begins his account by pointing out that Bartolomeo was seventeen when his father died and, like many young men without parents, given to spending, luxury, and leading a 'magnificent and noble life without boundary'.[18] Unlike most other members of the family, Bartolomeo was not content to follow in the 'ordinary ways' of his ancestors, such as being elected to the priorate, but was instead bent on greater glory. Ammirato implies that vanity and desire for glory were Bartolomeo's primary motives for toppling the Soderini republic and restoring the Medici to the city, though he adds that some Florentines attributed Bartolomeo's decision to a basic and genuine respect for the Valori family's longer tradition of alliance with the Medici. Whatever his inspiration, Bartolomeo played an instrumental role, as did Anton Francesco Albizzi and Paolo Vettori, in toppling the Soderini regime, an event that, according to Ammirato, displeased the broad middle ranks of citizens but was generally approved and consented to by many leading citizens. The recently returned Medici therefore held Bartolomeo in great esteem, and Ammirato lists in detail the various offices and honours conferred upon him by the grateful Medici.[19]

For most of his adult life, Bartolomeo remained a powerful and influential member of the inner circle of Medici advisers. The sack of Rome during the pontificate of the Medici pope Clement VII triggered a general collapse of Medici authority in the peninsula and was followed shortly afterwards by a republican uprising in Florence that ousted the Medici from the city in 1527. Bartolomeo's primacy in the Medici party culminated in his appointment as commissary-general of the papal and imperial forces that laid siege to the fledgling republic, ultimately starving the city into submission in 1530. In the weeks following the siege, Ammirato relates, Bartolomeo effectively ruled the city as prince. Having established some degree of order, Bartolomeo called a *parlamento* and restored the pre-1527 constitution, which informally

[17] Ibid., 105–7. [18] Ibid., 105. [19] Ibid., 106.

re-established Medici hegemony. In the year after the siege, Clement relied intensively upon Bartolomeo to administer affairs in Florence, discussing 'every secret matter' with him, according to the historian Paolo Giovio. Ammirato related that he had discussed Bartolomeo with older Florentines, who all declared that in the long course of their lives, they had never seen any citizen attain such *grandezza* as Bartolomeo Valori in the months after the siege of Florence. He was frequently accompanied, just like princes of states, by guards and circled by a retinue of important citizens. As the focal point of Medici power in the 1520s, Ammirato tells us, Bartolomeo little by little stabilized Florentine political life and ultimately established the shape and form of the future Medici principate.[20]

Relations between Bartolomeo and the ruling family rapidly plummeted after the death of Clement VII in 1534 and the accession of Duke Alessandro as the ranking member of the Medici family. According to Ammirato, Clement had promised Bartolomeo that in exchange for his crucial assistance and support he would hold the exarcate of Ravenna as the papally appointed president. Either because Alessandro failed to deliver on Clement's promises or, Ammirato suggests, because of his recurring perverse ambition for glory and new things, Bartolomeo defected from the Medici camp and allied himself with Filippo Strozzi, to whose son Bartolomeo promised one of his daughters in marriage, and the Florentines exiled by the Medici. After Duke Alessandro's assassination in 1537, Bartolomeo, ever the political instigator, persuaded Strozzi and the exiles to take up arms against the new fledgling Duke Cosimo I. The two armies met at Montemurlo, where the duke's forces thoroughly routed the exile army: 'God favoured Cosimo, who was superior at arms and prudence.'[21] Bartolomeo, his son Filippo, and the other exile leaders were brought to the Florentine prison and executed shortly afterwards for *offesa maestà.* Bartolomeo's other son Paolantonio was jailed on suspicion but not executed, and was eventually restored to grace with Cosimo, 'with all prejudices about his father removed', Ammirato concludes.

For Ammirato, Bartolomeo's political fickleness and the consequent executions that brought the fortunes of the Valori lower than ever before contained a pointed moral about the new political priorities of absolutist Florence. Ammirato places the following words in Filippo's

[20] Ammirato (1615), 106. [21] Ibid., 107.

mouth, uttered en route to the public executioner's block in the *piazza della Signoria*: 'Other children come to bad things by not obeying their parents, but [I] have been brought to this terrible end by being completely loyal. From this, we learn that one ought not always to obey in all matters one's friends, relatives, and fathers. The commands of princes, as ministers of God, are superior to the commands of parents. If the prince commands something directly contrary to the service of God, then one ought not to obey, but every paternal command is inferior to that of the prince, even when it goes against one's convictions.'[22]

Eric Cochrane concluded that history for Ammirato served a primarily antiquarian purpose, 'written for the author, not the reader', which he contrasted with Machiavelli's more stirring and civic conception of history as a repository of lessons, often hard ones, for engaged political actors. But we see here that history served no less of a political purpose for Ammirato than it had for Machiavelli; it merely served an absolutist rather than republican purpose.[23]

Ammirato's history of the Valori was thus one of the first to distinguish critically between the family's cultural traditions and accomplishments, their connections to Savonarola, Ficino, and Machiavelli, and their republican past. Ammirato related the cultural dimension of the family's activities in ways largely consistent with the family's private correspondence, but he presented their political history in ways that defused their republican commitments and situated them harmoniously in the new ducal state.

Not all of the family's allies chose to make such distinctions. Almost exactly contemporaneously with Ammirato, another member of Baccio's circle, Don Silvano Razzi, chose to commemorate and idealize Francesco *il vecchio* Valori in ways that radically and pugnaciously celebrated the family's Savonarolan republicanism.

Razzi was a Dominican, enthusiastic defender of Savonarola, and committed biographer of notable Florentines, as well as a friend and client of the Valori family.[24] Razzi added the life of Francesco to his collection of biographies that he had earlier published in 1580 under the title *Vite di quattro huomini illustri*. His biography

[22] Ibid., 106–7. [23] Cochrane 106–7.

[24] He dedicated his *Delle vite delle donne illustri per la santità* to Virginia Ardinghelli, Baccio Valori's wife. Razzi (1597); see Serafino Razzi, *Vita del Reverendo Padre Fra Girolamo Savonarola*, BNCF, MS. II. III. 172; Cochrane (1973), 134–5.

of Francesco was the most substantial and detailed biography from the Renaissance of the most controversial and enigmatic member of the Valori family. It is an equally interesting document given its context and subject matter: Francesco was the most outspoken republican from the Valori family and had famously played a central role in the first expulsion of the Medici in 1494, yet Razzi chose to publish his biography in a Florence ruled by a Medici duke busily transforming the city into a court culture.

Silvano's brother Serafino was also a biographer, in the hagiographical rather than civic mould. He wrote a hagiographic life of Savonarola, as well as a *Vita di S. Caterina de' Ricci*, *Vita dei Santi*, and a collection of illustrious Dominicans.[25] Both Razzi brothers were *piagnoni*, but they articulated their Savonarolism in different ways. Serafino was a central figure in what Lorenzo Polizzotto has called the 'Dominican rehabilitation of Savonarola to the new reality of granducal Florence'.[26] Part of that process involved Savonarola's nomination for canonization, which Serafino himself pursued at the papal court in Rome.[27] In the Medicean political and cultural context, rehabilitating Savonarola involved reinterpreting his life and career to purge it of its radical and republican associations. Serafino's biography minimized Savonarola's prophetic and revolutionary moments, and entirely omitted the friar's bellicosity towards and disobedience of papal authority. In place of Savonarola's fiery millenarian politics, Serafino emphasized his essential theological orthodoxy and apolitical piety, and connected him to traditional figures of Florentine sanctity such as Caterina de' Ricci and Saint Antonino. In Polizzotto's words, Serafino's Savonarola was a 'featureless and sedately tinted plaster saint'.[28]

In contrast to Serafino's conservative and apolitical vision, Silvano was far more willing to remember and insist upon the significance of the republican political dimension of the Savonarolan movement. He did so through a biography of Francesco Valori that championed Francesco's republican populism, defended him from criticism by Florentine politicians and the critical judgement of historians, and that was organized around the twin themes of piety and martyrdom, those crucial elements of the Savonarolan legacy absent in Serafino's writings.

While most Florentine families were reinventing their family histories in an aristocratic mould, Razzi was making the Valori family's previously

[25] See Polizzotto (1994), 295, 395, 400, 441, 443. [26] Polizzotto (1994), 440.
[27] Cochrane (1973), 134–5. [28] Polizzotto (1994), 441.

private republican tradition more public than it had ever been before.[29] Razzi interwove a narrative of Francesco's political career with the three major intellectual affinities with Ficino, Savonarola, and Machiavelli that the family mythology prized. Given the emphasis on Francesco's republican patriotism and his commitment to Savonarola and Ficino, the biography shares a similar function and purpose as Niccolò Valori's biography of Lorenzo *il magnifico* and Luca della Robbia's biography of the elder Bartolomeo Valori. But Razzi also introduces some new elements of Francesco's life and interprets the politics of the late Florentine republic and Francesco's role in it in novel ways that merit closer analysis, particularly given the absolutist context in which he wrote.

Razzi announces at the outset that his primary motivation is to defend Francesco Valori from the misinformed criticism of Jean Bodin. Were it not for Bodin's condemnation in his *Methodus* of Francesco and Piero Soderini as 'quasi-tyrants', Razzi explains, there would be no need to discuss Francesco since all the Florentine historians of Francesco's era are 'sufficiently informed of his fame, virtue, and strength'.[30] However, as we saw in Chapter 3, there were no Florentine historians who wrote in anything approaching an unequivocal manner about Francesco's virtue and fame. Machiavelli's judgement in the *Nature di huomini fiorentini* is the only example that might apply, but it was unpublished and contradicted much of Machiavelli's earlier more conflicted thinking about Francesco. Given the ambivalence of Florentine historians' interpretations of Francesco and his aggressive style of politics, it is difficult not to read Razzi's biography as a republican rehabilitation of Francesco more broadly conceived, an amplified and reworked version of the sentiments expressed by Machiavelli in his later thoughts on Francesco. In the same paragraph Razzi also implicitly invokes Savonarola and the fusion of republican politics with divine favour by declaring that

[29] On the transformation of family identity in ducal Florence, see Pandimiglio (1991); Pezzarossa (1979), 63–90.

[30] 'Io certo haveva ogn' altro pensiero, che di dovere scrivere a questi tempi, & in questa mia età la quale oggi mai a gran passi si avvicina al suo fine, la vita di Francesco Valori, huomo di chiarissima fama, essendo assai stato ragionato della sua virtù, e valore, quasi da tutti che hanno scritte l'istorie de' tempi suoi: ma essendomi non so come, venuto alle mani il il metodo di Gio. Bodini Franzese, & in esso havendo veduto, che dove ragiona delle cose di Firenze egli male intese alcuni istorici, che ragionano di esso Francesco, & di Piero Soderini: & interpretato, che dove si dicono questi due essere stati grandi e potenti cittadini, anzi principalissimi nella Republica, ch'e' fossero quasi Tiranni, e come di tali favellato di loro [. . .]' Razzi (1602), 181.

correcting the historical record about Francesco from Bodin's misjudgements constitutes an 'act of piety'—a statement that only makes sense in the *piagnone* tradition that upheld Francesco as the movement's first martyr.[31]

Razzi opens and closes the biography with Francesco's special affinity for neo-Platonic philosophy and his vigorous support for Marsilio Ficino, thus introducing and reinforcing one of the primary themes of the family's history. Razzi writes that Francesco had been raised in the manners and customs of the noble and well-born, providing an aristocratic veneer to the family's status in the late fifteenth century, and whose primary study from his early years on was Platonic philosophy.[32] Razzi relates that Ficino had been particularly impressed by Francesco's aptitude and commitment to Platonism, and had so written to Francesco's nephew Niccolò. Ficino's admiration for Francesco was political as well as philosophical: he explained in the same letter that he owed all his security and studies to Francesco after the expulsion of his Medici benefactors in 1494.[33] Echoing another consistent conviction of Ficino and the Valori, Razzi underscores the functional civic dimension of a Platonic education, explaining that Francesco brought his classical education to bear in the myriad affairs of state in which he was engaged, for which he was widely recognized and praised.[34] In the final pages, Razzi again invokes Ficino's praise of Francesco, this time from the proemio to Ficino's commentary on Parmenides and other Platonic dialogues, which Razzi adds are now in the Medici library, a small but telling detail that connects the collective memory of Ficino, neo-Platonism, Medici patronage, and the Valori family to the ruling dynasty of the city.[35]

Like Niccolò Valori's *Vita di Lorenzo*, Razzi's biography emphasizes a special harmonious relationship between Francesco Valori and Lorenzo

[31] 'mi ha fatto cadere nell' animo, che non debba essere in un certo modo altro che uffizio di pietà, non lasciare per quanto io posso, che per opera di costui, e d'alcun' altro ha creduto di esso Francesco, che egli fusse quello che gli non fu veramente, anzi così fedele, & amorevole della sua patria, quanto altro Gentil'uomo sua pari fosse gia mai.' Razzi (1602), 181–2.

[32] Razzi (1602), 181.

[33] 'Ma il suo principale studio . . . fu d'intorno alla filosofia Platonica, la quale ammirando in lui eziamdio il gran Platonico Ficino, fu cagione che egli in una sua lettera a Niccolò Valori suo Nipote, confessa come si dirà di sotto, riconoscere da lui tutto che havea da poter vivere and attendere a' suoi studi, dopo esser rimaso privo nel 94 de Signori Medici suoi primi Mecenati.' Razzi (1602), 181.

[34] Razzi (1602), 181.

[35] Ibid., 197.

il magnifico. Whereas Niccolò underscored the degree to which Ficinian patronage was a joint project between Lorenzo and the Valori, Razzi's discussion of their relationship concentrates on its political dimension. He divides Francesco's relationship into two distinct phases: an early harmonious relationship with Lorenzo, in which Valori was a close confidant in both the internal and peninsular dimensions of Laurentian politics, followed by an antagonistic relationship with an increasingly tyrannical Piero di Lorenzo.

Francesco became a prior for the first time in 1471 and thus, Razzi reminds his readers, came of age politically at roughly the same time as Lorenzo.[36] He became a critical figure in the major conflicts of the Laurentian years: in 1478 he was an ambassador to Ferrante of Naples during the Florentine war with Pope Sixtus; in 1483 he was captain of Pistoia; and in 1484 he was elected Standard Bearer of Justice and helped navigate the Florentine state through the difficult diplomacy occasioned by Duke of Ferrara's war with Venice.[37] After his second election as Standard Bearer of Justice, Francesco's first act was to censure his predecessor Neri Cambi for having punished certain citizens without the express consent of the Otto di Pratica, though, Razzi adds, the fact that Cambi acted without consulting Lorenzo either was his greatest offence in Valori's eyes. Lorenzo thus esteemed Valori as a true friend and confederate for two reasons: Francesco served him well in his handling of Neapolitan diplomacy and he acted quickly against Cambi, making Lorenzo's direct intervention unnecessary.[38]

Razzi increasingly structures the Valori–Medici relationship between the deaths of Lorenzo (d. 1492) and Francesco (d. 1498) in terms of a hostile and antagonistic conflict between republican liberty and tyrannical absolutism. Lorenzo's son Piero ruled the Florentine state, Razzi tells his readers, as *capo* and prince, and consistently mismanaged Florentine affairs.[39] Francesco, along with other 'lovers of the public good and safety of the patria', is first moved to action by the loss of Pisa, to the recovery of which he devoted considerable expense as a private citizen and effort as one of two commissary-generals sent to Pisa, and subsequently as a member of the Ten of War.[40] After Medici fortunes

[36] Ibid., 183. [37] Ibid. [38] Ibid.

[39] 'Piero de' Medici, dopo la morte del padre, come capo e Principe della Republica, reggeva lo stato.' Razzi (1602), 184.

[40] Razzi (1602), 184.

took a turn for the worse, prompted by Piero's gift to Charles VIII of key Florentine fortresses, the city barred his entrance to the *palazzo della Signoria*, prompting Piero to attempt to avenge the perceived insult by leading Orsini's cavalry into the city. Piero's attack on the city would have been successful, Razzi reports, were it not for the presence of Francesco Valori, who was already in the piazza on horseback and who summoned the Florentine people 'to defend the liberty of the patria'.[41]

Razzi devotes a considerable majority of the biography to Francesco's political career after the expulsion of the Medici, and a considerable majority of that period to defending Francesco's motives and actions in the discovery of the pro-Medici plot in 1497 and the execution of the conspirators. Although he does so ostensibly because his stated goal is to refute the errors of Jean Bodin, for whom the attempted Medici coup and its bloody fallout were central to his interpretation of Valori, it is possible that Razzi chose to quarrel with Bodin precisely because Bodin provided him with an ideal opportunity to consider in detail the trial and execution of the conspirators. For most Florentines, Francesco's reputation for controversy and notoriety stemmed more from the trial and execution of the conspirators than anything else, and given the hagiographical tone and apologetic purpose of the biography, Razzi doubtless intended at the outset to correct his fellow Florentines' understanding of that moment. As we saw in Chapter 4, the city's *ottimati* elite were traumatized by the severity of the punishment and by the public execution of members of the city's oldest families, and Francesco's apparent zeal throughout the whole affair was the principal catalyst for the widespread resentment of him as a bully with tyrannical ambitions.

As a committed Savonarolan, Razzi had additional motives for defending Valori's actions that transcended his immediate friendship to the family. As we saw in Machiavelli and Guicciardini's writings, Savonarola's silence during the whole episode, in which Valori and others lobbied to prevent the accused from appealing their verdict, their right according to an earlier law widely associated with Savonarola, was the single most damaging political incident for the Savonarolans, leading many to conclude that Savonarola had revealed himself to be little more than a cynical and hypocritical political operator. There

[41] 'Francesco Valori era in piazza a cavallo, e chiamava il popolo a difender la libertà della patria.' Razzi (1602), 185.

were therefore equally compelling reasons for Razzi to wish to exonerate Savonarola's lieutenant from legal wrongdoing and the perception of violent partisan politics.

Bodin had written about Francesco's tyrannical nature in his *Methodus* and in *The Six Books of the Republic.* He had little interest in Francesco beyond his controversial and highly publicized role in the investigation and punishment of the Medicean conspiracy of 1497. Bodin focused specifically on Francesco's efforts to deny the conspirators the right to appeal their verdict to the Great Council. The whole episode became for Bodin a cautionary tale about allowing sovereignty to reside in the masses: the wealthy and wise citizens will always be driven from the city, leaving power either in the hands of the mob or in the hands of tyrants.[42]

Bodin uses Valori as his central example of this rule. After the expulsion of the Medici and the establishment of the popular government by Savonarola's 'rioting throngs', the people began to be oppressed by Piero Soderini and Francesco Valori. Again, the mob revolted and brought down the Savonarolan regime. The catalyst for that round of violence was Francesco Valori's tyranny, evident when he 'checked an appeal to the people'.[43] Bodin revisited that moment in the *Six Books of the Republic* during his elaboration of the nine marks of sovereignty, of which the fourth is the right of last appeal. Florentine history, through Francesco, shows the damaging consequences of denying appeals to the accused: factional discord, street violence, and Francesco's consequent assassination by an angry mob.[44]

Razzi's biography is centrally concerned with that controversy and Francesco's role in it, and his account intertwines the recurring themes of Francesco's patriotism and Medici tyranny. As we saw earlier, most chroniclers saw the trial of the conspirators as a political battle between Valori and the faction that opposed him, but Razzi presents it as an ideological battle between absolutism and popular republicanism. In the final stages of their plot, according to Razzi, the pro-Mediceans planned to storm the Signoria, proclaim Piero 'absolute prince' of Florence, and 'make all swear obedience to him', in addition to the more mundane varieties of retribution to which returned exiles frequently indulge, such as 'sacking and destroying to the foundations the houses of the most noble and prominent families'.[45]

[42] Bodin (1966), 244–9. [43] Ibid., 247. [44] Bodin (1968), 168.
[45] Razzi (1602), 190.

No minor oligarchical skirmish, according to Razzi, the entire city was consumed by fear because of the plot. As rumour of it circulated, Razzi wrote, the city 'became full of fear', seeing that as long as Piero de' Medici lived he would remain the principal adversary of 'all who loved the liberty of their patria'. The realization of the danger that Piero posed was Francesco's primary motivation to act with zeal and urgency.[46] During the trial, the whole city was certain that 'the malignant humours that had awakened in [the conspirators]' would never be eradicated.[47] After the investigation, when news of the appeal began to circulate, the multitude became greatly displeased. Because of the conspirators' wealth and influential relatives, the multitude feared that the conspirators would seek favour and influence from Rome, Milan, and the French court that would result in their liberation. And the multitude further reasoned that such an outcome could only mean that Piero de' Medici would return to the city 'with more power and reputation than ever before', causing certain destruction for many others.[48]

Francesco's severity towards the conspirators thus implies his connection to the multitude and his basic alignment to the popular will, another way of reaffirming the centrality of Valori to the Savonarolan movement and its popular underpinnings. Razzi explains that Francesco spoke against the conspirators with more conviction than anyone else and as a result was 'much loved' by the multitude.[49] Francesco's enemies argued that his zeal revealed that he was not only the head of the anti-Medicean faction, but clearly was also aspiring to nothing less than Piero himself had, absolute power—the conclusion reached by Paolo Giovio and Jean Bodin. But Razzi challenges this view, asserting that although some may have believed it, 'almost everyone else' was of the contrary opinion and it is 'certain that they were right'. To the majority, Francesco exhibited only a sincere love of the *patria*. He spoke vigorously against the conspirators not because they were his particular enemies, as some believed, but because they wished to 'oppress liberty'.[50] When discussing the consequent animosities Francesco incurred, Razzi explains that the friends and relatives of the conspirators particularly resented Francesco not because he had exploited the laws to destroy personal enemies, as Guicciardini had concluded, but because 'it seemed to them that he had been altogether too zealous in his

[46] Razzi (1602), 187. [47] Ibid., 188. [48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid. [50] Ibid.

pursuit of the public good, having wished to protect it more than the others'.[51]

Razzi goes on to analyse the process by which the conspirators were condemned, emphasizing repeatedly its collective and representative nature, its fundamental legality, and the contextual pressures that called for the death penalty.[52] From the moment the conspiracy had been unravelled by the Signoria, Razzi relates, the priors worried that any delay in carrying out the capital punishment would lead directly to the flight of the conspirators, given their wealth and the power of their friends.[53] The Signoria spoke with one voice in passing the death sentence on the conspirators, but soon became divided over the question of the appeal. The priors inclined to permit the appeal, however, were persuaded by the councils of the *Dodici buonuomini* and the *gonfalonieri* to settle the question by a larger referendum that all in the city would have to accept, convinced as they were that only a small minority would support the appeal. Razzi acknowledges that the accused had the right to appeal to the Great Council, by virtue of 'a law promulgated not much earlier'. He does not mention what he of course knew—that the law had been publicly and influentially supported by Savonarola and that the friar's reluctance to speak out on the conspirators' behalf had substantially compromised his political image—but instead reinterprets opposition to the appeal as an expression of the multitude's will and zeal to protect the city's liberty, essentially in keeping with the Savonarolan political position.

Razzi's most recurring defence of Francesco consists of an elaborate analysis of the deliberation and judgement, showing how Francesco's position was merely a reflection of the sentiments of a clear majority of government and people. The final deliberation on the question included the priors, *gonfalonieri*, *Dodici buonuomini*, the captains of the Guelph party, *Dieci di guerra*, *Otto di pratica*, *Ufficiali di monte*, *Conservadori delle leggi*, and also the College of Doctors and Council of Eighty—nothing less than the full weight of the entire republican government. Invoking and enumerating all the old republic's major councils as a barometer of the legitimacy of political actions was itself a provocative republican statement in the context of ducal Florence.[54] The examination of the

[51] Razzi (1602), 191; Guicciardini (1931), 144–5.

[52] Thereby in effect replying to all the major lines of criticism that had surfaced at the time. See Chapter 3.

[53] Razzi (1602), 188. [54] Ibid., 189.

conspirators was read to the assembled officials, all of whom Razzi identifies, who were asked 'to speak freely, without consideration of the judgement of the priors or others, but each according to his own judgement' on two questions: what punishment the conspirators deserved and if the appeal should be permitted. Razzi marvels that 'it was truly an amazing thing' that 'from this great number of people', they all determined that the five were correctly judged guilty and merited death; the assembly showed little support for an appeal.[55] In spite of such apparent unanimity, however, reports arrived from the conspirators' allies in Rome that caused hesitation in some of the priors.[56] The Collegio replied by warning the vacillating priors that if they failed to uphold the verdict of execution, they would be forcibly taken from the palazzo and turned over to the people, who would sack and burn their houses, since their hesitation was contrary to the spirit, if not the letter, of the republican laws.[57]

Razzi concludes with a blunt statement of sympathy for the verdict, reasoning that since the five conspirators would have become kings if they had succeeded, they were genuinely worthy of death and had accordingly been dispassionately judged by many. On the night of 21 August in the court of the city's prison, the five conspirators were decapitated and their corpses were taken to their respective family's sepulchres. His ultimate summation demonstrates the quintessential Savonarolan qualities of populist republicanism: when considering the public good, one should not have any regard for the prerogatives of nobility or the greatness of kings.[58]

Razzi follows his discussion of the conspiracy with an account of Francesco's murder, interpreted as a moment of political martyrdom. Earlier in the biography, when discussing Francesco's controversial decision to lower the age of admission to the Great Council, he disputed the judgement of those who had claimed that Francesco's ruin had arisen from widespread resentment of that decision. Razzi reasons against that explanation by pointing out that the plotters against Francesco were all relatives of the executed conspirators who had recognized and resented Francesco's opposition 'to those who wished to liberate them through appeal to the Great Council'.[59] But in his discussion of Francesco's death,

[55] Razzi (1602), 189.

[56] Razzi does not discuss their content, but describes them as 'opinions from Rome that only made the hatred for these five [conspirators] grow'.

[57] Razzi (1602), 189. [58] Ibid., 190. [59] Ibid., 186.

Razzi further complicates the motives of Francesco's assassins. To those who argued that Francesco's death resulted from having implemented laws urged by Savonarola, Razzi points out that there were many friends and followers of the friar for whom no such animosity existed. Razzi explains the hatred of Francesco as the result of his championing the popular republican cause. The real common denominator among the assassins was not the fact of the relation to the condemned conspirators, but their desire for illegitimate oligarchy: ' . . . the greatness and power of the people was displeasing to those who loved the government of a few, and who wanted a licentious liberty totally contrary to that which had been approved by the laws. It was for this reason that a plot of a few men was raised to remove Valori from the earth.'[60] Their success was 'terrible' and 'tyrannical', a tragedy for the Valori but also an act that diminished the majesty of the republic's highest offices, since their success, as Razzi sees it, revealed that the Signoria had implicitly consented to his death because he was the acknowledged leader of Savonarola's cause.[61]

Razzi directly connects Francesco's demise to the Savonarolan movement's more general reversal of fortune. This was hardly new or controversial in itself, but Razzi adds to that observation some interesting remarks. Francesco's enemies plotted against him, waiting for the right occasion and opportune time to strike. They realized they would soon get their chance since Francesco was 'such a great friend of the friar', whose 'affairs were going from bad to worse from one day to the next'—particularly since every day increasingly menacing papal briefs were arriving in the city and the Pope had already judged Savonarola contumacious and a disparager of the apostolic commandments.[62] But Razzi goes further, connecting Francesco's death with Savonarola's execution, both of which serve as further evidence of Savonarola's gift of prophecy and sanctity. After relating the circumstances of Francesco's death, he turns to Savonarola and observes that the friar had predicted his own imminent ruin in the last sermon that he delivered in San Marco, on Palm Sunday. Razzi cites Iacopo Nardi's conclusion that, knowing his fate if he remained in Florence, Savonarola chose nevertheless to offer himself in sacrifice to God.[63]

After relating in detail the circumstances of Francesco's death, Razzi turns to historical assessments of Francesco's character and identity. Not surprisingly, given the close connections between Machiavelli and the Valori family, Razzi begins with and places heaviest emphasis on the

[60] Ibid., 186. [61] Ibid., 193–4. [62] Ibid., 191. [63] Ibid.

two portraits of Francesco by Machiavelli, hailed by Razzi as the greatest Florentine historian (though he does not mention Machiavelli by name, most likely because by the end of the sixteenth century Machiavelli had been placed on the Index of Prohibited Books).[64] Razzi explains that to refute Bodin's accusation that Francesco was a tyrant and factional demagogue, one need merely consult the best writers of Francesco's time. Razzi includes the full text of Machiavelli's sketch in the *Nature di uomini fiorentini* with the following introduction: 'the greatest . . . was a Florentine historian who left in one of his notebooks in his own hands these precise words . . . '[65] According to Razzi, Francesco's reputation as a haughty and arrogant bully was undeserved, the result of the gossip and false rumour spread by his enemies. He supports his claim by referring to Machiavelli's portrait in the *Discorsi*, which Razzi interprets somewhat loosely to fit his claim. Whereas Machiavelli wrote that Francesco was regarded by many as ambitious, audacious, and hot-tempered, without speculating on the causes of that perception, Razzi writes that Machiavelli hinted in the *Discorsi* sketch that Francesco's enemies tried to make the multitude believe that he intended to establish himself as a tyrant, 'by means of the friar or any other guise'.[66]

Although Machiavelli's assessment of Francesco is clearly for Razzi the most important judgement, he nevertheless includes a lengthy paragraph surveying a broader range of historians' writings about Francesco. He quotes Iacopo Nardi, one of the recurring sources in his biography, who described Francesco as 'an old, noble, and wise citizen', and points out that Scipione Ammirato elaborated in particular detail on Francesco in his family biography of the Valori.[67] Having begun his life of Francesco by quarrelling with Bodin, he concludes by citing other passages from Bodin that feature more positive assessments of the Florentine statesman, particularly the fifth book of Bodin's *History of France*, in which Bodin describes Francesco as a man of great virtue and bravery.[68] He refers the reader to the fifth book of Iacopo Pitti's *Storia di Firenze*, in which, after a lengthy narration of the conspiracy and its fallout, Pitti concludes that, because of his unwavering stand against the appeal, Francesco's authority in the city was greater than ever—indeed, that Francesco was celebrated by the people as a new Cato—and that the city was virtually

[64] Razzi (1602), 196. [65] Ibid. [66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., 192 and 198. Razzi also quotes Nardi's *Vita di Antonio Giacomini* (184) and Nardi's history of Florence on the conspiracy.

[68] Razzi (1602), 197.

governed according to his will.[69] He concludes by discussing Francesco Guicciardini's treatment of Valori. Guicciardini, who knew that period of Florentine history exceptionally well, Razzi reminds us, followed his account of Francesco's death with a character sketch that emphasized Francesco's greatness as a citizen and his stature among the followers of Savonarola. As we saw in Chapter 3, Guicciardini saw Francesco's stand towards the Medicean conspirators as cynical, self-interested, and manipulative—and the primary reason the conspirators' appeals were never heard. Guicciardini's account of Francesco's role in the conspiracy contradicted Razzi's. Razzi acknowledges this, but emphasizes those passages in which Guicciardini concedes that Francesco may have had the perceived best interests of the republic in mind.[70]

Razzi's biography was clearly part of a larger narrative strategy the Valori family employed to propagate the family's traditions and political mythologies, their hybrid republicanism. One can infer this from the text itself, which contains numerous Savonarolan undertones as well as explicit connections between Francesco's wisdom and his tutelage by '*il gran platonico*' Marsilio Ficino, the two primary traditions the family upheld throughout the Renaissance. The family had also been allies of Machiavelli and Razzi's biography incorporates Machiavelli's thoughts on Francesco, giving them a particularly republican interpretation. One can also infer Razzi's participation in the Valori family myth by comparing many of the private details about the family that Razzi could only have learned from family members themselves, and by the remnants of different earlier drafts of his biography in the Valori family papers.[71]

But Razzi does not merely reiterate messages that the family had been encoding into earlier biographies and recording in the family diary. The earlier biographies by Niccolò Valori and Luca della Robbia had republican implications and subtexts, but they were relatively hidden in texts that were purportedly politically neutral or friendly to the Medici. In contrast, however, Razzi's republicanism is overt and his biography unabashedly takes as its master theme Francesco's republican patriotism and opposition to tyranny. And in 1494 and 1497, the tyranny in both cases is the same: attempts by the Medici or allies of the family to establish the family as absolute princes, something the family had actually achieved by Razzi's time. Razzi makes clear the consequences of

[69] Ibid., 198. [70] Ibid.
[71] BNCF, Filze rinuccini, 27, cassetta 3, unfoliated.

such tyranny: destruction and violence for the city's old and established families and the ideological destruction of the *patria*, the traditional wellspring of Florentine republicanism, because all the Florentines will have to swear oaths of personal obedience to the Medici.

The historical vision of the Valori family in Razzi and Ammirato's work demonstrates the fundamental ambivalence and tension for the family about how best to preserve their memory and what kind of identity to assert in the new absolutist culture of Grand Ducal Florence. Baccio Valori's fingerprints are clearly evident on both texts; both texts celebrate and laud the family and their patronage of Ficino; both texts quote in detail—indeed probably from the actual notebook—Machiavelli's later proclamation of Francesco Valori's political virtues; and both texts present the best elements of Florentine political history as crucially connected to the Valori family.

And yet it is difficult to find two more contrasting visions. Ammirato offered a diplomatic celebration of the family's moments of friendship with Medici that finessed the equally numerous moments of hostility. Razzi offered a frank and unapologetic celebration of the anti-Medicean and Savonarolan zeal of Francesco Valori, who did more than any other family member to separate the family from the Medici cause and brand them as republican stalwarts.

Baccio had reason to appreciate both. The execution of his father and uncle as key rebels of the fledgling Medici duchy and his troubled youth as a political outsider no doubt made him keenly aware of the necessity of placating the Medici and the high costs of alienating the arbiters of power. Ammirato's history spoke directly to that concern. Those same executions and his difficult beginnings no doubt also made him resentful of Medici power, and humiliated by his acquiescence to the regrettable realities of power, and Razzi's biography spoke directly to those concerns. Razzi's biography reminded Baccio that the family, whatever it was forced to do to survive, nevertheless continued to cherish and celebrate their *piagnone* and republican traditions.

Conclusion: The Valori Family in Florentine Historiography

The Valori family provides an insightful and revealing perspective on the major events and personalities of the Florentine Renaissance. In spite of Ficino's increasingly esoteric and philosophical interests in the late fifteenth century, we have seen that the Valori saw him and his work much as the Florentine elite had viewed the civic humanists of the earlier fifteenth century, as a symbol of the wise, classically inspired civic culture upon which elite hegemony was seen to rest. The evidence from the Valori family papers suggests that they were more inclined to view Ficino in this light after the expulsion of the Medici and the establishment of the republic than they had under Lorenzo's rule. We have seen also that Savonarola was aware of and sensitive to the perception of Ficino as the heir of humanists, and that, particularly given the close collaboration between the Valori and Ficino, he saw Ficino's *opera* as a serious alternative to his vision of Florentine reformation. We are thus reminded of the degree to which many of his public utterances condemning the humanism of the later fifteenth century were politicized and linked to subtleties of Florentine factional conflict.

We have also seen that Machiavelli's biography looks somewhat different too, considered from the context of the Valori. Machiavelli was a close friend of Niccolò Valori and part of a tight group of Piero Soderini's supporters. The political implications of that friendship stayed with Machiavelli well after the Medici returned to the city. The political memory of Francesco Valori, his participation in the revolt against the Medici, and his controversial and polemical anti-Medicean stance during the republic demonstrably affected Machiavelli's thinking about Florence and his own role in it while composing the *Istorie fiorentine*. All of these insights demonstrate the degree to which the political life of the city informed the world of ideas. From a different set of sources and concerns, they confirm Hans Baron's conviction that

Florentine intellectual history is best understood as an informed dialog with a dynamic political context.

The Valori also offer a new perspective from which to consider the nature of the Renaissance family. The debate on that subject has been dominated by the work of Richard Goldthwaite and Francis William Kent. In his study of the economic fortunes of four Florentine families, Goldthwaite argued that the extended, corporate clan structure of the Middle Ages came to an end during the Florentine Renaissance, replaced by a nuclear conception of the family in which the immediate household was the only real social unit of family.[1] Goldthwaite approached the subject from a material economic position: statements families made about themselves, about the significance of lineage, and the importance of and respect shown toward family tradition are discounted in favour of hard economic decisions. How families distributed wealth, to whom and why, Goldthwaite implicitly claimed, ultimately says something more real about the nature of the family than what people said about the family. William Kent offered a strong contrast to that view in his *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence*.[2] Kent argued from a broader range of sources, both public and private, and found the rambling and extended corporate clan very much alive in fifteenth-century politics, will-writing, architecture, and other public and semi-public arenas.[3]

From all angles, the evidence provided by the Valori family overwhelmingly supports Kent and other scholars who reject the Burckhardtian, modernization thesis. Measured in terms of intellectual commitments, the five generations of the family studied here consistently respected, celebrated, and kept alive the Platonic and Savonarolan traditions established in the late *quattrocento*. There is clear evidence that the intellectual commitments of Baccio Valori's ancestors had a direct impact on his personality and sense of identity. When retracing his lineage, he included every potential line of the family that might have

[1] Goldthwaite (1968). From economic sources and 'hard' data, Goldthwaite was restating the famous argument of Jacob Burckhardt that Renaissance Italy witnessed the birth of the individual. For this argument, Burckhardt employed cultural sources, primarily—though he too made connections between the rapid urbanization and commercialization of Italy during the early Renaissance and the progressive nuclearization of the family. The work of Peter Laslett (1972) has tended to support Goldthwaite's assertions more generally throughout Europe.

[2] Kent (1977). Kent's position is supported in a European context by the work of Heers (1977).

[3] Kent's conclusions were based on notarial records, wills, tax reports, and *ricordi*, among many other varieties of source.

endured.[4] Measured in terms of economic commitments, the family respected each other's debts, assisted each other with funds, and paid for repairs on the various *palazzi*. In the fifteenth century, the family's real estate was concentrated in a cluster of *palazzi* on the same street.[5] Measured in terms of architectural patronage, the Valori palazzo of the sixteenth century featured publicly displayed busts of several generations of the family as well as the busts of Ficino and other intellectuals who had befriended the family years earlier. The façade was commissioned by Baccio Valori; his son Filippo published a commentary on the busts that explained in detail the family traditions that the public faces were intended to commemorate. Measured in political terms, the family frequently, though not exclusively, shared political priorities and positions, revealed most clearly by a sustained commitment to Savonarolism through several generations. Family members acted on each other's behalf. In two of the most notable examples, Bartolomeo used his influence with the Medici to protect and promote his uncle Niccolò after the collapse of Piero Soderini's republic and Baccio Valori, upon re-establishing his reputation in Grand Ducal Florence, immediately set about obtaining the release of Paolantonio Valori from the prison of Volterra, where he was slowly rotting because of his father's defection to Filippo Strozzi and the Florentine exiles and where his great-uncle Niccolò had been imprisoned over twenty years earlier.[6]

For several reasons and in several ways, the Valori family provides a new perspective by which to assess the nature and significance of Renaissance republicanism. This subject has been most influentially and famously explored by the 'Cambridge school'—Quentin Skinner, J. G. A. Pocock, and others.[7] A number of large questions bring this community to Renaissance Florence. Skinner sought evidence of an ideology of liberty before the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century language of rights; others wished to trace the transformation of republican writing from a language centred around liberty to one centred around security. And others, such as Pocock, were interested in a broad republican interpretation of western history. Skinner famously urged that the history of political thought should move from the history of ideas to the history of ideologies, and that, rather than concentrating

[4] BNCF, Rinuccini 27, unfoliated documents.
[5] ASF, Panciatichi, 2, Giornale dal 1499 al 1502, fols. 1r–3v.
[6] ASF, Carte Strozziane, 3.72.
[7] On the Cambridge school and Florentine republicanism, see Jurdjevic (2007b).

on classic texts, the focus should be on the general social and intellectual matrix in which ideas emerge, on the links between political theory and practice. Skinner in particular made great strides in expanding the range of authors considered. Studies of Renaissance thought were once concerned primarily with Dante, Machiavelli, More, Erasmus, and Bodin, but we now situate those authors in relation to a host of their formerly lesser-known interlocutors, such as Bartolus of Sassoferato, Brunetto Latini, and Donato Giannotti.

But to consider a broader range of texts is not finally to investigate the link between theory and practice that Skinner urged. The question was not posed in the form of the relationship between major and minor theorists and intellectuals, but between theorists and intellectuals and their political counterparts in the governing classes of the Italian city-states. As a result of Skinner and Pocock's work, we have a more elaborate and detailed recreation of the intellectual context, but little new insight into the political environment. For all the studies of Renaissance republican thought, we have few reliable indicators of its significance for its primary patrons and audience: in this case, the Florentine elite—who were, after all, the political actors for whom the republican stage existed. With very few exceptions, the theorists of republicanism held no significant offices whatsoever in republican governments.

What did that republican conversation mean to the Florentine elite? Did the humanist celebration of civic virtue affect the way Florentines conceptualized their own participation in government? Political imagination of course mattered greatly to philosophers like Ficino and theorists like Machiavelli, both of whom felt they had unlocked secrets about the proper configuration and constitution of political community. But did it matter in similar ways to those citizens who regularly faced actual mundane political questions as their principal occupation, or was it merely a convenient and fashionable ideological stance?

This study has assumed from the outset—in contrast to Pocock—that much can be learned from the answer to that question. Pocock declared that he was less interested in what happened in government than with the conceptual systems to which governments appealed. But by studying the relationship between those two subjects and the history of their interaction, we are able to learn what mattered most about the republican tradition in the eyes of the Florentine political community.

Florentine political and intellectual historiography has been more inclined to consider the political function of humanist republicanism,

the work its ideas performed in the political arena. There is an emerging consensus that Renaissance republicanism, particularly as articulated and conceptualized by humanists, was static, conservative, and essentially concerned with protecting and reinforcing the status quo. As Lauro Martines put it, 'power has a way of generating friendly critics'—and his work made a strong case for seeing republican thought as merely an expected accompaniment to the triumph of urban oligarchs, who dominated republics and princely regimes alike and whose principal concern was finding an effective political language for repudiating broad-based popular challenges to their hegemony. John Najemy and James Hankins have generally agreed that the republican theorists of the Renaissance idealized citizenship in terms of obedience and loyalty, presented the oligarchic state as a family, and rulership as a variety of benevolent paternalism.

The experience of the Valori family makes a strong contrasting statement about the character of Florentine republicanism in the late Renaissance. Their history reveals the enduring power of reforming traditions in the Florentine Renaissance and reveals the stubborn persistence of a republican world-view deep into the Medici duchy of the sixteenth century. Both revelations are clearly connected to the civic traditions of the fifteenth century. Savonarola had believed that the social, political, and religious life formed a single arena of human action. Spiritual regeneration was impossible in a hostile political environment, and equally impossible in an unjust society animated by greed. It followed from this conviction that political activism was a holy act. Polizzotto lamented that this way of understanding Savonarolism faded as the power of the Medici dukes increased in the mid-century. Repeated unsuccessful battles with Medici power forced the Savonarolans to compromise. They no longer emphasized the millenarian element of Savonarola's message and recast the friar as a tame saint—the charismatic qualities that had made him a leader and inspired people like Francesco Valori to give their lives to the cause of social and political reform were glossed over.

The Valori, however, retained a steadfast commitment to that initial Savonarolan conviction about the unity of social, political, and religious life. Some members of the family reconciled themselves to Medici rule, though for them it was not so much a renunciation of formerly republican sentiments as it was a resurrection of a much older friendship with the family that had lifted the Valori into the top tier of the city's political order. However, many members of the family actively

opposed the development of an absolutist state, and several of them, quite literally, fought that development to their deaths. A genuine and enduring belief in Savonarola's message seems to have informed that conviction. The Savonarola of their family papers was not the traditionally pious Savonarola of conventional miracles, but the political friar whose vision of religious reform and redemption was closely connected to a particular political vision for the city.

The same is true of their commitment to Ficinian Platonism. It was once a commonplace of Florentine historiography that the rise of speculative philosophy, particularly as directed by Ficino, who was seen primarily as a Medici client, tolled the death knell for the earlier, more heroic era of civic humanism.[8] To Hans Baron, Eugenio Garin, and Lauro Martines, it seemed that the Medici had deliberately fostered Platonic philosophy because it encouraged political quietism. Rather than celebrate a model of positive liberty, stressing civic traditions and the importance of active participation in the republic, it proposed a model of negative liberty, stressing withdrawn, solitary contemplation as model conduct. That view has been significantly challenged and complicated by the work of James Hankins, Arthur Field, and Riccardo Fubini, who in various ways have all argued that Ficinian Platonism did not encourage scholars to leave the city to engage in isolated contemplation.[9]

The debate on civic humanism and the rise of Platonism has been fundamentally tied to the question of actual political context: what effect did the humanist education that all members of the Florentine elite were receiving have on their political activities? In the end, the question has never been explored by the debate because the sources used have almost always been the texts of humanism—and the humanists themselves were not politicians.[10] By looking at this question through the eyes of the Valori family, who were educated by humanists but who were the political actors of the time, we have clear evidence that the study of humanism informed political action. The reinvention of

[8] This argument was made most explicitly by Eugenio Garin and Hans Baron. Garin (1965), 78–9; and (1972); Baron (1955); see also Martines (1963), 295–302; and Brown (1992), 215–46.

[9] Hankins (1991); (1990), 144–62; Field (1988); Fubini (1996). I tried to show in an earlier article on humanism and Medici power that civic humanism was capable of accommodating a variety of political contexts and constitutional alignments of power, and that there was therefore no immediately apparent political need, at least in the eyes of the Medici, for Platonism. Jurdjevic (1999).

[10] Martines (1963).

the Florentine elite from the lawless magnates of the early commune to the *patres conscripti* of the fifteenth century may initially have been a posture that facilitated more immediately self-serving political ends, but at least in the case of the Valori, as that posture became a tradition it seems to have informed their thinking about politics in genuine and demonstrable ways.

Contrary to the initial suppositions of Baron and Garin, Platonism, understood as a repository of political wisdom, informed the Florentine landscape from the fifteenth through the entire sixteenth century. Regarding the political function of neo-Platonism in Florentine history, Baron was wrong. But when we see the degree to which the Valori's volatile political careers were informed by enthusiasm for Marsilio Ficino and Platonism, we see that his larger sense of Florentine intellectual traditions and political activism was correct and that he could have extended aspects of his argument about civic humanism deeper into the Renaissance. As interpreted by several generations of the Valori throughout the Renaissance, Ficinian humanism never lost its political and cultural relevance.

The history of the Valori family suggests that we need to reconsider the function and nature of Renaissance republicanism. Certainly the family adopted a republican stance in part because they saw it as an ideology that legitimized their prominence and status in Florence, and they surely interpreted their patronage of Savonarola, Ficino, and Machiavelli in similar terms. But they also viewed Florentine republican ideology as something considerably more complex and polyvalent than the republicanism of recent scholarship. They were simultaneously drawn to several different ways within the tradition of thinking about citizenship and the state; and they found those traditions directly relevant for understanding their own political struggles. Although the family clearly felt that their prestige in the city derived in part from their intellectual patronage, it is difficult to see with any clarity how the politically and ideologically static republicanism of recent historiography would so consistently benefit or attract a family with such a complex and unstable role in Florentine political life. For many members of the family, there was no obvious status quo to serve as a frame of reference for the family's political position. In this case at least, a humanist-inflected political language appealed as much to those hungering for political change as it did to those shoring up support for existing regimes. Most members of the family were not only open to political change, they actively fought for it—several lost their lives as a result—and, at least

in their own self-image, their intellectual commitments and traditions must have helped them understand why.

Florentine republicanism—and particularly the Valori family's hybrid variety—was more than a set of constitutional and legal assumptions about the proper configuration of collective governing institutions and their relationship to the citizenry. It certainly featured such assumptions and they clearly played a demonstrable role in the Valori family's responses to the various political problems and challenges they faced throughout the Renaissance.

But as a guide to action and deliberation, Florentine republicanism for the Valori family was capable of much more. It provided a linguistic and ideological structure upon which the family grafted considerable intellectual materials: Savonarola's millenarian populism, Ficino's Platonically inspired emphasis on concord and wisdom, and Machiavelli's interpretation of Florentine history. The hybrid republicanism of the Valori family was thus in part a constitutional statement, however vaguely defined. But it was also a way of looking at history and politics, both familial and Florentine, a way of interpreting the past and engaging it in the present, and a way to incorporate their religious and philosophical sensibilities into their political lives. It was a supple and organic ideology rooted in an eclectic fusion of ideas that had, through the Valori, a life and history of its own, directly connected to the intellectual heart of the Florentine Renaissance. And hence it constitutes a rather surprising but important moment in the history of ideas, a revelation of the richness of Florentine political imagination and an affirmation of the interconnection between Renaissance high culture and the frequently hard-bitten, bloody political struggles that formed its context.

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