Vengeance and Remembrance: The Role of Florentine Family Memoirs in Vendetta Culture

James A. Davies
Professor Carol Lansing
Professor Randy Bergstrom
Senior Honors Thesis, 2011-2012

Abstract

This paper is an exploration into the evolution of medieval vendetta culture in Florence, Italy. It follows a five-pronged approach, beginning with evidence of the unique character of the Florentine people and their unusual propensity for pursuing vendettas. Part two considers a variety of diaries written by affluent Florentine merchants and politicians in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, analyzes vendetta narratives within them, and highlights how each writer recorded past offenses to help perpetuate the memory of vengeance for future generations. The paper then compares the city statutes of Siena, Bologna, and Florence to explore differences in how each sought to restrict vendetta practice. The purpose is not to examine the intricacies of the Florentine legal system and attempt to evaluate the overall effectiveness of city and government authorities in limiting and regulating the practice of vendetta. While increased efficiency and internal organization may have limited the size and success of vendettas over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Florentine diaries reveal that litigants viewed recourse to the law as a form of vendetta. The concluding section shows that a Florentine culture of vengeance survived into the late Renaissance, if not through the continuance of family acts of vengeance, then at least in the memories and language preserved in sixteenth-century diaries.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I'd like to thank my advisor Professor Carol Lansing for the encouragement and support she has provided me in the past two quarters. Her unwavering enthusiasm for medieval history helped shape this paper into what it is today, and for that I am eternally grateful.

I'd also like to thank Professor Bergstrom for his invaluable advice, instruction, logistical support, and editing expertise. The comments and suggestions he made to my many drafts were useful and deeply appreciated.

Kalina Yamboliev, my translator, also deserves a place high on this list. Her translations of several Florentine diaries proved to be incredibly valuable for this paper, and all her hard work has been greatly appreciated. I could not have done it without you, Kali. Grazie mille!

A debt of gratitude is also owed to Thomas and Elisabeth Cohen, whose book *Words and Deeds: Trials Before the Papal Magistrates* first introduced me to the topic of medieval and Renaissance society. Trevor Dean also deserves special recognition, for his article "Marriage and Mutilation" provided me with a wealth of vendetta scholarship and sources that, along with his other publications on the subject, served as the keystone research underpinning my own investigations.

I would also like to extend my thanks to the URCA review committee for providing a greatly appreciated grant that allowed me to translate research material into English.

Last, but certainly not least, I'd like to thank my parents and fellow seminar members for the invaluable advice and support they have provided me during this project.

Chapter 1 - The Historiography of Florentine Vendetta from Dante to Dean

In the *Inferno*, Dante Alighieri confronts the ghost of an ancestor at one stage of his descent into Hell. The murdered victim of an unspecified affair, the embittered ancestor refuses to speak to Dante, fleeing from his presence in disgust because his kinsman had failed to avenge his death. Pitying his dead relative's anguish, Dante described the man's justified rage to his guide Virgil:

> "My guide, it was his death by violence,
> for which he still is not avenged," I said,
> by anyone who shares his shame, that made
> him so disdainful now; and—I suppose—
> for this he left without a word to me,
> and this has made me pity him the more."[1]

Several passages in Dante's early fourteenth-century *Divine Comedy* resonate with motifs of insult and shame, honor and familial duty, and above all, the desire for revenge—all elements mirrored in the values shared by late medieval Florentine families. Dante's verses convey the solemn concerns and intense personal feelings of a Florentine whose cultural customs and practices were characteristic of the daily life of many elite noblemen living in his time. Vendetta was a fundamental tool to protect the interests of the family and preserve the honor and dignity of the family name. Along with this desire came another: to record and remember past conflicts. Florentines accomplished this by recording successful vendettas and past quarrels in diaries and memoirs (*ricordanze*). From the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, these elite families perpetuated the doctrine of private justice, transmitting personal memory of past injury into social memory, and setting the standard for avenging past wrongs. Though conflicts and private vendettas were typical of many medieval Tuscan cities, the Florentine manner of recording their

---

[1] Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, Canto XXIX, lines 31-36. Translated by Allen Mandelbaum, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri Inferno, a Verse Translation* (New York: Bantam Books, 2004), 267.

culture of vengeance was unique; as a consequence, its government and legal system continued to permit the practice of vendetta longer than any other Italian city, allowing the medieval culture of vengeance to last well into the sixteenth century.

Tuscan sources offer one of the largest collections of revenge narrative. Within Tuscany, a majority of accounts of violence and vendetta derive from the city of Florence. The city's chronicles, statutes, and other documents suggest that Florence was at the center of vendetta culture, but they do not necessarily explain why this was the case. Why did Florentines have strong inclinations towards private vengeance? Did Florentines possess an unusually strong fondness for violent acts of revenge, or did socio-political conditions provide the environment for vendetta culture to thrive and gradually evolve? Why did Florence sanction the legality of blood vengeance and never officially criminalize the practice? What conditions allowed Florence to maintain its culture of vengeance longer than any other Italian city-state? In short, what made vendetta in Florence different from everywhere else? The answer lies in the diaries and memoirs of Florence's aristocratic and mercantile families.

To understand how this could possibly be the case, it is necessary to acquire an understanding of what medieval Italian diaries were. Medieval historian Trevor Dean has mentioned in *Crime In Medieval Europe* that most Italian noble families "lacked the means for recording and transmitting memory of injuries that Florentine families had in their family diaries."[2] In his opinion, the possession of diaries made the Florentine experience of vendetta atypical. Though he briefly acknowledges this to be the case, Dean neglected to discuss at length how *ricordanze* differ from other written sources that Florentines used to preserve and perpetuate social memory. Though scholars have generally derived the common features of vendetta through accounts from private diaries, they have combined these with other revenge narratives

[2] Trevor Dean, *Crime in Medieval Europe, 1200-1550*, (England: Longman, 2001), 103.

found in accounts like city chronicles, court records, and fictitious moral stories. Failure to make a clear distinction among the sources constitutes a serious oversight, because diaries were private records, unlike other accounts of vendetta. Family vengeance, no matter how prominent, was a personal affair. Even in instances where self-help was given public sanction, vendettas involved parties in private disputes, seeking private means of justice and resolution. Though the family clan was frequently used for support to help carry out the vendetta, they still remained a private group, not a public body. It follows that the most useful evidence historians have available to them—the source best able to help them understand Florentine vendettas and their transcription into social memory—comes from records that bring them closest to the intimate thoughts and feelings of the very individuals involved in such conflicts: the private diaries of Florentine families.

The society of the medieval Italian city-states upheld and respected distinct codes of honor, family, and loyalty. These values fostered a system of vengeance known as *vendetta*. Whenever individuals or groups perceived that an insult, injury, or other injustice had been committed against them, they would often retaliate. The original aggressor would frequently retaliate in turn, creating a cycle that only ended when a peace was finally reached between the injured parties, or when one or both parties was entirely destroyed. In a time when the political power of the state was weak, this extra-legal system of violent self-help flourished as families used private methods to exact justice for perceived injuries to the body or to the honor of the family name. At the same time, governments and public authorities generally sought to limit the violence of vendetta and attempted to replace private extrajudicial practices with public justice.

Several traits of the Italian vendetta clearly distinguish it from other medieval forms of revenge practice. One important distinction concerned the equivalency of injuries exchanged. As

such, the Biblical proverb "an eye for an eye" often received a literal interpretation. Whenever the opportunity presented itself, injured parties would strive to exact a punishment identical to the offense they had received, and both witnesses and participants in the vendetta were careful to note how fair or appropriate (*condecens*) it had been.[3] The need for reciprocal vengeance killings explains how a series of assassinations over a period of many years could sometimes be traced back to a single murder. As Jacques Heers has claimed, "Violent death always demanded compensation…even accidents sometimes set two families against each other for many years."[4] Another feature of vendetta was the length of time taken to carry out revenge. Compared to their European neighbors, Italians were often known for concealing their violent intentions and striking at the most opportune moment.[5] Dean cites examples of Italian treatises that advise the revenge-taker to wait for the opportune moment before striking: "Don't spoil it through haste," and "He who conceals the injury can better take revenge," are two recommendations.[6] As a result, Italians earned a reputation for pursuing vendettas under the principle of a dish best served cold.

One other important characteristic of vendetta was the prominent role of families and allies in the participation of blood vengeance. Nowhere else in Europe did vendetta involve or require so many participants, a phenomena that can be explained by medieval Italians' unusually strong sense of family solidarity, which created close, intricate networks of friends, relatives, and allies. As Dean wrote, "Family solidarity was the key to the exaction of revenge: a claim to vengeance bound the generations and branches of a kindred together and was transmitted as part

---

[3] Daniel Waley, *A Blood Feud with a Happy Ending: Siena, 1285-1304*, 48.
[4] Jacques Heers, *Family Clans in the Middle Ages* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1977), 108.
[5] Dean, *Crime in Medieval Europe*, 102.
[6] Ibid.

of the heritage."[7] In theory, families acted in solidarity to answer threats made to an individual member or to the collective whole, and to repay any offending party through retaliation. This retaliation could in turn be reciprocated, often initiating a long, drawn-out conflict between the two warring families. This is the final attribute: the unusually long life span of vendettas. In Tuscany, cycles of violence were especially long-lived, with animosity between families sometimes lasting up to a decade or longer.

Although it was prevalent throughout Italy, the practice of vendetta held particular importance for the Florentines. Giovanni Villani (1280-1348) and Dino Compagni (1255-1324), two contemporaries of Dante who chronicled the violent factionalism that gripped Florence during the thirteenth and fourteenth century, referred to several instances of vendetta in their chronicles, depicting them as the catalysts of long-standing factional division. In the unstable climate at the beginning of the thirteenth century, Florence's leading families came to be bitterly divided. In Book V of his *Nuova Cronica*, Villani lists "the families and the nobles which became Guelfs and Ghibellines in Florence," brought on by a citywide division that allegedly began after the death of Buondelmonte de' Buondelmonti in 1215.[8] As the famous story goes, Buondelmonte had dishonored the Amidei family by reneging on his promise to marry "a maiden of [that] house" after "a lady of the house of the Donati called to him," promising a more agreeable marriage to one of her own daughters.[9] The shame visited upon the Amidei was great, and to avenge their humiliation, "on the morning of Easter of the Resurrection [they] assembled in their house," armed themselves, and attacked Buondelmonte as he arrived at the foot of the

---

[7] Ibid., 99.
[8] Giovanni Villani, Book V, chapter 39, *Selections from the First Nine Books of the Croniche Fiorentine* (Westminster, [Eng.]: A. Constable, 1896), 123.
[9] Ibid., 38, 121.

Ponte Vecchio.[10] "Assaulted and smitten" by the Amidei and their allies, Buondelmonte's "veins were opened and he was brought to his end."[11] This cold-blooded murder was, according to both contemporary and later accounts, the "beginning of the accursed parties of Guelfs and Ghibbelines in Florence," for the city "rose in arms in tumult" at the news of Buondelmonte's death, and "all the families of the nobles were divided, and some held with the Buondelmonti, who took the side of the Guelfs, and were its leaders, and some with the Umberti, who were the leaders of the Ghibellines, and whence followed much evil and disaster to our city."[12]

Both Villani and Compagni wrote in their respective chronicles about another major division that occurred during their lifetimes that renewed the city's bitter divisions. The enmity arose out of the growing hatred between two powerful families, the Cerchi and the Donati. In his *Cronica delle cose occorrenti ne' tempi suoi*, Dino Compagni stated that problems came about gradually as the Cerchi family rose in wealth and power. He wrote that "the hatred grew day by day," flamed by several small but incendiary incidents that eventually led the two families to split the Guelph party in Florence into opposing factions, the Donati becoming members of the Black Guelphs and the Cerchi taking the part of the White Guelphs.[13] Villani recorded one particularly violent vendetta that occurred in retaliation for the death of Corso Donati, leader of the Black Guelph faction. Villani wrote,

> At that time [1310], at the end of February, the Donati slew M. Betto Brunelleschi, and a little while after the said Donati and their kinfolk and friends assembled at San Salvi and disinterred M. Corso Donati, and made great lamentation, and held a service as if he were only just dead, showing that by the death of M. Betto vengeance had been done, and that he had been the counselor of M. Corso's death, wherefore all the city was as it were moved to tumult.[14]

---

[10] Ibid., 122.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., 122-123.
[13] Dino Compagni, Book I, chapter 20, *Dino Compagni's Chronicle of Florence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 22.
[14] Giovanni Villani, Book IX, chapter 12, *Croniche Fiorentine*, 400.

As explained by Villani, the murder was carried out as repayment for the death of Corso Donati. The Donati, to emphasize the symbolic significance of Brunelleschi's murder, dug up their relative's remains and held a solemn ceremony to demonstrate to everyone their memory of the debt owed their murdered leader and to celebrate the successful recovery of their family's honor. However, as Villani also related, their actions "moved [all the city] to tumult," bringing the factions and their members into renewed opposition with each other.[15] The frequent conflicts between Florence's political factions inevitably contributed to the development of vendetta. Anna Maria Enriques has said that this allowed for a co-existence to develop, in which personal enmities were influenced by the political parties, "and vice-versa the vendettas influenced the political parties."[16] As she affirmed, "The expressions of the chroniclers, in the retelling of the vendettas and private peaces, make us understand how these deeds were considered important for civic life."[17]

Because this was the case, chroniclers were therefore not the only Florentines interested in politics and factional rivalries; Florence's leading families were also anxious to understand and record the past in their *ricordanze*, especially history where the family's private vendettas were intertwined with the city's factions. Many diaries contain entire passages dedicated to describing civic life both past and present. Some writers such as Giovanni di Pagolo Morelli (1371-1444) kept personal accounts of Florence's political history, as well as descriptions of his own family's role in politics. In one section, Morelli detailed his family's past involvement in the city's factions:

---

[15] Ibid.
[16] Anna Maria Enriques, "La vendetta nella vita e nella legislazione Fiorentina," *Archivio storico italiano*, 7th series, xix, (1933), 123. Translated by Kalina Yamboliev.
[17] Ibid., 124. Translated by Kalina Yamboliev.

> In the [opening years of the fourteenth century], and rather before…there came to Florence…many divisions and discords between the citizens for many causes, and [especially] because every one wanted to be the greatest, and to come to this end under new covers there was fighting. There were then sects of the Bianchi and Neri, derivatives of the sects of the Donati and Cerchi, or if you want the Guelfs and Ghibellines; and by these were found and was done many wrongs to many [people], according to who was found most strong in the regiment. And beyond the injuries in the regiment, and it was used then to make enemies more with the sword in hand than with the beans,[18] as it is done unto this day. This *popolo* was very divided, and he who held with the Cerchi was Bianco, and he who held with the Donati was Nero: many grand and old families were with one part [side] or with the other, and many families were divided amongst themselves, so that one part held with the Cerchi and another part with the Donati. And by these divisions were made many fights, and many bad ones were birthed all day[19] between the citizens, so much that the houses fought with crossbows; and in these cases were built many tall and large towers, like you will still see in the first ring [original city walls]. So it happened that, by certain fights that were done by our old [ancestor] Morello speaking in benefit of the Guelfs with certain Bianchi of the sect of the Cerchi, it came to question; and it was so much before, that arms were adopted and some of the Ghibellines were wounded; where it was agreed that by certain condemnation Morello left, and went to stay in Arezzo…. And for this reason, because they always held the part Nera, [our ancestors] were named the Morelli, deriving from the part Nera, as is said.[20]

The passage mirrors the story recounted by the chronicler Dino Compagni, with an emphasis placed on the Morelli clan's involvement with political affairs in Florence. It also shows that by Dante's time, vendettas had quite successfully merged with city politics. As Andrea Zorzi has stated, vendetta was seen "as an idiom of political competition."[21] Though revenge narratives survive from Bologna, Lucca, Pisa, Pistoia, and Siena, contemporary Italians generally agreed that Florence was especially prone to the factionalism that sparked vendettas; in the words of one scholar, "factional discord was said to be endemic among the Florentines, as even their own citizens acknowledged."[22] Florentine notary Filippo Ceffi (late 13th century-c.

---

[18] Editor's note: that is, with the votes, that were done using black and white beans.
[19] Editor's note: always, continuously.
[20] Giovanni di Pagolo Morelli, *Ricordi. A cura di Vittore Branca* (Firenze: F. Le Monnier, 1969), 130-133. Translated by Kalina Yamboliev.
[21] Andrea Zorzi, *La trasformazione di un quadro politico: ricerche su politica e giustizia a Firenze dal comune allo stato territoriale* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2008), 99. Translated by Kalina Yamboliev.
[22] Gene Brucker, *Florence: The Golden Age, 1138-1737* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1998), 11.

1330) stated it even more eloquently, "It is certain that all of the Florentines shout in their souls: vendetta, vendetta; justice, justice for those wicked evils."[23]

Evidence supporting this claim is found in the opinions of medieval commentators on Dante's *Divine Comedy*. One commentator, Benvenuto de Rambaldi de Imola (1320?-1388) claimed, "Though all men naturally tend to vendetta, the Florentines are especially ardent in this, both publically and privately."[24] Referring to the passage from the *Inferno* mentioned above, Florentine notary Andrea Lancia (c.1280-1356) wrote in his *Ottimo Commento* on the *Comedy* that the Florentines "never forget an injury, nor forgive the offense without vendetta; hence there is a proverb among us that a vendetta of one hundred years [still] keeps its milk teeth."[25]

Contemporary historians also remarked on the prominence of vendetta in Florence, and accordingly critiqued Florentine character. Giovanni Villani wrote that Florence was founded by a mixture of "noble" Roman blood and the belligerent qualities inherited from the "rude Fiesolans fierce in war."[26] "And note," said Villani, "that it is not to be wondered at that the Florentines are always at war and strife among themselves, being born and descended from two peoples so contrary and hostile and different in habits."[27] Villani not only acknowledged Florentine antagonism, he also explained it: a social appetite for factionalism and revenge was a hereditary trait inherited from the citizen's ancestors. Dino Compagni lamented the chaos that

---

[23] Filippo Ceffi, *Le dicerie di ser Filippo Ceffi notaio fiorentino, a cura di L. Biondi* (Torino, 1825), 22. Cited by Andrea Zorzi, in "La cultura della vendetta nel conflitto politico in età comunale," in *Le storie e la memoria: in onore di Arnold Esch*, ed. Delle Donne, Roberto, and Arnold Esch (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2002) 159. Translated by Kalina Yamboliev.

[24] Benvenuti de Rambaldi de Imola, *Benvenuti de Rambaldis de Imola Comentum super Dantis Alighierii Comoediam*, edited by J. P. Lacaita, 5 vols. Florence, 1887, ii, 391. Cited by Trevor Dean, in "Marriage and Mutilation: Vendetta in Late-Medieval Italy," *Past & Present* 157 (Nov. 1997), 6.

[25] Andrea Lancia, *L'Ottimo Commento*, ed. A. Torri, Pisa 1827-29, III, 354-60. Cited by Nicolai Rubinstein, in *Studies in Italian History in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004), 181.

[26] Giovanni Villani, *Croniche Fiorentine*, 30.

[27] Ibid.

factionalism had brought to Florence and he cursed the irascibility of her citizens, swearing, "May its citizens…weep for themselves and for their children, since by their pride and ill will and competition…they have undone so noble a city."[28] Niccolò Machiavelli (1468-1527) would later admit that in republics such as Florence "there is more life, more hate, more desire for revenge."[29]

Modern scholars tend to agree with the medieval assessment of the belligerent temperament of the Florentines. Dean stated quite matter-of-factly that "Florentine injuries were more likely to lead to vengeance than non-Florentine ones."[30] Nicolai Rubinstein noted, "In the fourteenth century, the Florentines…were considered to be especially addicted to the custom of vendetta."[31] "Florentines' first thoughts were of revenge," concurred Thomas Kuehn, and though "those thoughts might be quickly dismissed…they were there, redolent with the cultural demands of offended honor."[32] Renaissance historian Gene Brucker stated that if among contemporaries "the consensus of opinion about the physical city was unanimously favorable, the judgment of the Florentines as a people was just as consistently negative."[33] By all accounts, both modern and contemporary, Florentines practiced vengeance with a peculiar intensity.

❖

[28] Dino Compagni, Book I, chapter 2, *Dino Compagni's Chronicle of Florence*, 6.
[29] Niccolo Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, chapter 5, ed. S. Bertelli, Milan, 1960, 28-9. Cited by Trevor Dean, in "Marriage and Mutilation," 6.
[30] Dean, "Marriage and Mutilation," 6.
[31] Nicolai Rubinstein and Giovanni Ciappelli, *Studies in Italian History in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004), 181.
[32] Thomas Kuehn, *Law, Family & Women: Toward a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 80.
[33] Brucker, *Florence: The Golden Age*, 11.

Chapter 2 - A Penchant for Vengeance: Florentines and Vendetta Culture

Inhabitants and authorities of other Italian cities also noted a Florentine propensity for vengeance. In 1392, responding to the outcome of a government-sanctioned vendetta that had been carried out in Pisa, the Florentine *Signoria* sent a message to Messer Piero Gambacorti, lord of Pisa, conveying their apologies and acknowledging that: "a very grave matter has been brought to our attention…namely, that you are displeased by Florentine citizens who engage in quarrels and disturb the tranquility of your city."[34] After assuring him that they were "prepared to do anything…to remedy the situation," the *Signoria* appealed to the lord of Pisa for leniency in prosecuting the Florentine who had carried out a recent vendetta, explaining that the vendetta had been officially authorized. Clearly Florentines were different in their practice of vendetta, for some acts of vengeance were sanctioned, rather than suppressed, by the commune.

Florence's officially endorsed vendettas could even become a spectator sport, as an entry from the fragmentary *Cronica* of Luca di Totto da Panzano (d. 1378) makes clear:

> Memorial, how I went to Prato to kill Carlo di Baldovinetto Gherardini. Sunday, after the sounding of nones, on the 13th day of June 1350, I heard from some trusted friends how Carlo di Baldovinetto Gherardini…was in the church of S. Margherita at Montici, of which he was patron…many people, my friends, went there immediately to my aid…and we laid siege to it…we put fire under the campanile and burnt two large parts of it and destroyed all the roofing…and the battle lasted until sunset…and more than 5,000 people from Florence and the *contado* came to watch, and there came all the officials of Messer Andrease Rossi of Parma, who was *podestà*, and all the officials of Guadagno di ser Lando of Gubbio, his assessor, and there came Ser Nuto from Città di Castello, a proud constable, with many troops. And when he came he gave orders that we should go away and that we should leave him to fight Carlo (who had been outlawed by the commune) and the other group there…. But we were so strong that we just laughed at him…and they, willingly and with much courtesy, left us to our business."[35]

---

[34] *ASF, Signori e Collegi, Missive*, 23, fols. 45v-46r. Translated by Gene Brucker, *A Documentary Source*, 115-116.

[35] Luca di Totto da Panzano, "Frammenti della cronaca di Messer Luca di Totto da Panzano," *Giornale storico degli archivi toscani* V (Firenze, 1861). Cited by John Larner, in *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch, 1216-1380* (London: Longman, 1980), 123-124.

This account contains several important points about the Florentine practice of vendetta. First, it shows how culturally acceptable publicized vendettas could become, even developing into public spectacles, socially and (sometimes) legally recognized by the city. Second, it illustrates the key role that allies and friends played in assisting the primary avenger. As Luca explained, "many people, my friends, went…immediately to my aid."[36] Third, it shows the inability of local police to control extralegal affairs supported by the populace. Evidently, the constable from Città di Castello was helpless to prevent the assault against Carlo. Even with the assistance of "many troops," he only succeeded in arousing laughter from the attackers for daring to intervene.[37] Fourth, the account demonstrates how channeled hostility could motivate Florentines to travel to another city to participate in vendetta and watch as a nobleman exacted revenge against a person who had offended his honor. While many Florentine laws were enacted to limit magnate violence, popular support of vendettas shows that the practice of revenge was sometimes a grey area in terms of legality and social acceptance, especially for crimes committed against the commune.

While vendettas had the potential of becoming a popular form of unauthorized public execution, less distinguished (but equally effective) methods of taking revenge were common as well. An example of shaming the offending family without resorting to murder appears in the court records of 1420 from a mountainous Apennine district "of the province of Florence in the region of Romagna."[38] These records show how a group of twelve men "banded together…with the intention of murdering Messer Jacopo di Conte of Portica, rector of the church of S. Marina

---

[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Gene Brucker, "An Escapade in the Apennines, 1400," in *The Society of Renaissance Florence: A Documentary Study* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 104-106.

in the province of Florence."[39] While the account does not reveal how the priest had initially aroused the men's ire, it does describe how they enacted their revenge. Unable to assault the rector directly, the band decided to instead "seize the mother and the sister of the priest of S. Marina and to shame them and thus to disgrace the priest."[40] Receiving permission from powerful friends, the men were told to "go ahead and do it and don't have any fear if you do it. This will be a beautiful vendetta and you will disgrace his family."[41] Following their friends' advice, the men broke into the priest's home, kidnapped, and later raped, his sister.

Some of the participants who were apprehended for the crime were fined for their actions while others "were sentenced to death *in absentia*," though probably with the vicar's expectation that they would never be caught.[42] The apparent leniency exhibited for those captured (that is, a punishment of fines instead of death) is suggestive of the provincial court's slight tolerance for crimes perpetrated in the name of vendetta. The defendants' careful mentioning of powerful friends who were "very influential in this region" may have also played a part in securing their freedom from execution. Most likely local elites, these men are referred to as confidential advisors and *de facto* councilors of the accused, offering their political clout to "help and defend us, as they have done with respect to other affairs in the past."[43] The fact that these influential individuals are never explicitly mentioned in the courts official minutes—"whose names will not be revealed at the present time"—seems to confirm this hypothesis.[44]

Another factor influencing the court's verdict may have been the very culture of vengeance in Tuscan society. Custom, obligation, and sacred duty dictated that all members of

---

[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., 105.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid., 104.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.

the family rally to defend the honor of the family name. In the words of one fourteenth-century lawyer, "All members of a family take up offensive weapons, for an injury to one stains the whole house."[45] In the model Italian family, an injury to one was perceived as an injury to all, though this ideal was often far from reality. As Dean has pointed out, "Family solidarity was not a given, but a construct, and one that often failed."[46] Several vendetta narratives recount cases of conflict that ended with the original provocateur being completely abandoned by his friends, relatives, and fellow kinsmen.

Dean highlighted many instances where a lack of family solidarity is apparent, including several examples from small Tuscan towns. One episode, which ignited the famous and long-lived animosity between the factions of Black and White, occurred in Pistoia in 1286 between two different branches of one family. One hotheaded youth named Dore di Messer Guglielmo took revenge against his relative Messer Vanni di Gualfredi Rinieri by striking him with his sword, severing all but a thumb from one of his hands.[47] Upon seeing the injury, Vanni's father and brothers "resolved to make vendetta and to kill Dore, his father, brothers and kinsmen."[48] As the chronicle recounted, "Dore's kinsmen, thinking that they could get out of this quarrel, decided to give Dore up to Vanni's father and brothers, for them to do as they pleased…so they arranged for Dore to be seized and sent to the house of Messer Gualfredi and his sons and put into their hands."[49] Needless to say, things did not go well for Dore Guglielmo. Observing the rule of reciprocation, the Rinieri cut off one of Dore's hands, "the one which he had attacked Vanni…and thus wounded and mutilated, they sent him home to his father."[50] While medieval

---

[45] Dean, *Crime in Medieval Europe*, 108.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Trevor Dean, *The Towns of Italy in the Late Middle Ages* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 185.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid., 186.
[50] Ibid.

chroniclers of this case of retribution have universally agreed "this was considered by everyone to be too cruel and severe a thing, to shed their own family's blood, especially as they had put him in their mercy," the Rinieri's retaliation was fair according to the vendetta code of retaliation.[51] However, the Rinieri transgressed another aspect of honor: they ignored a call for peace and mercy and betrayed the trust placed in them by their own kinsmen.[52] As this example illustrates, family solidarity could be broken. In this case, it was broken twice over, first by the family desertion of Dore, and then through the betrayal perpetrated by the larger familial network.

A less famous case of clan-abandonment occurred in 1309-10, in the town of San Miniato. Following some altercation, Nelluccio Tobertelli killed a member of an important and powerful family. Rather than hand over their troublesome relative to the offended family, the Tobertelli clan simply disowned him. The *Diario di Ser Giovanni di Lemmo da Camugnori* described the cause of the conflict and its swift pacification:

> Monday evening, 30 December 1309: Nelluccio di Nuccio dei Tobertelli…killed Manarduccio di Andrea Manardi...Afterwards, on 3 January, all the Tobertelli gathered on the piazza of Santa Maria, and, in the presence of the Manardi, repudiated Nelluccio as their friend and kinsmen, declaring that they wished to be friends and servants of all the Manardi. And the Manardi said and promised that, on account of the death of their kinsman Manarduccio, they would take no revenge against any of the Tobertelli family except Nelluccio, and that they would regard Nelluccio (but no other of the Tobertelli) and all who helped and supported him as enemies…[53]

These cases show that family solidarity was far from a guarantee of protection and support from fellow kinsmen, and that vendetta custom and practice varied. At the same time however, vendetta could act as a cohesive force that strengthened a clan's solidarity. As John Larner has stated, "The long time allowed for the exaction of vendetta…promoted family unity over long

---

[51] Ibid.
[52] Enriques, 131.
[53] Lemmo da Camugnori, *Diario di Ser Giovanni di Lemmo da Camugnori*, in *Cronache dei secoli XIII e XIV*, ed. C. Minutoli (Florence, 1876), 173, 201-202. Cited by Trevor Dean, in *The Towns of Italy in the Late Middle Ages*, 187.

periods, for faced always with the possibility of reprisals, families that slayed together had every reason to stay together."[54]

❖

[54] Larner, 65.

Chapter 3 - *Ricordanze:* How Florentines Remembered Quarrels and Vendettas

During the late Middle Ages, Florentine merchants and wealthy families began to keep family diaries, recording the economic, social, political, and personal developments that occurred in their lives. The secret writings of Florentine elite first appeared during the thirteenth century, though very rarely with the inclusion of family details before 1350, after which they flourished.[55] Merchants customarily kept records of their business lives in private ledgers that included books of receipts, testaments, expenses, and records of other commercial transactions. Frequently, personal memorandums were written in the margins, then compiled into separate volumes and called *ricordanze*, or "things to be remembered."[56]

Some merchants simply called them *ricordi*. Others began with the words "libro di…" or "il libro segreto di…" followed by the name of the writer or his family name.[57] Some private diaries were also entitled *Memorie di famiglia*, or "family memoirs." The contents of these diaries also differed considerably. Most were primarily economic, recording and listing various financial accounts, records of taxation, and other business dealings. Others focused on social and political developments in the city and abroad. Regardless, most diaries contained at least a small quantity of family information, records of births, deaths, marriages, genealogies, and other miscellanea. Several contain detailed family histories, (auto) biographies, and other descriptive

---

[55] Philip J. Jones, "Florentine Families and Florentine Diaries in the Fourteenth Century," *Papers of the British School at Rome*: *Studies in Italian Medieval History* 24 (1956), 184.

[56] *Ricordanze*: "a word of Provençal origin first used in Italy in the late thirteenth century." Vittore Branca and Murtha Baca, *Merchant Writers of the Italian Renaissance*. New York: Marsilio Publishers, 1999, xii.

[57] I.e., "The book of…" and "the secret book of…"

narratives. After 1350, a businessman would normally designate a complete ledger as his *libro segreto*, or "secret book" of personal information for himself, his family, and his heirs.[58]

Philip Jones stated that Florentine private memoirs survive in such numbers from so many different families "as to make it probable that they were kept by every man of business or distinction in later medieval Florence."[59] Given this fact, it is baffling that, with few exceptions, family diaries are found nowhere else in Italy, and certainly not in such vast quantity.[60] Brucker has noted that "perhaps as many as 200 private reminiscences from the 14th to the 17th century exist today in Florentine archives and libraries. In no other Italian city, indeed, in no other European city before the 17th century, is a community's private experience so fully and richly recorded."[61] Why Florence contains the vast majority of medieval diaries has not been adequately explained. Brucker offered a simple reason: the accidents of survival. However, this does not account for the scarcity of diaries outside of Florence.[62] What Florence's wealth of *ricordanze* does suggest is that social and political conditions in the city were "particularly conducive to the writing of memoirs" and that Florentines, for whatever reason, "were exceptionally motivated to write about themselves, their families, their city, their world."[63]

Judging from their economic contents, the diaries were a simple, practical method for recording important financial information and preserving copies of receipts and other monetary transactions. Why then did many ledgers include additional notations and eventually become separate books intended for personal, non-business purposes? Often, the writers themselves

---

[58] Gene Brucker, *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence: The Diaries of Buonaccorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 9.
[59] Jones, 184.
[60] "There are, in fact, only a few dozen non-Florentine *libri di famiglia* from the late Middle Ages to the contemporary period. Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Florence alone produced hundreds of such books." Brucker, *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence*, 27.
[61] Brucker, *The Golden Age*, 21.
[62] Brucker, *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence*, 11-12.
[63] Ibid., 12, and Brucker, *The Golden Age*, 21.

explain it. The Florentine statesman Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540) began his family history with this declaration:

> I have written this family history with great toil and diligence, not so much from the things I have heard as from my own memory, and much more from letters…And because I shall be totally truthful here, I beg our descendants, to whom this history will be handed down, not to show it to anyone outside of the family, but to keep it safe for their own use. For I have written it solely for that reason…[64]

Guicciardini's motive for writing his *ricordanze* was to communicate with his heirs. Preserving his family's history was important to him, though he was clearly motivated by vanity and pride as well. He added, "I desire…above everything else in the world…the glory of our family, not only during my lifetime, but in perpetuity."[65] These duel motives are found in a number of diaries.

Another example comes from Giovanni di Pagolo Morelli, who over a century earlier, in 1393, had written his own explanation for compiling and composing his family's memoirs:

> Because in this book there is not written anything before, the desire came to me…to write of our nation[66] and of the old conditions…so that they [our family] may know something about us, because today every one is founded in grand antiquity; but I want to show the truth of ours. And, as you see, in sum I have named those antique descendants the one from the other…according to what I found written in certain books and written very old. I will call this book *Memoirs of Giovanni di Pagolo* and so on....[67]

Again, a Florentine explained his intentions in the language of family history and honor. *Ricordanze* such as Morelli's were often written during a landmark moment in an author's life, when success or misfortune provoked him to write down his family's history. The result could be an anthology of domestic chronicles, comprehensive genealogies, lists of family finances and properties, and a great deal of political, commercial, and social memoranda from past generations of the family.

---

[64] Branca, *Merchant Writers*, xlviii.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Editor's note: stock, lineage.
[67] Giovanni Morelli, *Ricordi*, 81. Translated by Kalina Yamboliev.

Often Florentine diaries contained detailed accounts of past family conflicts, as well as dry records of isolated vendettas.[68] Their inclusion allows the modern historian to understand the manner in which Florentines, through their diaries, recorded and recalled past aggressions in order to perpetuate the memory of dishonor. In a comparative analysis of European practices of vengeance, Dean has pointed out this unique quality of Florentine revenge cycles. He has explained that unlike Florentines, French noblemen were quick to take revenge for injuries, noting, "French noble families lacked the means for recording and transmitting memory of injuries that Florentine families had in their family diaries. But most Italian families outside Florence lacked these too, and this is what makes Florentine practice of vendetta untypical."[69] Florentine diaries functioned as a private device for remembering past injuries, and therefore became a permanent reminder of family enmities; they served as a way to keep grudges alive through successive generations of a single family. Other scholars have agreed with Dean's brief assessment of the important role diaries played in Florentine family memory of vendettas, with two directly stating as fact that "[Florentine] families such as the Peruzzi had long memories...stocked by conversation and by reading the *ricordanze* of their ancestors."[70]

Family diaries recount colorful ancestral conflicts that occurred during the heyday of Florentine factional violence in the twelfth and thirteenth century. Brief biographies of relatives were common in *libri segretti*, and were often created as a means to bolster family pride. The famous Florentine sculptor and goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini openly admitted, "I glory in tracing my descent from men of valor."[71] Often, "diarists wished to set down the facts of their family's

---

[68] Jones, 184.
[69] Ibid., 103.
[70] D. V. Kent and F. W. Kent, "A Self Disciplining Pact Made by the Peruzzi Family of Florence (June 1433)," *Renaissance Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (1981), 345.
[71] Benvenuto Cellini and John Addington Symonds, *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini* (New York: Modern Library, 1927), 5.

antiquity."[72] Diaries thus unsurprisingly reveal self-aggrandizement and contain a certain amount of embellishment. Factual fabrication was typical, ranging from slight exaggeration to outright falsehoods that filled in missing segments of the ancestral line and added a flamboyant flare to a family's otherwise uneventful, undocumented past.

One example of this is found in the Sirigatti family's *Book of Family Affairs*. A prosperous merchant named Lapo di Giovanni Niccolini de'Sirigatti (1360?-1430) recounted the tale of the founder of his family line: Ruzza d'Arrigo di Luchese di Bonavia de'Sirigatti.[73] Although he lived more than a century later, Lapo described his ancestor as though he was a recent memory, writing that Ruzza "was a big man, handsome and strong, and lived about a hundred and thirty years."[74] Unable to produce precise dates, Lapo nonetheless provided a timeframe by setting the tale shortly after the occurrence of a well-known event, stating, "At that time, the Guelphs [had been] exiled for the first time."[75] He then recounted a vendetta narrative involving Ruzza and his son Niccolino, "whom he had married to a daughter of the Scolari family in order to make peace with that family."[76] This was necessary to avoid prolonging a vendetta whose origins Lapo described:

> It seems that one of the Scolari family was out hunting, and so was one of Ruzza's nephews. A dispute arose about some prey…the argument grew heated; the man from the Scolari family, who was carrying a spear, struck the other man with it and killed him. Then to mock them he sent to Ruzza's family to ask for the spear back, for he had left it in the body of the dead man, for which Ruzza did not rest until he and his men killed the man who had killed his nephew, at the foot of Passigniano in a stream called the Rimaggio. Then he sent a message of his own to the Scolari, telling them to go to the Rimaggio and they would find their spear, for Ruzza killed the man with the same spear with which he had killed his nephew. The Scolari were outraged, for they were a powerful family at that time, and if the Buondelmonti family hadn't come to our family's

---

[72] Brucker, *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence*, 11.
[73] Lapo Niccolini, *Book of Family Affairs*. Translated by Vittore Branca in *Merchant Writers of the Italian Renaissance*, 140.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Editor's note: This would have placed Lapo's story about his ancestor sometime after September 4, 1260, when the Florentine Guelphs were defeated near Siena at Montaperti. Branca, 139.
[76] Ibid., 140.

> aid, they would have been undone. But they made peace between the two families, and Ruzza married his young son Niccolino to the sister of the Scolari who had been killed, and peace was made between them...[77]

Many elements of the revenge story are familiar: the kindling of enmity between the families by their younger members, the attacking of family honor by adding insult to injury (i.e., the Scolari mocking Ruzza's family by asking for the return of the spear which had killed his nephew), the vendetta doctrine of reciprocal retaliation (i.e., Ruzza's return of said spear by killing and leaving it in the man who had murdered his nephew), the assistance of allied connections for protection and support, and the use of a marriage alliance to bring peace between the warring families.

However, it also reveals telling signs of how fourteenth and fifteenth century Florentines interpreted their own ancestral stories. There is a distinct purpose in Lapo's account of this revenge narrative. More than simply preserving his family history, Lapo consciously spun a tale that identified his family line with a noble ancestry. At the same time, Lapo subtly bolstered it with a credible story: a revenge narrative that invoked the highest value of the nobility, honor. Lapo's ancestral story involved his family in fierce past encounters with other noble families. The revenge narrative helped prove that, above all else, the Sirigatti family was worthy of vendetta, that they were worthy of the enmity of the Scolari and the friendship of the Buondelmonti.[78] Lapo's purported lineage founder Ruzza was a man who had boldly fought and defended his family's honor against a powerful noble clan, a source of Sirigatti honor and social standing.[79] Sprinkled with a few facts, elite family names, and at least one historic event, Lapo's diary passage reveals a successful merchant's attempt to authenticate his family name in the city

---

[77] Ibid.
[78] Thomas Kuehn, "Social and Legal Capital in Vendetta" in *Sociability and Its Discontents Civil Society, Social Capital, and Their Alternatives in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Nicholas A. Eckstein and Nicholas Terpstra (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 54.
[79] Ibid.

and community by connecting a noble lineage to his family line through association with vendetta.

The recording of ancestral vendettas in the family could also serve as a reminder of past family shame. In *La cronica domestica di Messer Donato Velluti*, the Florentine judge, and merchant Donato Velluti (1313-1370) narrated the history of his branch of the family's involvement with various vendettas.[80] Recounting an ancestral quarrel, Velluti described a blood vendetta involving his clan that had started around the mid-thirteenth century and had come to involve his family twenty-eight years later, in 1295. Donato recorded the event as best he could, providing as many details as his sources permitted:

> According to the records which I have discovered, Gino di Donato [Velluti] was killed by Mannello, called Mannelino, de'Mannelli, in September or October, 1267 [because he had procured the cancellation of a judicial ban against an enemy of the Mannelli]…. For our part, we did not wage a vendetta until June 24, 1295, the feast day of St. John the Baptist…[81]

According to Velluti, the family's retaliation had been accomplished successfully and without casualties. Velluti's father, Lamberto, even had the honor of being directly involved in the vendetta. Afterwards, however, the Commune fined Lamberto and several others for the murder. As Velluti wrote,

> Afterwards, when the Mannelli had made a peace agreement with our ancestors through a procurator…according to the form of the statutes of the Florentine Commune they still regarded our relatives with rancor and hostility. So the Commune forced them to make another peace agreement, this time in person, and also to guarantee that the peace would be kept…. This they did with great reluctance and because they were forced to do so. For at that time they were so strong and powerful in numbers and possessions that they considered themselves outraged because our family had committed a vendetta against them.[82]

Predictably, the peace agreement, though officially completed, did not end hostilities between the two clans. As Donato explained,

---

[80] The diary was written between 1367-1370.
[81] *La cronica domestica di Messer Donato Velluti*. Cited by Gene Brucker, in *A Documentary Study*, 106.
[82] Ibid., 107.

> After that peace was concluded, the Mannelli continued to lord it over us. On account of their exalted position, they regarded us with loathing, since they had been forced by the Commune to sign the accord…I also find in the document more of them to be condemned by the said *Capitano*, since they did not complete his requests to make peace.[83]

Donato continued to narrate the ensuing hostility, the Mannelli's "barbarous manner[s]," and other dangers they presented for the Velluti through personal stories involving both his father and himself. At one point Lamberto was nearly assassinated. "As I learned from his papers," wrote Donato, Piero and Matteo Velluti had warned Lamberto not to "return from England by way of Genoa…[for] some of them [the Mannelli] had learned of his trip, and if they had known his route, they would have killed him."[84] Donato went on to write that "I myself had further proof [of their hostility], for once upon my return from Bologna, I greeted…[two sons of Messer Lapo Mannelli and another member of their family], and none of them returned my greeting."[85] From this unfriendly encounter and a confirmation from a family member related to the Mannelli, Velluti learned "that they were [still] hostile toward our family."[86] As his family's unpleasant encounters indicate, the Velluti clan's conflict with the Mannelli became a hazard for Donato's immediate family. The actions of the clan had repercussions for all of its members. None were immune to the retaliatory actions of an enemy clan. Large-scale vendettas thus had the potential of hurting family members who had little or no involvement in the quarrel.

One such vendetta brought serious consequences to Donato's family. It had originally started because of the actions of Velluto Velluti, a first cousin of Donato's grandfather. In the year 1310 a friend of the Velluti family named Dino del Mangano became "involved in a quarrel

---

[83] Ibid., 107-108.
[84] Ibid., 108.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.

with Giovanni Berignalli, a cloth manufacturer and merchant, and three or four of his sons, his brothers, and relatives."[87] According to Donato,

> With the aid of Lorenzo di Dietaiuto Velluti, Dino had won this dispute with Giovanni. Giovanni wanted to gain revenge on Lorenzo, and near [the church of] S. Spirito, he encountered him with Velluto [Velluti]. Giovanni attacked Lorenzo with a knife but he ran away, and when Lorenzo wanted to pursue him, Velluti held him [Giovanni]. Then Giovanni shouted, "Let me free," and when Velluto would not release him, he gave him two blows in his flank. Velluto was carried to his house, and our relatives—Lapo, Lorenzo, and the others—persuaded him to make his will.[88]

Dictating his will hours before death, Velluto left his entire inheritance to "Lapo, Lorenzo, and the others."[89] This action infuriated Donato's father and uncle, for as Donato wrote in his diary, "Our branch of the family was as closely related to [Velluto] as theirs, and we had as much claim to be heirs as they, but he made them his heirs and treated us as though we were bastards…My uncle Gherardo…went to Velluto, who was still alive, and complained about this, but he refused to change the will."[90] Donato's uncle vehemently condemned Velluto, reproaching, "As you have treated us while alive, so shall we treat your memory after your death."[91]

As a result, "neither Gherardo nor [the family's] women attended his funeral."[92] Donato's father Lamberto commended his brother "for what he had done" and "complained bitterly of the actions of his relatives, and how they had repaid him for having involved himself in the vendetta against the Mannelli."[93] Because of their betrayal, Donato's uncle and father never involved themselves in Velluto's vendetta and even continued to speak with several of the Berignalli

---

[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid., 109.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Earlier in 1295, Donato's father Lamberto had been involved in another vendetta with Velluto, this time against the Mannelli family—the same family that Bonaccorso Pitti (below) would quarrel with a century later. At the time, "he had been the leader of the vendetta, and because of his involvement he was forced to pay a fine of 5,000 *lire*." Ibid.

afterwards. In addition, Velluto had also "left 500 florins to whoever would avenge him."[94] But as Donato previously stated, "our side of the family did not wage the vendetta, although they expected us to..."[95] Unfortunately, Donato's brother Piccio did not heed his father's command "not to involve ourselves in this affair."[96] Soon after, with the help of a friend and a close relative, Piccio murdered a member of the Berignalli family.

In retrospect, Donato believed his relative Velluto had been entirely responsible for bringing shame and chaos to his family. In his closing remarks, he reiterated that "we are an honorable and wealthy family...and this is enough about Velluto; for our honor and welfare, it should have pleased God that he had not been born."[97] Several aspects of Donato's narration held significance for his heirs. The first was the cautionary message layered throughout the tale, warning Donato's descendents of the collateral damages that could be inflicted on the extended branches of a family involved in blood vengeance. Although Lamberto tried to keep his family free from the vendetta, he ultimately failed to prevent his son's involvement in the affair. The account also contains a sharp reminder of the harsh toll that revenge could exact on the Florentine family, testing the limits of clan cohesion. As witnessed, the Velluti family became divided over the decision to pursue vendetta for a family member's death. Piccio Velluti, brother and member of Donato's family, disobeyed his family's resolution to remain neutral in the vendetta and instead allied with his clan members to avenge Velluto's death. This blood vengeance shows how vendetta could damage relations between members of the nuclear family and within the larger familial network, and how it could thus strain family solidarity. Given the chaos and loss it brought the Velluti, one would have thought it important for Donato to record

[94] Ibid., 110.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid.

how the vendetta had initially started, but Donato wrote only that a family friend became "involved in a quarrel with Giovanni Berignalli," with no further explanation.[98] Perhaps Donato was unable to learn of how the vendetta had started, but it is probable that had he known, he would have certainly recorded it in his diary, for just as the outcome of a vendetta was important to remember, so was its origins.

A Florentine memoir that illustrates the care taken to explain the events leading up to a family conflict is the diary of Bonaccorso di Neri di Bonaccorso Pitti (1354-1432). In one passage, it shows the sudden and dangerous escalation that a minor incident could instigate. In 1374, following the outbreak of a virulent plague that took the lives of his father and older brother, Pitti wrote that he left Florence for Venice to retrieve his eighteen-year-old cousin, Cione. The boy was expected to inherit the estate of his own recently deceased brother, Niccolo, who had also died from plague. Soon after his death however, Niccolo's mother quickly sold her son's house and moved in with her sister, a member of the Mannelli clan. Her actions had seemed unjust to Bonaccorso and his surviving brothers, for the Pitti family believed Cione should have received his brother's inheritance. Accordingly, they sent Bonaccorso to fetch him. On their way back to Florence, Cione received a vicious kick to the head from his horse and fell unconscious. Bonaccorso managed to get his injured cousin to a doctor, and after a month of rest, Cione was able to return to Florence and make a full recovery.

While the incident alone was no cause for conflict, two events that occurred shortly after nearly brought a vendetta between the Pitti brothers and their cousin's family. First, upon hearing the news of her son's critical condition, Cione's mother, "in a moment of hysteria or spite or perhaps simply in order to make trouble between us," angrily confronted Bonaccorso's brother Piero and said: "You sent Bonaccorso to kill my son and you killed my other son too in your

[98] Ibid., 109.

house."[99] The insult was a small affront compared to what followed after. Bonaccorso wrote in his diary that he had removed a bundle of unsealed letters from his unconscious cousin's side the day of the accident. Reading the letters, Bonaccorso learned that "they were from [Cione's] cousins, the Mannelli, who had sent them to him at Venice to tell him that when his mother had tried to return to the house where she had lived with her brother, we [the Pitti] had struck her and driven her out."[100] When his cousin awakened, Bonaccorso confronted him with the letters, telling him that he intended to show them to his relatives "so that they might learn of the Mannelli's dishonesty."[101] An incensed Cione, perhaps unaware of his family's deception, then threatened, "If you don't return them I will denounce you and tell how you hit me on the head with your sword."[102] Convinced that the Mannelli were feeding their cousin lies to provoke a vendetta with them (i.e., by goading Pitti into attacking their cousin in anger and "doing him an injury"), Pitti refrained from a violent response to Cione's slanderous words and immediately left with the letters.[103] After he delivered them to his family and related what Cione had said, the Pitti clan held a large family meeting, discussed the issue at length, and after "due deliberation" took the letters from Bonaccorso, "telling [him] to leave the matter in their hands."[104]

In effect, an unfortunate accident quickly kindled a rising hostility between two families that threatened to engulf both. The Pitti and Mannelli had nearly started a vendetta over a petty dispute about a boy's inheritance. Fortunately for Bonaccorso and his brothers, they left the

---

[99] Bonaccorso Pitti, "The Diary of Buonaccorso Pitti," in *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence: The Diaries of Buonaccorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati*, ed. Gene Brucker (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 23.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid., 24.

matter to be settled by their older and wiser relatives. A month later, the Pitti clan sent for both Bonaccorso and Cione, and acted as mediators. Bonaccorso wrote,

> After they had lengthily interceded for him, he begged my pardon, swearing that he did not remember who had stuck him. This, he explained, was why he had been foolish enough to repeat what he had heard from troublemakers but, since then, God had opened his eyes to the truth and he was now convinced that he had been stunned by a kick just as I had said. I pardoned him freely...[105]

Though Cione openly recanted his charges and even invented an excuse to defuse the situation and restore Bonaccorso's offended honor, it seems that Bonaccorso still held a grudge against him and only pardoned Cione to avoid offending *his* honor and reopening hostilities between them, a situation that would have negated the Pitti family's efforts to avoid further conflict. Indeed, it seems Bonaccorso still held bitter resentment for Cione, his relatives, and even the boy's mother. As Pitti continued on in his diary, "many years later, after repeated entreaties, [I] was...[finally] prevailed upon to forgive his mother."[106] Clearly, embittered Florentines like Bonaccorso Pitti could nurse resentment for a lifetime, and the duration of personal ill will depended largely on the individual. In Pitti's case, it took three decades. Finishing his account of his past encounters with the Mannelli family, Pitti wrote the following:

> [Cione] wanted me to forgive his cousins, the Mannelli, too, but this I refused to do until, one Good Friday, fully thirty years afterwards...I summoned them to the chapter house in S. Spirito and, with God as our only mediator, made them an offer of peace which they accepted in a humble and contrite spirit.[107]

Thus ended Pitti's complete account of his earliest quarrel with a noble Florentine family, though it would not be his last.

Four years later, in 1378, he was involved in a fight with a stonecutter who was "in a murderous mood" and who he ended up killing with a spear.[108] Several witnesses to the fight

---

[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid., 23-24.
[108] Ibid., 29.

declared he had acted in self-defense, and so, according to Pitti "no more was said about this."[109] However, by 1380 it seems there clearly was more to be said about it, for in that year Pitti found himself in the city of Lucca on the run from the brother of the dead stonecutter. Bonaccorso had heard from someone that the brother was actively seeking to find enough men "to take vengeance on an enemy" (that enemy being him).[110] Fortunately for Pitti, his elite status and familial connections afforded him powerful friends that hid and later moved him to safety in Genoa.[111] In Pitti's social world, an extensive network of allies served to protect and support one another both domestically and abroad. Powerful friends in cities outside of Florence saved Bonaccorso time and again from vindictive family members or authorities seeking justice.

Pitti was involved in another quarrel a week or so prior to his flight from Lucca and the vengeful wrath of the stonecutter's kin. Bonaccorso and a fellow Florentine named Matteo del Ricco, a member of the Corbizi family who was visiting the city of Pisa on business, made violent threats and hurled brazen insults at each other. Pitti threatened Ricco with the promise that "if I heard [in the future] that he said anything offensive to my honor, I would make him smart for it," and told Ricco he would soon "find himself with a bloodied shirt."[112]

In this heated game of insults, honor and reputation were both at stake. Though neither man was a citizen of Pisa, an account of their threats and insults surely spread through elite circles as quickly as the most scandalous of gossips, and it is likely that both families learned of their members' quarrel before either man had a chance to tell them himself. It is interesting to note that of all the people in Pisa to pick a fight with, Pitti chose a fellow Florentine. This may suggest that Florentines remained hostile to political opponents even when traveling outside the

---

[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid., 34.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid., 32.

city. Pitti probably singled out Ricco for a reason linked to his family's affiliation with the revolutionary commune in Florence, a government that Pitti adamantly opposed.[113] According to Brucker, following the Ciompi Revolt "the regime which governed Florence from September 1378 to January 1382 was too democratic for Pitti's taste. It had banned several members of prominent aristocratic families," many of whom held strong Guelph sympathies.[114] Pitti had "decided to throw in his lot with these Guelf exiles," and in doing so found himself living in exile, "convicted of treason and sentenced to death *in absentia*" by the revolutionary regime.[115]

Regardless of the reasons for the initial altercation, a few days later Pitti again ran into Ricco, who was discussing business matters with some individuals. Upon seeing Pitti, Matteo di Ricco began to speak loudly with one Caroccio Carocci, telling him, "Well…tomorrow I'm off to Florence where I shall repay with deeds a certain person who threatened me with words."[116] Pitti understood that Ricco's comment was a challenge to him, intended to provoke a reaction. And Ricco succeeded: "Knowing that this was intended for me and that his revenge would fall on my brothers who were still in Florence, I grabbed him by the chest and began to shake him, asking: 'Did you want to say something to me?'"[117] A brief assault followed, in which a friend of Pitti's gave Ricco "a blow on the head which knocked him flat."[118] He died from his wounds later that night. As guardsmen arrived on the scene, powerful friends saved Pitti from arrest, first hiding him in their homes, then appeasing high officials on his behalf, and finally removing the guards from the city gates so that he and his accomplice could make their escape to Genoa and later Lucca.

---

[113] Brucker, *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence*, 29.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid., 32.
[117] Ibid., 32-33.
[118] Ibid., 33.

Three important features stand out from these events. First, once again, loyal friends and diplomatic allies were able to negotiate with authorities to rescue Pitti. Second, defamation through verbal assault was perceived to be equal to physical assault. In all likelihood, the second confrontation between Ricco and Pitti was put in motion by the latter's concern for his honor. Words could be just as painful as wounds to the reputation of the one being attacked. Finally, the account highlights the fact that any member of a kinsman's family was vulnerable to attack by an offended party. In his diary, Pitti felt justified because he believed that, had he not intervened, Ricco's revenge would have fallen on his brothers in Florence. He knew as well as any Tuscan nobleman that vengeance against one was vengeance against all. A man's actions could involve and endanger his family in the process.

Probably hoping to end his family's involvement in a conflict of his creation, Bonaccorso attempted to make peace with the Corbizi family. In 1391, Pitti decided that it was time for him to get married. Like most elite marriages, Pitti's was political, and he described the logic of his choice in his diary for its inheritors to take note of:

> Since Guido di Messer Tommaso di Neri del Palagio was the most respected and influential man in the city, I decided to put the matter in his hands and leave the choice of bride up to him, provided he picked her among his own relatives. For I calculated that if I were to become a connection of his and could win his good will, he would be obliged to help me obtain a truce with the Corbizi family.[119]

As can be clearly surmised, Pitti had yet to make peace with the Corbizi following his lethal encounter with Matteo del Ricco Corbizi in Pisa twelve years earlier. The unresolved bitterness between the two families must have continued to weigh heavily on him over the intervening years, and his attempt to forge a peace through marriage is a strong indication of his desire to avert any future retaliation. However, his fears would not be completely assuaged for another eight years. Not until 1399, following a movement of religious awakening that occurred

[119] Ibid., 45-46.

throughout Italy, would Pitti finally make peace with the Corbizi. Though he did not start his diary until 1412, Bonaccorso made a special note of the peace, treating their concord as an important event:

> Our family, the Pitti, made peace with Antonio and Geri di Giovanni Corbizi, the nephews of Matteo del Ricco whom I had killed in Pisa, and with Matteo di Paolo Corbizi. The compact was notarized by Antonio di Ser Chello.[120]

The passage, though brief, conveys a great deal. In particular, note the formality of the entry. Here, on the eve of the fifteenth century, Florentines were still employing notaries to make their peace pacts official, and despite the contraction of the memorial compared to the one seen in an earlier peace pact recorded by Donato Velluti (see *Appendix*), the importance of the agreement remains visible for both the writer and his family.

The Corbizi were not the only family to resolve issues with the Pitti clan. Hoping to end hostilities, Bonaccorso made peace with another powerful Florentine family towards the end of his life. His last diary entry reads,

> On 14 September 1422, I resolved to pardon Fibindacci Ricasoli and all others who had harmed me. Through the mediation of Guidaccio Pecori, I made peace with Pandolfo Ricasoli in the presence of the *Signoria*. He undertook, in his own name and in those of his brothers, sons, grandsons, and relatives, to treat me and my brothers, sons, and grandsons as friends, etc. I made a like promise to him in the name of my brothers, sons, and grandsons. I have recorded this here so that you, my brothers and grandsons, may observe my wishes and so I command you to do.[121]

Pitti's motive was clear: "I have recorded this here so that you, my brothers and grandsons, may observe my wishes and so I command you to do."[122] This was a memorial for future generations to note in their own engagements and disputes with other Florentine families. Memoirs such as Bonaccorso Pitti's served to perpetuate the social memory of the deceased, to help descendents remember their ancestor's vendettas and their closures, and to guide them when deciding who to

---

[120] Ibid., 62.
[121] Ibid., 106.
[122] Ibid.

trust and who to hold in suspicion. Given Pitti's desire to preserve his family's history for posterity, it is not hard to imagine a grandson of his perusing the worn diary for information about his family's past experiences with the Mannelli, Corbizi, or Ricasoli of Florence.

The same desire can be found in the diary of Giovanni Morelli. Morelli had grown up without a father to advise and guide him on practical matters concerning business and daily interactions with others. In the case of an untimely death, Morelli had attempted to preserve his words of wisdom in his *Ricordi*, so that his son might be spared the trouble of learning how to negotiate between the factions of Florence and avoid entangling the family in a vendetta. Speaking of the many experiences and lessons conveyed between family members and especially between father and son, Morelli wrote that, among other things, a father could instruct his son on the history of his life and family:

> Afterwards, you will hear from [your father] certain cases that have occurred in your city, certain counsels given by valiant men, certain remedies taken, useful and good, and certain taken by damage and shame…he will recount to you the things that happened to him, either in his person or in his need, or by defect of himself or the others, or in the deeds of the commune or in merchandise or in other cases that the world gives, or truly things that came to his ancestors, remedies given by them, or by who were received prize and service, or by who received disservices, who was a friend in their needs and who was contrary, and the vendettas done for them and the merits rendered to whom they are held[123]; and as such in many things remembered by the father are taken by the son as example and are held well in the mind. And it is much the advantage that the son receives…many advantages by having his father living, because he learns so many things from him, as listed above...[124]

Morelli evidently felt it necessary to write this passage in case he should never be able to explain these matters to his son in person. Through his sage advice, the historian can observe the concerns and interests of Florentine families and the manifest presence of a culture of vengeance, inherited with a family's *ricordanze* from one generation to the next.

---

[123] Translator's note: "and the recompense and the thanks given to those to whom these are obligated (that means ancestors and family members)." Giovanni Morelli, *Ricordi*, 269. Translated by Kalina Yamboliev.

[124] Ibid. Translated by Kalina Yamboliev.

Morelli's diary also provided pragmatic advice for his son, instructing him on the social practice of the mercantile trade and how to skirt the pitfalls of daily life in the city. In one passage Morelli wrote how to avoid getting involved in entanglements with the various city factions. His experiences had taught him that it was always best to evade conflicts whenever possible, as the following passage makes clear:

> If in your…district or neighborhood, one or more factions should be formed, as happens every day…because one citizen has a grudge on account of something…if you want to live in peace and be no man's enemy…this is what you must do: stay in the middle and remain friends with everyone and don't speak ill of anyone nor try to please one more than the other; don't be moved by anger…if you hear [people] speaking ill of anyone, hold your tongue…. Never repeat anything bad said about anyone…. Don't get involved if you aren't asked to…. Observe which of the two parties is stronger…which has more noblemen and more Guelphs; associate yourself with that party, honor it, support it in word and deed.[125]

Note that Morelli did not think it wise to avoid joining a faction all together. Having the support and backing of the community obviously made it important to align oneself with one party or another. That being the case, Morelli obviously felt that if one played his hand correctly, one could reap the benefits of faction membership without having to suffer its negative aspects.

Despite the frequency of references to blood vengeance in family memoirs, remembrance did not necessarily have to be about the need for murder; it could frequently be a matter of remembering certain political disfavors and financial damages incurred from other Florentines. A prime example is seen in Francesco di Tommaso Giovanni's *Ricordanze*, specifically in a bound section entitled "Remuneratorio," or "book of remuneration." In this record-book, Francesco recorded various entries in order to keep track of the services and disservices rendered by other families. He began by stating,

> [This will be a book] in which I will note down and record all the kindnesses and favors deserving of repayment which we [the Giovanni] might have received from anyone and, similarly, along with these kindnesses and favors, their opposite, not in order to start a vendetta, but so we can remember them, being able to pay back those who did them,

[125] Branca, *Merchant Writers*, 73-74.

> resolving to return good for evil, which I urge on myself and on whomsoever it should fall to do so.[126]

At first glance, it may appear that Francesco's words provide evidence counter to customary Florentine intentions of using *ricordanze* for vendetta remembrance and family injury. But this is not the case. Though his goal was not to start a violent vendetta, Francesco still felt deeply concerned for his family's "being able to pay back those [families]" who did them harm or malice. Francesco's memo, however mild, still proclaimed a desire to avenge the family and "return good for evil," and his closing remarks included a call to urge himself and "whomsoever it should fall" to carry out any vindictive acts against the family's enemies. The "whomsoever" in this declaration doubtlessly referred to Francesco's relatives, his descendants, or whoever else should happen to inherit the Giovanni family's *ricordanze*. In all respects then, the diary that Francesco di Giovanni kept from 1443-1458 provides a patent Florentine model of family preoccupation with recording past offenses and their obsession with the remembrance of injuries received.

❖

[126] Francesco di Tommaso Giovanni, *Ricordanze, 1443-58, Carte Strozziane*, series 2, XVI. Cited by D. V. and F. W. Kent, in *Neighbours and Neighbourhood in Renaissance Florence: The District of the Red Lion in the Fifteenth Century* (New York: J.J. Augustin, 1982), 49.

Chapter 4 - Analyzing the Legality of Vendetta: A Comparative Study of the Statutes of Siena, Bologna, and Florence

The Florentine disposition to enact vendetta was well known to both Florentines and other Italians. Florence was a city dominated by elite families, vying for power and control of the city, making factional violence inevitable. As noted previously, Anna Maria Enriques has said that vendetta and factionalism developed hand in hand, in which political parties influenced personal enmities "and vice-versa the vendettas influenced the political parties."[127] Brucker, however, has challenged the idea that factionalism alone set Florence apart. He argues that medieval Florentines failed to realize that violent party struggles were just as frequent in neighboring cities. To a degree, he is correct in downplaying factional discord as a unique condition in Florence, for other cities experienced similar instability brought by factions and vendettas, and they also prescribed statutory remedies to address these problems.[128]

However, the prevalence of factions—political and social—somewhat explains why vendetta culture remained present throughout Florence's republican period. John Larner has pointed out that communal governments were frequently short-lived, with the most successful situated in Tuscany. Typically, over time communes succumbed to rule by *signori*, that is, a government controlled by a single wealthy family, or were absorbed by another town. *Signori* arose after one family or faction grew to such power that it could rule over the entire commune. This did not happen in Florence, presumably because many elite families competed with each other until the Medici rose to power, preventing any one elite faction from asserting total control and obtaining dominance over city politics.

---

[127] Enriques, 123. Translated by Kalina Yamboliev.
[128] Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, 129.

Florence frequently fluctuated between a narrow and broad oligarchy, which kept factional alliances and social mobility in continual existence. Economic practices also helped create a mercantile class of wealth and political clout. These upstart *gente nuova* ("new men") challenged the old aristocratic elite and fought to obtain a greater share of official power. The tension, as Larner has described, was "exacerbated by features peculiar to [the Florentine] community: an economy characterized by risk and speculation, sharp fluctuations of wealth and income, a high degree of social mobility."[129] With "wealth, social status, and political influence spread among so many," it proved impossible for a single family to establish a despotic, signorial regime until the rise of the Medici.[130] Brucker agrees, claiming that although "Dante believed that factionalism and the instability it bred were particularly characteristic of his native city...every Italian town was plagued by domestic turmoil. Rather, it was Florence's success in controlling these dissensions, in maintaining a viable republican government and in preserving her independence, which distinguishes her most sharply from other city-states."[131]

City statutes also distinguished Florence from other city-states. There are numerous accounts of vendetta practice and avoidance in the chronicles, court archives, and notarial records of cities outside Florence, including her medieval rival, the Tuscan city of Siena. David Waley highlighted the fact that Sienese law recognized vendetta "in a clause authorizing the grant of a license to wear armor (*arma defensibilia*) to those known to have 'capital enmities' (*qui haberent et notorium esset ipsos habere inimicitias capitals*)."[132] Like the Florentine statutes that sought to limit the scale of vendetta, whenever "a Sienese takes revenge (*fecerit vindictam*) against another Sienese for a crime not committed by that person," the punitive fee was

---

[129] Larner, 132.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, 129.
[132] Waley, *A Blood Feud with a Happy Ending*, 47.

tripled.[133] Waley also pointed out that "a clause in the vernacular constitutions of 1309-10 did much to undermine such restraints by proclaiming that a man taking revenge on his known enemy (*chi fa vendetta di suo nimico pubblico)* could not be accused of murder, this being extended to include revenge against a relation up to the third degree: first and second cousins, as well as brothers."[134] As the statutes attest, an offended Sienese was allowed to commit murder in the pursuance of vendetta, as in Florence.

The statutory laws of Bologna also contained sections pertaining to vendetta, though with far less leniency than those of Siena or Florence. The 1288 statute prescribed excessively harsh penalties for individuals not involved in 'primary' vendettas who were captured by the *podestà*: "if anyone makes a revenge attack…on any person or persons other than the [first] attacker," then the punishment is death should the victim die, and a heavy fine should the victim only be wounded.[135] If the transgressor escaped capture, the penalty was equally unforgiving: perpetual banishment, all houses and towers demolished, and all property transferred to the victim or the victim's family. Unlike in Florence, where vendetta statutes evolved gradually in their restrictions, the Bolognese statutes remained static. The 1454 statutes are essentially a repeat of the 1288 decree and its penalties: "if anyone attacks…in his revenge any person or persons other than him or them who is said to have attacked him," the original punishments were to be enacted.[136] The features are consistent in both the 1288 and 1454 statutes: they sought to limit reprisal to the original attacker and severely punish those who did not follow this narrow framework. As Dean points out, these legal texts sought to penalize collateral revenge, "their

---

[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Trevor Dean, "Violence, Vendetta, and Peacemaking in Late Medieval Bologna," in *Crime, Gender, and Sexuality in Criminal Prosecutions*, ed. Louis A. Knafla (Connecticut: Greenwood, 2002), 2.
[136] Ibid., 3.

purpose was repressive, not permissive."[137] Though Bologna's court records often indicate that her citizens were frequently involved in violent acts of vengeance well into the fifteenth century, the courts' complete intolerance for revenge killings paints a different picture of vendetta culture from that of Florence.

Florence's legal leniency in regards to vendetta clearly distinguished her from other Italian cities. In certain instances, the Florentine government actually supported the execution of vendetta. One well-documented case, from 1387-1392, demonstrates the official legitimacy that a judicially sanctioned vendetta could achieve. The conflict was part of a larger dispute between the Strozzi and the Lenzi, and this incident arose after a night of drinking and gambling. In early October 1387, a cloth dealer named Piero di Lenzo was gambling at cards with Michelozzo dell'Ambo, and after losing several hands he got into a dispute with Pagnozzo di Pagnozzo Strozzi. Pagnozzo, having recently "been wounded in the hand by one of [Piero's] relatives," believed that Piero had criticized him, and so "he put his hand on his sword…and gave Piero such a blow that he cut off his hand, and he struck his head with such force that pieces of bone were scattered about…"[138] Unfortunately for Pagnozzo, he had not realized that Piero was a Standard-bearer of Justice for the commune of Florence.

On October 8th, the Strozzi received a severe reprimand from the city authorities, who had considered the incident at length and reached a verdict on Pagnozzo Strozzi's actions:

> We, the lord priors…have considered the enormous crime and the atrocious offenses perpetrated…against the person of Piero Lenzi…by that son of iniquity, Pagnozzo di Pagnozzo Strozzi…. With particular respect to the office which Piero held and holds, such offenses require more serious penalties than those regularly assessed for these crimes…. [Therefore, it is] decreed that Pagnozzino and Nofri, the sons of Pagnozzo

---

[137] Ibid.

[138] *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, ed. Muratori, XXVII (Florence, 1770), cols. 137-38. Cited by Gene Brucker, in *A Documentary Source*, 111.

> Strozzi, are henceforth considered magnates…and are subject to all the penalties and limitations...which are currently in force against magnates, of whatever kind.[139]

The penalty for Pagnozzo's family was harsh, especially for his sons. The commune's decree could have ended there. Instead, they invoked the law of retaliation, authorizing the Lenzi to pursue a personal vendetta against the Strozzi:

> Item, Giovanni and Piero Lenzi…and their children and descendants are hereby authorized with impunity to pursue a vendetta…and to offend by any means and to any degree Nofri and Pagnozzino and their sons and male descendants, and also any other member of the Strozzi clan…no matter how remote the relationship…. The offenses committed by Giovanni and Piero Lenzi and their relatives and descendants shall be considered as having been committed for this vendetta…. And for any offenses committed by Giovanni and Piero Lenzi and their relatives and descendants…against Nofri and Piero Lenzi, their sons and male descendants…or against any member of the Strozzi family, no vendetta may be waged in revenge…[by the Strozzi]…. Within fifteen days of the commission of such offense, each member of the Strozzi family shall be required (under penalty of 2,000 florins) to make peace with Piero and Giovanni Lenzi and their sons and male descendants….[140]

This was an official authorization for private punishment, and the *Signoria* stood by their decision for several years.

In 1392, the Lenzi finally succeeded in fulfilling their government-sanctioned vendetta by murdering the son of Pagnozzino Strozzi in Pisa. A friend or relative of the Lenzi named Paolo di Francesco carried out the assassination and was then seized by the Pisan authorities and imprisoned. The *Signoria* of Florence attempted to negotiate his release, explaining to the lord of Pisa that:

> You must be aware that this act was committed as a result of a vendetta…arising from a public offense committed against our Commune…. Through our ambassadors who have just returned…we have appealed to you to do justice with mercy in this case…. For this offense was a public rather than a private act, since Pagnozzino killed one of our standard-bearers. As a result, a vendetta was authorized.[141]

---

[139] *ASF, Provvisioni*, 76, fols. 121r-125r. Cited by Gene Brucker, in *A Documentary Source*, 111-112.
[140] Ibid., 113.
[141] *ASF, Signori e Collegi, Missive*, 23, fols. 45v-46r. Cited by Gene Brucker, in *A Documentary Source*, 115-116.

As seen in the Lenzi-Strozzi dispute, vendetta was sometimes authorized, rather than subdued, by the Florentine legal system. Looking solely at the statues, it is difficult to explain why this was so. One logical explanation might be that the Florentines were too attached to their culture of vengeance to properly separate private from public, and indeed, evidence from diaries confirm this often to have been the case as courts came to be more and more involved in the legal settlement of both major conflicts and even minor disputes.

Law could in fact facilitate personal revenge, functioning as a more domesticated form of vengeance, but vengeance nonetheless. As Daniel Lord Smail has stated, "Jural processes, whatever they look like, involve reciprocity…vengeance is the emotional content of that reciprocity."[142] The first indication of the Florentine use of the legalized vendetta came from the city's laws. Trevor Dean outlined the history of Florentine statutes on vendetta, revealing how the laws became increasingly liberal:

> Vendetta was allowed to the victim and any of his relatives up to four degrees of kinship (1295), to the victim and 'anyone of his house' (1331-4), to the victim and all 'of his house and clan-group, and his descendants in the male line' (1355), or finally to the victim 'with any support whatsoever' (1415).[143]

Considerable freedom was thus given to the victim in a private conflict. This legal permissiveness suggests that Florentine lawmakers had reasons for allowing people to resolve private disputes without institutional interference. At the same time, in certain respects Florence's statutes evolved in parallel with other Tuscan laws on vendetta. For one, revenge targets became increasingly restricted over time. In particular, vengeance became lawful in Florence only when: the offence was manifest, the vengeance was appropriate, "when taken against the offender's children only when the offender was dead," and "when carried out by the

---

[142] Daniel Lord Smail, "Factions and Vengeance in Renaissance Italy. A Review Article," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38, no. 4 (1996), 782.
[143] Trevor Dean, *Crime in Medieval Europe, 1200-1550* (New York: Longman, 2001), 107.

offended man's family within the degree of fourth-cousinship."[144] The restriction of acts of 'primary' vendetta helped limit the level of violence by containing the dispute to the principal aggressor, while also providing a legal, private outlet for vengeful parties to resolve their disputes.

Florence's legal institutions could also serve as a vehicle for enacting revenge. Court records "attest to the quarrelsome and litigious nature of the Florentines."[145] In addition, references in the private memoirs of Florentine merchants suggest a frequent use of the court system to resolve personal disputes between family members and other groups. In a quarrel that arose between Antonio di Lionardo Rustichi (1412-1436) and Simone Buonarroti, the latter attacked Antonio without provocation "while he was sitting on a bench in front of a neighbor's house."[146] Incensed, Antonio brought a criminal charge against Simone, which he only dropped after Simone appeared before Antonio "in the presence of my relatives and friends" to publically apologize.[147]

As clearly shown, Antonio used the threat of court involvement as a means for seeking justice against his attacker. There is no doubt that this was the only reason for threatening official adjudication, for as Antonio wrote in his diary: "I record that on December 5, 1420, I went to the court of the *podestá* to accuse Simone di Buonarroto di Simone [Buonarroti]. I initiated this process for this reason [:]...Simone...threw a brick at my head."[148] Antonio enacted a successful, peaceful retaliatory action by forcing Simone to publically apologize for his behavior, humiliating him in front of Antonio's friends and family. It is unclear why he preferred to use threats to avenge his injury. Perhaps his family would not support him in making vendetta, or

---

[144] Larner, 123.
[145] Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, 115.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Brucker, *A Documentary Study, 119*.
[148] Ibid.

maybe he simply wanted to abstain from violent retaliation. Also, his legal costs amounted to only one florin, far cheaper than would have been the costs incurred from a full-fledged vendetta.[149] Whatever his reason, Antonio's actions show that legal methods (when used as pressure tactics) could prove just as effective at resolving conflicts between individuals and families.

❖

[149] Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, 115.

Chapter 5 – The Continuance of Vendetta Culture in Florence

Many scholars have argued that the fifteenth century saw the decline of vendetta not only in Florence, but also throughout Tuscany. Those who support this view argue that although isolated cases persisted, the general trend called for greater judicial interference and a firm suppression of private forms of justice. Italian diarists Graziani and Bianchi, in their respective domestic chronicles, each reference the recurrence of fifteenth century family vendettas despite the ostensible policing of government authority. Heers has stated, "Graziani gives an account of a particularly horrible vendetta in 1437, and refers to another in 1449. In his *Domestic Chronicle*, G. Bianchi also mentions several bloody battles between *casati*; one in 1446 and another, very late, in 1497."[150] These family wars, though they may be isolated cases of large-scale vendetta practice, are indicative that the culture of vengeance was far from extinct in the fifteenth century. But alone they do not provide sufficient evidence for confirming that fifteenth-century vendetta culture was alive and well.

This necessarily begs the question: when did vendetta practice subside? Knowing the answer will help reveal how Florentines preserved and transformed the social codes that governed vendettas, and why and how the practice fell into decline. Currently, a firmly defined end date is still a point of contention among medieval historians. Zorzi and Brucker agree that by the start of the fifteenth century, vendetta culture was clearly on the decline. Brucker noted an increased preference towards forgiveness and reconciliation between belligerent clans. In his *Documentary Study*, he gave the year 1420 as a rough date for the decline of the vendetta, using the resolution of a quarrel in Florence that year as an example of Florentines turning to reconciliation rather than conflict. The case, previously discussed, was recorded in the diary of

[150] Heers, *Family Clans*, 124.

the merchant Antonio Rustichi, who had been assaulted by Simone Buonarotti, ancestor to Michelangelo Buonarotti. In his diary Rustichi wrote,

> On the evening of November 1st, at the hour of the Ave Maria, I was sitting with Rinieri Bagnesi on his bench when Simone came along…and threw a brick at my head. I did not know how to explain his attack on me…[T]o settle this quarrel between us…[our arbitrators] proposed that Simone should beg my pardon in the presence of my relatives and friends…My relatives thought this was a greater revenge than if we had assaulted him…So on the 14th of the month [of December], I withdrew my charges against him.[151]

Zorzi agrees with Brucker, arguing that abundant cases such as this show a cultural transformation and the general subsiding of violence in Florence. He also stated that the scarcity of documented cases of violent dispute resolution in the fifteenth century point to a "decisive reduction" in vendetta practice.[152] Zorzi has postulated that the "decline of the vendetta should be explained more by social and cultural exhaustion, than by rigid discipline."[153] Scholars frequently cite a comment made by the Florentine merchant Giovanni Morelli as concrete evidence of the fifteenth-century decline in revenge practices. Looking back at the conflicts of Dante's time in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, Giovanni described the current state of affairs in Florence: "Once Florentines settled quarrels with swords, now they do it with beans."[154] The "beans" Morelli was referring to were "those used by communal representatives when voting on public measures," indicating that he believed conflicts to have shifted from physical to political.[155]

However, Morelli may have spoken prematurely, for there is plenty of evidence to suggest that vendetta culture continued well into the sixteenth century. As Florentine law

---

[151] *The Diary of Antonio Rustichi*; *ASF*, *Carte Strozziane*, series II, vol. 11, fol. 26v. Cited by Gene Brucker, in *A Documentary Study*, 119-20.
[152] Andrea Zorzi, "The Judicial System in Florence," in *Crime, Society, and the Law in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Trevor Dean and K. J. P. Lowe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 52.
[153] Ibid., 53.
[154] Giovanni Morelli, *Ricordi*, 131.
[155] Becker, *Changing Patterns of Violence*, 296.

indicated in the revised statutes of 1415, the city continued to permit and regulate vendetta. If Italian city laws are an accurate reflection of socio-cultural practices, then vendettas must have continued. Furthermore, there is evidence that both Brucker and Zorzi dismiss as isolated instances. The year 1420 also saw a violent vendetta recorded in a diary written by Luca di Totto da Panzano's grandson, Luca di Matteo di Messer Luca Firidolfi da Panzano (1393-1461). He had traveled to Naples with his clansmen and allies to kill Nanni di Ciecie del Nero, who had most likely committed the murder of a close Firidolfi relation.[156] Meeting with a few kinsmen in Naples, including Luca's brother, Matteo, the Firidolfi split into groups to comb the city for Nanni. As Luca recorded,

> ...we formed three pairs and decided that the first who encountered him [Nanni] should kill him. And so it happened. Maso of S. Godenzo and Matteo di Matteo di Messer Luca [da Panzano] met him in the district of the Banchi in Naples. Maso gave him a blow on the head so that he fell unconscious to the ground. Then with knife and dagger, Matteo and Maso gave him five wounds, one in the artery, one in the flank, and three on the head, and they left him there for dead.[157]

Luca continued: "the guard arrived on the spot immediately," forcing them to flee and find safe haven in the house of a family ally.[158] Two days later, they were able to leave Naples disguised as servants and slowly make their way back to Florence, arriving ten days later with everyone "safe and sound."[159] A short time after, a friend from Naples visited Florence and reported that Nanni di Ciecie had died and been buried in Naples. Hearing the good news, with visible relief Luca concluded the episode in his diary: "So now we have accomplished our vendetta, thanks be to God."[160]

---

[156] Carlo Carnesecchi, "Un fiorentino del secolo XV e le sue ricordanze domestiche," *Archivi storico italiano* (Florence: 1888), 149.
[157] Brucker, *Documentary Study*, 118-119.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ibid.

The year 1420 thus saw vendettas both in Naples and the Apennine district of Florence, as discussed above. This alone reveals that the early fifteenth century was still ripe with blood vengeance. Brucker's own example supports this claim. The diary that he used for evidence of vendetta's decline reveals the continued use of the language of vengeance, complete with its distinct Florentine expression. Again, the diary belonged to a Florentine merchant named Antonio Rustichi, who wrote from 1420 to 1435. In 1427, Antonio recorded how he found himself hauled before a judge to answer charges of physical violence against a servant woman. He was found guilty of assault, fined 100 *lire* in damages, and was required to pay an additional 40 *lire* in court costs.[161] Maintaining his innocence, Antonio swore revenge against the woman and her manager, who had brought the matter to court on her behalf. Speaking in the style of a vindictive Florentine, Antonio wrote in his diary this important comment: "I make this record so that I shall not forget, if ever I have the opportunity to pay them back in the same coin."[162] Rustichi was mad because he had to pay a fine, and he specifically vowed to return the favor. His desire for revenge, though pecuniary, was still present. This passage therefore reveals one of the ways a fifteenth-century Florentine pursued his vendettas through non-violent channels of arbitration and judicial mediation. In both passages, Antonio consciously recorded his personal conflicts and even used his *ricordanze* as a reminder of a debt he still owed those who had hurt him financially. Though they lack the excitement of a revenge narrative replete with violence and murder, many of Antonio's diary entries attest to a thriving culture of vengeance in fifteenth-century Florence.

Antonio's court case also confirms that Florence's legal institutions did little to tame vindictive and quarrelsome Florentines. Though evidence from Antonio Rustichi's diary reveals

[161] Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, 115.
[162] Ibid.

that courts were becoming more involved with arbitrating disputes, Florence's legal institutions did not replace extralegal methods of vengeance. If anything, judicial intervention was concurrent with self-help. Though he has argued for an earlier vendetta end date, Zorzi also maintains that "though the two systems seem to contradict each other, the important point is not the assertion of public over private methods of justice…but in the long coexistence of public justice and the practices of composition and pacification."[163] Kuehn agreed: "There was not a simple evolution from private pursuit of grievance to public prosecution of crime. The two went hand in hand."[164] Legal intermediaries, notaries, judges, and arbitrators were active throughout the medieval period and were important players in conflict resolution. Arbitration provided a cost-efficient way to avoid a full-blown vendetta, or the financial costs of prolonged litigation.

Kuehn has challenged Brucker's case for vendetta decline in 1420. While he does not estimate when vendetta declined, he does criticize Brucker's use of a peaceful resolution as evidence of pacification.[165] Kuehn has demonstrated that peace settlements are by no means evidence of a permanent substitution of peaceful resolutions for violent conflicts. Arbitration "was a useful social and legal mechanism to resolve disputes…[it] provided a public but less formal way to express claims and gain satisfaction of them."[166] He finds that Florentines often pursued lawsuits as a "bloodless surrogate for revenge," and as such, "litigation could...[therefore] be a means of revenge" because "legal procedure tended to mimic vendetta."[167] Dean agrees with Kuehn, claiming that "peace was part of the process" of

---

[163] Zorzi, "The Judicial System in Florence," 51.
[164] Kuehn, 69.
[165] Dean, "Marriage and Mutilation," 6.
[166] Kuehn, 58.
[167] Thomas Kuehn, *Law, Family & Women: Toward a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 106 and Kuehn, "Social and Legal Capital in Vendetta," 80.

vendettas.[168] In the early fourteenth century, when blood vengeance practice was perhaps at its highest, peace pactś and arbitrations were used just as frequently as they would be a hundred years later. This clearly discredits the argument for pacification through an increased frequency of peace pacts.

Dean provided an excerpt from the *Diario di Ser Giovanni di Lemmo da Camugnori*, which described the pacification of a vendetta in 1318, a hundred and two years prior to Antonio Rustichi's peace with Simone Buonarroti. The diary records that Andrea di Mazzo Pallaleoni was abandoned by his family for unjustly attacking Astanuova Tobertelli and his brother. He then went to a public assembly of the commune of San Miniato to beg forgiveness:

> Subsequently Andrea, who had been abandoned by his kinsmen, came to a public assembly of the commune, dressed in black like a dead man. He kneeled before Astanuova and, holding his unsheathed sword by its point, said 'Astanuova, here I confess that I attacked you in a false and treacherous manner. Take my sword and do with me what you will'. Astanuova's brother stepped up to the podium and spoke at length against Andrea, but concluded that, out of love of God and Saint Francis, he wished to spare him if he undertook to wear forever the habit of a lay brother. This Andrea promised to do: he put on the habit and peace was made.[169]

The 1318 peace shares a key feature with the Rustichi-Buonarotti peace of 1420. Both insulted individuals required that the offending person publically admit his error in front of a large group of witnesses, thereby humiliating him as he admitted his guilt. Early fourteenth-century cases such as this confirms that peace pacts do not reliably indicate the end of the vendetta.

However, if a transformation did occur in the fifteenth century, it was clearly a shift to new methods of enacting revenge. Daniel Lord Smail suggested that "jurists and administrators turned the exercise of blood vengeance into a prerogative of the state and its courts, while at the same time offering new venues for the pursuit of more domesticated forms of vengeance."[170]

---

[168] Ibid.
[169] Dean, *The Towns of Italy in the Later Middle Ages*, 188.
[170] Smail, 783.

Brucker wrote, "court records from this period attest to the quarrelsome and litigious nature of the Florentines… The frequency of these accounts suggests that Rustichi, like many of his neighbors, thrived on lawsuits."[171] Lawsuits were not simply a substitute for vendetta, they were another form of it. Kuehn assents that, like some forms of vendetta, lawsuits were unilateral and could "well be used as elements of vendetta."[172] He has noted, "Costs of vendetta, in the opponents' counterstrokes, could be high (in pain and blood)."[173] Litigation offered a cheaper alternative. Smail agreed with this assessment and contended that Florentine courts offered "new venues for the pursuit of more domesticated forms of vengeance."[174] He has observed that "civil litigation, as an alternative to violence, is scarcely less vengeful at heart. Repayment is made in cash, not blood; but the cost is severe regardless of the currency."[175] While it may appear on the surface that Florentines grudgingly adopted lawsuits and other new forms of revenge seeking in response to increased judicial intervention, evidence shows the reverse to be true: citizens actively chose to appeal to the courts as a way of pursuing their own private conflicts.

❖

[171] Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, 114.
[172] Kuehn, "Social and Legal Capital in Vendetta," 59.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Smail, 783.
[175] Ibid., 781.

Chapter 6 - The Birth of the Duel: Vendetta in the Twilight of Decline

If fifteenth-century Florence continued to allow several varieties of vendetta—vendettas that focused less on the spilling of blood and more on nonviolent forms of revenge—was there a shift from vendetta as blood vengeance to vendetta as private dispute? Can an approximate end date be given for the disappearance of the vendetta? Currently, it seems impossible to fix one. In Bologna and Siena, changing laws, customs, and political developments give approximate indications for vendetta extinction. Not so in Florence. Counter to the notion of social and cultural exhaustion, Florentine vendetta culture remained vibrant throughout the fifteenth century. Some contemporary accounts estimate that only by fifteenth century's end did it appear that *vendetta* was no longer a part of the social code governing conflicts in Florentine society. Frequently cited by scholars are the words of the merchant Giovanni Cambi, who stated that "in 1494 there was no mortal enmity (*briga*) among citizens, and if some lads wounded each other in a fight...they alone settled it, for neither father, nor brother, nor *consorti* got involved."[176] The same year that Giovanni Cambi made his observation of vendetta's conspicuous absence in Florence, Luca Landucci (1436–1516) recorded in his personal diary that an unknown assailant had accosted his son. Immediately after, Luca recorded the following entry:

> [21 December 1494 (Sunday)] This evening it was permitted by the Lord, about 2 at night (10 p.m.), in the *Via tra' Ferravecchi*, near the Volta della Luna, that my son Benedetto was stabbed in the face, across the cheek, by no means slightly; and we cannot think by whom. We believe it must have been a mistake, as he has never offended anyone or suspected anyone of having a grudge against him.... I freely pardon the aggressor, as I hope that the Lord may pardon me, and I pray God to pardon him and not send him to hell for this.[177]

---

[176] G. Cambi, *Istorie*, in *Delizie degli eruditi toscani*, ed. I. di San Luigi (Florence, 1786), XX. Cited by Andrea Zorzi, in "The Judicial System in Florence," 52.

[177] Luca Landucci, *Diario*, in *A Florentine Diary from 1450 to 1516*, ed. Jodoco Del Badia and Alice de Rosen Jervis (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1927), 77.

At first glance this passage may seem to support Brucker's notion of a growing trend towards pacification and forgiveness—an end to vindictive violence and the vendetta culture. While that may be the case, there are at least two aspects of Landucci's diary entry that indicate a continuance of vendetta culture in Florence. First, Luca was careful to note that he was uncertain why his son had been attacked. He wrote that his son had "never offended anyone or suspected anyone of having a grudge against him," a telling indication that giving offense could still elicit retaliatory actions from offended Florentines.[178] Second, and equally important, there is the matter of Luca Landucci recording the event in his diary, and of noting to pardon the attacker in writing. Both facts confirm that Luca did not want to leave the attack open for future acts of retaliation by a less forgiving relative. This demonstrates that in 1494, diaries and *ricordanze* still played an important part in remembering injuries inflicted upon the family, and also in making peace and resolving the matter of insulted honor. Though Luca frequently mentioned government intolerance with factional violence in the city, and although his entries often evidence a general crackdown on crime, his diary also offers confirmation that things really were not all that different from centuries past as far as private matters of offense and retaliation were concerned.

Even if by the late fifteenth century the large-scale physical practice of vendetta had fallen into decline, the culture of vengeance remained vibrant in Florence for many subsequent decades. Florentines kept vendettas alive through conversations with elder family members and, more effectually, through frequent readings of the private diaries of their ancestors. While a detailed search for evidence of the presence of vendetta in sixteenth-century Florence is beyond the scope of this paper, a close analysis of the *Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini* supports the claim that Florentines continued to use the language of vengeance and abide by codes of honor

[178] Ibid.

and revenge practice in the form of the duel. Benvenuto Cellini's autobiography is an atypical source that blends fact with fiction, and is therefore unrepresentative of sixteenth century practices of vendetta. However, it does provide an accurate account of Florentine attitudes, even if Cellini was no average Florentine. In fact, he was an extraordinary artist who lived a lively and adventurous life, even participating in the defense of Castel Sant'Angelo during the sack of Rome in 1527. However, though he was not a typical Florentine nobleman, his language suggests a contemporary preoccupation with preserving social reputation by avenging oneself for the loss of honor through insult or injury, making his autobiography an accurate reflection of Florentine attitudes, perceptions, and social mores.

In his *Autobiography*, Cellini recounted a story from his youth about the death of his twenty-five-year-old brother, Cecchino. One fateful day in 1529, a friend of Cecchino's was killed in "a great scrimmage" with a city guard.[179] To avenge the death, Cecchino learned of the killer's name and upon finding the guard, "ran him right through the guts, and with the sword's hilt thrust him to the ground."[180] Unfortunately for Cecchino, the guard's companions gave him a mortal wound. Benvenuto, upon hearing of the fight, rushed to his dying brother's side, crying out to him a promise: "be of good cheer [dear brother]; for before you lose sight of him who did the mischief, you shall see yourself revenged by my hand."[181] Following his brother's death, Benvenuto engraved upon Cecchino's tomb the coat of arms of the Cellini family of Ravenna, "who bear a lion rampant or upon a field of azure, holding a lily gules in his dexter paw, with a label in chief and three little lilies."[182] Benvenuto altered the coat of arms to have "the lion hold

[179] Benvenuto Cellini, *Autobiography*, 108.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid., 109.
[182] Ibid., 112.

an axe…solely that I might not be unmindful to revenge him."[183] This is undeniably a sixteenth-century personal statement of the need to enact vendetta. Benvenuto's vengeful words are like those cried out in earlier centuries, and the memento that was placed on the tomb of his deceased brother was a visual reminder of the need to avenge the murder.

He would later avenge his brother's death, an event Cellini also described. Learning of the arquebusier's identity, Cellini explained that he went to the man's lodgings after dark and tried "to cut his head clean off."[184] He succeeded in killing him, but was then immediately confronted by four soldiers who had been visiting a courtesan next door and heard a scuffle. Abandoning his dagger in the man's neck, Cellini fled for fear of being recognized. The soldiers later learned that Cellini had wanted to revenge his brother, and were "profuse in their expressions of regret at having interrupted me, although my vengeance had been amply satisfied."[185] Whether or not the guards were apologetic, the successful completion of the vendetta serves as a blatant example of a Florentine's thirst for blood vengeance in the sixteenth century.

Further sections in Cellini's *Autobiography* attest to his vindictive nature. Cellini recounted how he stopped at an inn one night on his way back to Florence and entered into a verbal dispute with the innkeeper over payment for the night's lodgings. After submitting to the host's rude demand to be paid immediately, Benvenuto wrote that "I did not get one wink of sleep [that night] because I kept on thinking how I could revenge myself" for the insult.[186] Cellini described several ideas he thought would satisfy his wounded pride:

---

[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid., 113.
[185] Ibid., 114.
[186] Ibid., 167.

> At one time it came into my head to set fire to his house; at another to cut the throats of our fine horses which he had in the stable; I saw well enough that it was easy for me to do all this; but I could not see how it was easy to secure myself.[187]

Incensed, he resolved to quit the inn before dawn and continue on his journey home. However, Cellini described how he at last stumbled upon a fitting revenge before leaving:

> I went upstairs, took out a little knife as sharp as a razor, and cut the four beds that I found there into ribbons. I had the satisfaction of knowing I had done a damage of more than fifty crowns. Then I ran down to the boat with some pieces of the bed-covers in my pouch, and bade the bargee start at once without delay.[188]

Though the account has a touch of humor, Cellini's actions were illegal, and therefore punishable. Cellini committed a crime, albeit one that he considered justified given the insult he had received from the innkeeper. The incident again illustrates a non-violent method for exacting revenge and exemplifies the evolving nature of vendetta. Cellini chose to satisfy his desire for vengeance by exacting a financial toll from his offender. His meticulous recording of the incident and deep concern for redeeming his pride both bear the distinct Florentine marks of the vendetta culture and the language of vengeance.

Cellini was not the only sixteenth-century Florentine to carry on the tradition of preserving a record of the injuries and offenses received in life: the *ricordanze* of Filippo di Neri Rinuccini also attests to the continued recording of accounts of personal offense:

> I remember today this day, May 1, 1502. Seated in the house at the table dinner, there were M. Piera, Lorenzo Rinuccini and I reasoning with Monna Lisabetta, and of other things, as was the custom, Lorenzo told me certain less-than-honest words in his presence, and most of all of Tommaso my brother; at which I gave them [the words] back by telling him that he had done much worse than Tommaso, and that his mother knew of it and had repaired every thing, and had always covered after him.... He replied to me more than one time: you lie by your throat. Monna Piera was seated in our presence, and she never told him anything, but always argued against me, and ignited the fire.... He took me afterwards by the hair and told me in the face more than one time about battle, and made much blood come out through my nose; and therefore he did to me these injuries both with words and with these deeds without any reason, I wanted to make this

[187] Ibid., 167-168.
[188] Ibid., 168.

memory of them, to remember them in the place and time when it will be needed, to demonstrate to him his error.[189]

The closing line is particularly important and bears repeating: "I wanted to make this memory of them, to remember them in the place and time when it will be needed, to demonstrate to him his error."[190] Once more a sixteenth-century diarist had mentioned an injury received, those involved in the affair, and in this case, the explicit reason why he believed it important to record it in his family *ricordanze*—all elements that were no different in intent from the Florentine authors of a century or two prior.

There is further evidence indicating the same purpose for writing accounts of enmity for posterity. Rinuccini evidently went back to his diary at an unknown later date and rescinded the memory, having apparently made peace with his cousin. At the end of the account he wrote in parenthetic form: "I cancel this memory, because I pardoned him, and may it please God in this way to pardon me and my sins."[191] The fact that it was important for Filippo to return to his diary and expunge the memory provides further proof that the injury-recording process was still alive and thriving in Florence in the opening years of the sixteenth century. The additional note probably served as closure for the entire episode. No longer an un-avenged offense, Filippo's relatives and heirs would no longer have been expected to repay their cousin or his family for his misdeed should they read the account after Filippo's death.

While both Rinuccini and Landucci made peace with their offenders, not all were so forgiving. An example of a non-lethal form of vendetta that continued unabated into the

---

[189] Rinuccini, Filippo di Neri, *Ricordi Storici di Filippo di Cino Rinuccini dal 1282 al 1460 colla continuazione di Alamanno e Neri, suoi figli, fino al 1506, seguiti da altri monumenti inediti di storia patria estratti dai codici originali e preceduti dalla Storia genealogica della loro famiglia e della descrizione della cappella gentilizia di S. Croce, con documenti ed illustrazioni* (Firenze: Dalla Stamperia Piatti, 1840), 256-257. Translated by Kalina Yamboliev.
[190] Ibid., 257. Translated by Kalina Yamboliev.
[191] Ibid. Translated by Kalina Yamboliev.

sixteenth century comes from another episode in Cellini's life. Cellini wrote in his *Autobiography* an account from his early years involving a Florentine clerk named Pagolo Micceri whom he had hired to do some of his accounting and to guard his property from theft. Benvenuto also asked Pagolo to protect his art model, a young girl called Caterina, and keep her chaste. After some time away, Cellini was informed:

> Pagolo Micceri had taken a house for the little hussy Caterina and her mother, and that he was always going there, and whenever he mentioned me, used words of scorn to this effect: "Benvenuto set the fox to watch the grapes, and thought I would not eat them! Now he is satisfied with going about and talking big, and thinks I am afraid of him. But I have girt this sword and dagger to my side in order to show him that my steel can cut as well as his, and that I too am a Florentine, of the Micceri, a far better family than his Cellini."[192]

Upon hearing this, Cellini was taken with a fever of rage, stating that "the insane passion which took possession of me might have been my death, had I not resolved to give it vent as the occasion offered."[193] Yearning for revenge, Cellini recounted how he went to "the house where that worthless villain was" and repaid him for his treachery:

> I found the door ajar, and entered. I noticed that he carried sword and dagger, and was sitting on a big chest with his arm round Caterina's neck; at the moment of my arrival, I could hear that he and her mother were talking about me. Pushing the door open, I drew my sword, and set the point of it at his throat, not giving him the time to think whether he too carried steel. At the same instant I cried out: "Vile coward! Recommend your soul to God, for you are a dead man." Without budging from his seat, he called three times: "Mother, mother, help me!" Though I had come there fully determined to take his life, half my fury ebbed away when I heard this idiotic exclamation. I ought to add that I had told [my friend] not to let the girl or her mother leave the house, since I meant to deal with those trollops after I had disposed of their bully. So I went on holding my sword at his throat, and now and then just pricked him with the point, pouring out a torrent of terrific threats at the same time. But when I found he did not stir a finger in his own defense, I began to wonder what I should do next; my menacing attitude could not be kept up for ever; so at last it came into my head to make them marry, and complete my vengeance at a later period.[194]

Cellini kept his promise too:

> "Not satisfied with having made him take a vicious drab to wife, I completed my revenge

[192] Benvenuto Cellini, *Autobiography*, 342-343.
[193] Ibid., 343.
[194] Ibid.

by inviting her to sit to me as a model…and obliged her to pose before me naked. Then I made her serve my pleasure, out of spite against her husband, jeering at them both the while."[195]

His need for revenge was nearly insatiable, though as the prior two episodes revealed, Cellini frequently chose to avenge himself through less violent channels. Cellini's vendettas were mostly passive-aggressive, in that he did not enact his revenge directly, but rather through secret, subtle acts of insult and offense. If his actions are characteristic of Florentines in general, then his *Autobiography* provides clear evidence for the evolution of vendetta into a completely private and personal matter without public acknowledgement or social acceptance.

However, though Cellini often enacted docile forms of vengeance, vendetta had not lost all traits of aggression by the sixteenth century. Violence in the name of revenge still appeared through words and deeds, as seen in Cellini's autobiography. Coming upon his artistic archrival Baccio Bandinello one day in the piazza of San Domenico, Benvenuto wrote how "on the instant [he] decided upon bloodshed" but then noticed his opponent unarmed and thought better of it.[196] He ultimately satisfied himself by verbally insulting Bandinello, exclaiming, "Fear not, vile coward! I do not condescend to smite you."[197] Not all conflicts were resolved so peacefully. If many of Cellini's revenge stories seem bloodless, they do not reflect the Florentine standard, and even Cellini admitted to killing two individuals out of revenge. While some scholars argue that the prevalence of pacification over blood vengeance is indicative of a shift away from vendetta culture, others argue that the culture continued and was transferred through the birth of dueling.

In "Changing Patterns of Violence in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Florence," Marvin Becker pointed out several profound changes in Florence's judicial system. Although he confirmed that the legal system experienced great reforms and further restrictions in regard to

[195] Ibid., 345.
[196] Ibid., 400.
[197] Ibid.

nearly every facet of criminal violence and unlawful conduct, he nonetheless concluded, "Though the vendetta was restricted it was never outlawed, continuing into the fifteenth century to become the duel of the sixteenth."[198] In sum, if the term "vendetta" encompasses all acts of retaliation for perceived insults and injuries, then it is safe to say that vendetta culture continued well into the sixteenth century.

In 1524, Benvenuto Cellini was almost in a duel himself. He had invited a group of men to dine with him on the morning of Saint John's Day, when:

> It chanced that a light-brained swaggering young fellow passed by…when he heard the noise that we were making, gave vent to a string of opprobrious sarcasms upon the folk of Florence. I…taking the insult to myself, slipped out quietly without being observed, and went up to him…I asked if he was the rash fellow who was speaking evil of the Florentines. He answered at once: "I am that man." On this I raised my hand, struck him in the face, and said: "And I am 'this' man." Then we each of us drew our swords with spirit; but the fray had hardly begun when a crowd of persons intervened, who rather took my part than not, hearing and seeing that I was in the right. On the following day a challenge to fight with him was brought me, which I accepted very gladly…and [I] repaired with sword in hand to the appointed place, but no blood was shed, for my opponent made the matter up, and I came with much credit out of the affair.[199]

In the pursuance of honor, the quarrel took on the expression of violence without vendetta. It was a public event, even a spectacle, in which others would likely hear that Cellini had come "with much credit out of the affair."[200] It was also a personal form of retribution. Like many of Cellini's other disputes, there is a marked absence of wide-scale revenge taking. Vendetta occurred entirely on an individual level, without familial support or a network of assisting allies. The absence of family solidarity in the pursuit of revenge is an important indicator that vendetta seemed to have lost many of its earlier characteristics. The duel supplanted the limitless violence of vendetta, and as Cellini's various accounts show, made vengeance a truly personal affair.

[198] Becker, 289.
[199] Ibid., 49.
[200] Ibid.

Chapter 7 - Diarists Revisited

This paper has examined various revenge narratives from the diaries of several Florentines writing in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. These include accounts from Luca di Totto da Panzano and his grandson Luca di Matteo da Panzano; the autobiographical diaries of Benvenuto Cellini and Bonaccorso Pitti; and the family memoirs of Giovanni di Pagolo Morelli, Lapo di Giovanni Niccolini de'Sirigatti, and Donato Velluti, along with a few other diarists. These Florentine memoirists differed in how they used writing to record and remember conflicts. Cellini, Pitti, and both grandfather and grandson of the Panzano clan wrote about vendettas in which they themselves partook, while Lapo and Donato recorded vendettas from the time of their ancestors.

This distinction mirrors the disparate purposes of vendetta narrative. In Bonaccorso's diary, describing his past violent encounters served to educate his family and (hopefully) his descendents about clan conflicts with other powerful Florentine families. Lapo's ancestral account focused primarily on creating a foundation story for his family as a means of authenticating the Sirigatti family name and securing his noble lineage through honorable vendetta. This fundamental distinction reveals the different ways in which diaries held relevance for Florentine families and how they remembered past quarrels, conflicts, and revenge killings. Even more importantly, all methods of recording vendetta achieved the same result. Vendetta narratives invoked personal or social memory to honor, protect, or otherwise benefit the family. Chronicles of family vendettas conveyed a sense of honor in having a noble history of violence through blood vengeance, and brief journal entries that detailed personal vendettas made note of the recent past to better prepare for future conflicts.

Brucker concluded that one "rationale for compiling memoirs was often formulated in terms of family interest: to pass on to later generations the experiences of the writer and his contemporaries, to demonstrate by illustration and example which paths to follow and which to avoid."[201] The passages analyzed from the Morelli, Pitti, and Velluti diaries precisely illustrate this motive; they recorded their family's quarrels and peace agreements to inform their descendents about potential threats to the family, including future dealings with the quarrelsome Mannelli family that was, curiously, mentioned by all three writers. Brucker also noted that another motive for writing was family pride, and is seen most clearly in the vendetta recounted by Lapo Niccolini about his ancestor Ruzza.[202] With an aim to family aggrandizement, "these diarists wished to set down the facts of their family's antiquity; they also described the exploits of its distinguished members, the prominent offices held, the honorable marriages contracted."[203] The Sirigatti vendetta passage touches on all of these features except the holding of prominent offices, using the memory of vendetta as a tool to achieve family honor and protect the nobility of the Sirigatti name. Cellini, Morelli, Niccolini, Pitti, Velluti, and the two Panzano relatives all shared the desire to transmit their histories for posterity, and although their *ricordanze* employ vendetta narrative in different ways, all seven Florentines achieved "purposeful means of remembering and explaining disputes" for both themselves and their descendents.[204]

In conclusion, the medieval social practice of vendetta took on a peculiar character in Florence that, though acknowledged by scholars, has never been properly explained. An analysis of several Florentine diaries has revealed one possible explanation for the peculiarity of Florentine vendetta: the Florentine diaries themselves. *Ricordanze* allowed Florentines to record

---

[201] Brucker, *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence*, 11.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Dean, "Marriage and Mutilation," 31.

insults and injuries perpetrated against the family, functioning as a written aid to remember, transmit, and eventually fulfill a family's need for retribution. A unique feature of vendetta remembrance in Florence was the length of Florentine conflict. These quarrels lasted for long periods thanks to diaries that kept past physical and emotional wounds fresh in the hearts and minds of Florentine family members. It is this reason, more than anything else, which explains the longevity of the vendetta culture in the city of Florence. Florentines held grudges longer than other Italian communities and transmitted their culture to succeeding generations through the written word. In so doing, diaries did more than simply record the past, they preserved the emotions and character of entire families through multiple generations, making remembered injuries all the more relevant and enduring. In the words of Gene Brucker, "A characteristic Florentine trait, not found commonly elsewhere: to express openly and freely one's emotions, likes and dislikes, loves and hates, passions and prejudices. In this private realm of inner experience, Florentines made a particular, unique statement."[205] This unique statement was only possible through the continued use of *ricordanze*, which preserved the Florentine culture of vengeance for more than three centuries in the late middle ages and defined the period as one of continual peace and conflict.

❖

[205] Brucker, *Golden Age*, 22.

Chapter 8 - Appendix

Velluti-Mannelli Peace Pact, 1295

So that on the 17th day of July 1295, by the hand of Messer Chello Uberti Baldovini chancellor of the commune; in the presence of Messer Carlo of Messer Manente da Spuleto at that time Defender and and Capitano del Popolo and of the Arts of the city of Florence, and in the presence of Vanni Ugolini Benivieni, Passa Finiguerra, of sir Guccio Ruggieri the doctor, and of Palla Bernardi…and of many knights and grand citizens of Florence, noble and popular; in the church of San Piero Scheraggio; Messer the abbot of Messer Mannello, for himself and for Messer Maso and Ghiotto their sons; Messer Lapo of Messer Coppo, for himself and for don Filippo his brother, and for Masino of Messer Lamberto, and for all the sons and heirs of Messer Coppo; and Mannello of Messer the abbot, for himself and Vannuccio Berto and Lapo his sons, and for Messer Lapo his son, and for Cecco of Messer the abbot, and for Chele, Bate, Coppo, Stregghia and Fahina children of the said Cecco, and for Messer Stregghia of Messer the abbot, and for the other sons of the said Messer Stregghia, and for Cione of Messer Abate, and for Giannozzo son of the said Cione, and for Agnolo and Stregghinuzzo sons of Banco of Messer Abate; from the said and part of the Mannelli: and Buonaccorso son of Piero, and Filippo his son, and Dinaccio son of the said Filippo, for them and Berto son of the said Filippo; Dietaiuti and Gherardino, for them and Lapo their brother and sons of Donato, and for Donato son of Mico; and Velluto son of Christian, and Pasquetto his son; all of the Velluti; and Cino of sir Dietisalvi, for himself and for Salvino his brother: from the other part: they made peace, and kissed each other on the mouth.

And by the hand of the said notary, was secured and solidified the said peace by the good and sufficient guarantors, that promised that the said peace would be observed.

The names of the guarantors of the Mannelli are these: Ghino di Davizzo and Mangia di Donato de'Marrucegli, Bello and Dino di Filippo Gherardini, Fornaio del Rosso del Fornaio and Benguccio di Benghi de' Rossi, Giovanni and Simone di Iacopo del Ricco de' Bardi, Lapo di Rinaldo del Boccaccio, and Neri di Monte dal Bagno, Riccardo di Tommaso, and Vanni di Iacopo de'Mozzi.

The guarantors of the Velluti…are these: Bardo di Lamberto, Lambertuccio di Ghino Frescobaldi, Pino di Stoldo Iacopi, Bernardo di Rosso de' Rossi, Sozzo Guicciardini, Agnolo de'Magli, Lamberto di Abate degli Abati, Fornaio di Fenci de'Pulci, Vanni Angelotti, Lippo Becca, Orlando Maffei, Tano di Iacopo della Bruna, Lippo Gucci Soderini, Banco di Guernieri del Bene, Scelto di Gitidotto, Filippo del Lombardo, Casino Casini, Nuccio Parigi, Albertuccio di Iacopo Cappietti, Giovanni Iacopi, Lapo Bonaiuti, Neri di Iacopo Mantellini, Rosso Filigherna, Simone Folchi, Fenci di Gherardo Malefici, Duccio Angiolini de'Malchiavelli, Salvi d'Uberto, and Figo di Dono della Bianca.[206]

❖

[206] *La cronica domestica di Messer Donato Velluti* (Firenze: G.C. Sansoni, 1914), 15-18. Translated by Kalina Yamboliev.

Bibliography

Florentine Chronicles, Diaries, and other Primary Sources

Alighieri, Dante. *La divina commedia*. Translated by Allen Mandelbaum. *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri Inferno, A Verse Translation*. New York: Bantam Books, 2004.

Brucker, Gene A. *The Society of Renaissance Florence: A Documentary Study*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

Brucker, Gene A., Buonaccorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati. *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence*. New York: Harper and Row, 1967.

Caggese, Romolo. *Statuto del capitano del popolo: degli anni 1322-25*. Firenze: Galileiana, 1910.

Caggese, Romolo, Giuliano Pinto, Francesco Salvestrini, and Andrea Zorzi. *Statuti della repubblica fiorentina, statuto del podesta dell'anno 1325*. Firenze: Galileiana, 1999.

Cellini, Benvenuto. *La vita di Benvenuto Cellini scritta da lui medesimo*. Translated by John Addington Symonds. *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini*. New York: Modern Library, 1927.

Compagni, Dino. *Cronica delle cose occorrenti ne' tempi suoi*. Translated by Daniel E. Bornstein. *Dino Compagni's Chronicle of Florence*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986.

Da Panzano, Luca di Matteo. *Memoriali*. Translated by Gene A. Brucker. *The Society of Renaissance Florence: A Documentary Study*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

Da Panzano, Luca di Matteo. *Memoriali*. Translated by Kalina Yamboliev. "Un fiorentino del secolo XV e le sue ricordanze domestiche." *Archivio storico italiano*. Series 5, Volume IV. Firenze, 1889.

Da Panzano, Luca di Totto. *La cronaca di Messer Luca di Totto da Panzano*. Translated by John Larner. *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch, 1216-1380*. London: Longman, 1980.

Da Panzano, Luca di Totto. *La cronaca di Messer Luca di Totto da Panzano*. Translated by Kalina Yamboliev. "Frammenti della cronaca di Messer Luca di Totto da Panzano," *Giornale storico degli archivi toscani*. Volume V. Firenze, 1861.

Dean, Trevor. *The Towns of Italy in the Late Middle Ages*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

De'Sirigatti, Lapo di Giovanni Niccolini. *Libro degli affari propri di casa*. Translated by Vittore Branca. *Merchant Writers of the Italian Renaissance*. New York: Marsilio Publishers,

1999.

Guicciardini, Francesco. *Ricordi*. Translated by Margaret Grayson. *Francesco Guicciardini: Selected Writings*. London: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Jansen, Katherine, Joanna H. Drell, and Frances Andrews. *Medieval Italy: Texts in Translation*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

Landucci, Luca. *Diario*. Translated by Alice de Rosen Jervis. *A Florentine Diary from 1450 to 1516*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1927.

Morelli, Giovanni di Pagolo. *Ricordi*. Translated by Vittore Branca. *Merchant Writers of the Italian Renaissance*. New York: Marsilio Publishers, 1999.

Morelli, Giovanni di Pagolo. *Ricordi*. Translated by Kalina Yamboliev. *Ricordi. A cura di Vittore Branca*. Firenze: F. Le Monnier, 1969.

Niccolini di Camugliano, Ginevra. *The Chronicles of a Florentine Family, 1200-1470*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1933.

Pitti, Bonaccorso. *Ricordi*. Translated by Gene A. Brucker. *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence*. New York: Harper and Row, 1967.

Rinuccini, Filippo di Neri. *Ricordi*. Translated by Kalina Yamboliev. *Ricordi storici di Filippo di Cino Rinuccini dal 1282 al 1460 colla continuazione di Alamanno e Neri, suoi figli, fino al 1506, seguiti da altri monumenti inediti di storia patria estratti dai codici originali e preceduti dalla storia genealogica della loro famiglia e della descrizione della cappella gentilizia di S. Croce, con documenti ed illustrazioni*. Firenze: Dalla Stamperia Piatti, 1840.

Rustichi, Antonio di Leonardo. *Ricordanze*. Translated by Gene A. Brucker. *The Society of Renaissance Florence: A Documentary Study*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

Velluti, Donato. *La cronica domestica di Messer Donato Velluti*. Translated by Gene A. Brucker. *The Society of Renaissance Florence: A Documentary Study*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

Velluti, Donato. *La cronica domestica di Messer Donato Velluti*. Translated by Kalina Yamboliev. *La cronica domestica di Messer Donato Velluti*. Firenze: G.C. Sansoni, 1914.

Villani, Giovanni. *Nuova cronica*. Translated by Rose E. Selfe. *Selections from the First Nine Books of the Croniche Fiorentine of Giovanni Villani*. Westminster: A. Constable & Co, 1896.

Secondary Sources

Becker, Marvin B. "Changing Patterns of Violence and Justice in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Florence." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 18, no. 3 (1976): 281-296.

Black-Michaud, Jacob. *Cohesive Force: Feud in the Mediterranean and the Middle East*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975.

Blok, Anton. *Honour and Violence*. Cambridge: Polity, 2001.

Branca, Vittore, and Murtha Baca. *Merchant Writers of the Italian Renaissance*. New York: Marsilio Publishers, 1999.

Brucker, Gene A. *Florence: The Golden Age, 1138-1737*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1984.

Brucker, Gene A. *Renaissance Florence*. New York: Wiley, 1969.

Ciappelli, Giovanni, and Patricia Lee Rubin. *Art, Memory, and Family in Renaissance Florence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Dean, Trevor. *Crime and Justice in Late Medieval Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Dean, Trevor. *Crime in Medieval Europe, 1200-1550*. New York: Longman, 2001.

Dean, Trevor. "Marriage and Mutilation: Vendetta in Late-Medieval Italy." *Past &□Present* 157 (Nov. 1997): 3-36.

Dean, Trevor. "Violence, Vendetta, and Peacemaking in Late Medieval Bologna." In *Violence, Vendetta, and Peacemaking in Late Medieval Bologna*. Edited by Louis A. Knafla. London: Greenwood, 2002.

Dean, Trevor, and K. J. P. Lowe. *Crime, Society, and the Law in Renaissance Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Enriques, Anna Maria. "La vendetta nella vita e nella legislazione Fiorentina." *Archivio storico italiano*, 7th series, xix, (1933): 85-146, 181-223.

Gordon, N. P. J. "The Murder of Buondelmonte: Contesting Place in Early Fourteenth-Century Florentine Chronicles." *Renaissance Studies* 20, no. 4 (2006): 459-477.

Heers, Jacques. *Family Clans in the Middle Ages*. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1977.

Jansen, Katherine. "Florentine Peacemaking: the Oltrarno, 1287-1297." In *Pope, Church and*

City: Essays in Honor of Brenda Bolton. Leiden: Brill, 2004.

Jones, P. J. "Florentine Families and Florentine Diaries in the Fourteenth Century." *Papers of the British School at Rome*: *Studies in Italian Medieval History* 24 (1956): 183-205.

Kent, D. V., and F. W. Kent. "A Self Disciplining Pact Made by the Peruzzi Family of Florence (June 1433)." *Renaissance Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (1981): 337-355.

Kent, D. V., and F. W. Kent. *Neighbours and Neighbourhood in Renaissance Florence: The District of the Red Lion in the Fifteenth Century*. New York: J.J. Augustin, 1982.

Knafla, Louis A. *Crime, Gender, and Sexuality in Criminal Prosecutions*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 2002.

Kuehn, Thomas. *Law, Family & Women: Toward a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Kuehn, Thomas. "Social and Legal Capital in Vendetta: A Fifteenth-Century Florentine Feud In and Out of Court." In *Sociability and Its Discontents Civil Society, Social Capital, and Their Alternatives in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Edited by Nicholas A. Eckstein and Nicholas Terpstra. Turnhout: Brepols, 2009.

Larner, John. *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch, 1216-1380*. London: Longman, 1980.

Martines, Lauro. *Violence and Civil Disorder in Italian Cities, 1200-1500*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972.

Morris, Lawrence. *The Middle Ages and Renaissance*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2009.

Najemy, John M. *A History of Florence, 1200-1575*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

Netterstrøm, Jeppe Büchert, and Bjørn Poulsen. *Feud in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2007.

Rubinstein, Nicolai, and Giovanni Ciappelli. *Studies in Italian History in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004.

Smail, Daniel Lord. "Factions and Vengeance in Renaissance Italy. A Review Article." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38, no. 4 (1996): 781-789.

Tamassia, Nino. *La famiglia italiana nei secoli decimoquinto e decimosesto*. Roma: Multigrafica, 1971.

Taylor, Matthew. *Pace con onore: un esempio del declino della vendetta a Firenze nel primo Quattrocento. Archivio storico italiano* 150, no. 553 (1992): 775-804.

Throop, Susanna A., and Paul R. Hyams. *Vengeance in the Middle Ages: Emotion, Religion and Feud*. England: Ashgate, 2010.

Waley, Daniel. "A Blood-Feud with a Happy Ending: Siena, 1285-1304." In *City and Countryside in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Essays Presented to Philip Jones*. Edited by P. J. Jones, Trevor Dean, and Chris Wickham. London: Hambledon Press, 1990.

Wray, Shona Kelly. "Instruments of Concord: Making Peace and Settling Disputes Through a Notary in the City and Contado of Late Medieval Bologna." *Journal of Social History* 42 (2009): 733-760.

Zorzi, Andrea. *Conflitti, paci e vendette nell'Italia comunale*. Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2009.

Zorzi, Andrea. "La cultura della vendetta nel conflitto politico in età comunale." In *Le storie e la memoria: in onore di Arnold Esch*. Edited by Delle Donne, Roberto, and Arnold Esch. Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2002.

Zorzi, Andrea. *La trasformazione di un quadro politico: ricerche su politica e giustizia a Firenze dal comune allo stato territoriale*. Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2008.

❖