

# The Magnificent Interior

Emotion, Gender, and Household in the Life of Lorenzo de'  
Medici

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## **Declaration of Authorship**

I, Karen Burch, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, it is clearly stated.

Signed:

Dated:

## **Abstract**

Though Lorenzo de' Medici (1449-1492) is one of the most well-studied Florentine figures in history, previous studies have almost exclusively focused on his political life and his contributions as an art patron. Few historians have given time to his emotional life, his relationships with the members of his household, or the ways in which he understood himself as a Medici man. The neglect of this crucial facet of the human experience fails to challenge previous understandings of Lorenzo's life.

This thesis is meant to be a corrective to earlier work in Laurentian history. I approach Lorenzo's life from a standpoint which incorporates the methodologies of emotions history, gender history, household history, and the history of sexuality. By making a close study of a variety of sources, including letters, poetry, and artwork, I will seek to create a new portrait of Lorenzo which explores his internal life. This, I believe, will give greater context to the decisions and behaviours which shaped his political and artistic career. Additionally, by exploring Lorenzo's inner life, we will come to a deeper understanding of the ways in which masculinity, sexuality, and household relationships shaped the lives of Florentine men.

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# Contents

<b>Declaration of Authorship</b> .....	2
<b>Abstract</b> .....	3
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	4
<b>Contents</b> .....	6
<b>Figures</b> .....	9
<b>Abbreviations</b> .....	10
<b>Introduction</b> .....	11
<b>Why Lorenzo?</b> .....	14
<b>Historiography and Methodology</b> .....	17
The Many Lives of Lorenzo.....	17
Psychohistory and Emotional Biography.....	21
The History of Emotions.....	32
The History of Masculinity .....	38
<b>Emotion and Masculinity in Renaissance Florence</b> .....	47
Renaissance Emotions.....	48
Princely Masculinity .....	63
<b>Sources</b> .....	77
Letters .....	78
Poetry .....	82
Visual Sources .....	87
<b>The Contents of this Thesis</b> .....	90
Chapter One: The Medici Household .....	90
Chapter Two: Raising Lorenzo .....	91
Chapter Three: Another You: Brotherhood and Medicean Identity .....	93
Chapter Four: The Patron, the Wife, and the Poet .....	94
Chapter Five: The Magnificent Death.....	95
<b>Chapter One: The Medici Household</b> .....	98
<b>Historiography</b> .....	100
Household Histories.....	100
<b><i>Casa, Famiglia, Brigata</i></b> .....	108
<i>Casa</i> .....	110
<i>Famiglia</i> .....	113
<i>Brigata</i> .....	116
<b>Chapter Two: Raising Lorenzo</b> .....	127
<b>Historiography</b> .....	129

Fathers and Sons .....	129
The Young Lorenzo .....	135
<b>Youthful Ambiguities</b> .....	138
The Transfer of Authority .....	143
Youthful Politics .....	149
Sexual Politics.....	154
<b>The Loss of Youth</b> .....	158
Loss and Image .....	158
Youthful Personas .....	162
Lifting Weights .....	170
<b>Chapter Three: “Another You”: Brotherhood and Medicean Identity</b> .....	176
<b>Historiography</b> .....	178
Giuliano di Piero .....	178
Siblings .....	180
<b>The Young Magi</b> .....	187
<i>The Journey of the Magi</i> .....	189
Men, Not Youths.....	199
<b>Giuliano, Interrupted</b> .....	205
“The Least Content Youth”.....	212
<i>The Adoration of the Magi</i> .....	215
<b>Public Death, Public Mourning</b> .....	222
<b>Chapter Four: The Patron, the Wife, and the Poet*</b> .....	243
<b>Poliziano and Clarice</b> .....	244
<b>Historiography</b> .....	247
Household Conflict .....	247
Homoeroticism and Male Friendship.....	251
<b>Bedroom Politics</b> .....	255
<b>Poetic Homoeroticism</b> .....	263
Phallic Games .....	264
Love’s Light.....	269
<b>The Death of Orpheus</b> .....	273
<b>Chapter Five: The Magnificent Death</b> .....	282
<b>Historiography</b> .....	284
Death and Grief.....	284
<b>A Death at Careggi</b> .....	293
Deathbed Emotions .....	303
Manly Death.....	311

Insane Death.....	314
<b>Concluding Remarks .....</b>	<b>322</b>
<b>Appendix A. Medici Family Tree .....</b>	<b>332</b>
<b>Appendix B. Glossary of Names .....</b>	<b>333</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>335</b>
<b>Manuscripts and Archival Documents.....</b>	<b>335</b>
<b>Printed Primary Sources .....</b>	<b>336</b>
<b>Secondary Sources .....</b>	<b>339</b>



## Figures

Figure 1. Benozzo Gozzoli, Procession of the Magi. ....	190
Figure 2. Gozzoli (detail), Caspar. ....	192
Figure 3. Gozzoli (detail), Cafaggiolo.....	194
Figure 4. Gozzoli (detail), Piero, Cosimo, and Giovanni .....	195
Figure 5. Gozzoli (detail), Balthasar. ....	196
Figure 6. Gozzoli (detail), Melchior. ....	197
Figure 7. Gozzoli (detail), Lorenzo (left), Giuliano (centre left), and Cosimino (far right).....	198
Figure 8. Sandro Botticelli, The Adoration of the Magi. ....	217
Figure 9. Bertoldo di Giovanni, medal (obverse). ....	229
Figure 10. Bertoldo di Giovanni, medal (reverse). ....	230
Figure 11. Botticelli, Giuliano de' Medici. ....	238
Figure 12. Domenico Ghirlandaio, Confirmation of the Rule (detail). ....	280

## **Abbreviations**

CSPE: Carteggio Sforzesco, Potenze Estere, Archivio di Stato di Milano.

GC: Autografi Ginori Conti, Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze.

MAP: Mediceo avanti il Principato, Archivio di Stato di Firenze.

TLIO: *Tesoro della lingua Italiana delle Origini.*

## Introduction

This thesis is an analysis of the emotional and relational life of Lorenzo de' Medici. By "emotional life," I mean not only the emotions which may have motivated his actions, but also the way in which he and his contemporaries interpreted and expressed those emotions. Similarly, by "relational life," I mean the relationships which formed – and informed – both his actions and his identity as a man, a *paterfamilias*, and a Medici. Most Laurentian studies thus far have followed Lorenzo's multiple roles as patron, unofficial diplomat, and first citizen. Very few, however, have deeply explored the emotions and relationships which laid the foundations for his self-construction into those roles. Because the whole of Lorenzo's emotional and relational life is far too broad of a subject to fit in a single study, this thesis will approach this void by analysing a few of his key relationships with other members of the Medici household, the emotional valence of which have until now been mostly overlooked.

I am here primarily concerned with three specific men: his father Piero, brother Giuliano, and close friend Poliziano. While historians have long acknowledged the impact which Lorenzo's relationships with women had on his self-formation, his relationships with other men have been framed primarily in terms of politics and business, with the implication that this made them less emotional. The "exterior" Lorenzo, who navigated a male world with tight emotional control, has thus become divided from the "interior" Lorenzo, who found emotional release among women. This thesis will seek to rectify this false dichotomy. To this end, in this thesis I seek to radically integrate a crossover of many historical methodologies, including those of emotions history, gender history, household history, art history, literary

history, and the history of sexuality. This integration, I believe, will more accurately reflect the complex ways in which relationships – and their attendant emotions – interact with the whole of one’s life.

Foremost among these methodologies is emotions historian Barbara Rosenwein’s concept of the emotional community.<sup>1</sup> This methodology takes both emotions and relationships into consideration by proposing that our expression and understanding of emotions is relationally constructed in the context of one or more groups which share common goals, values, and experiences. These communities frequently – though not always – overlapped with social communities, and the household is often the first (and often one of the most important) emotional communities in a person’s life. Lorenzo’s household is thus central to my analysis. I will combine the historical concept of the emotional community with that of the household to address a few key questions: who “counted” as a member of the household? How did Lorenzo’s relationships with the different members of his household develop and change over time? How did household members negotiate and manage their emotions, and how did this vary depending on age, gender, class, and other factors?

This thesis will also utilise approaches based on gender history, and more specifically on the history of masculinity. Gender was, in premodern Europe more so than it is today, a particularly significant determining factor in a person’s life cycle and relationships. This was especially true in Quattrocento Tuscany, where the masculine and feminine spheres were becoming even more strictly demarcated than before as Tuscans began re-

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1. Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007).

examining what manhood ideally looked like in the light of the wisdom of antiquity. Then, as now, cultural norms about masculinity impacted which of a male's relationships were encouraged or discouraged, how those relationships fluctuated based on factors such as status and age, and how conflicts were navigated. These models also informed men of not only how they should express their emotions, but also which emotions were appropriate (or inappropriate) for which relationship. I will therefore analyse how ideals about masculinity impacted Lorenzo's relationships with other men of his household. Additionally, how did they affect the way emotions were understood and expressed in the household context?

By exploring the questions discussed above, this thesis will make new inroads into understanding not only Lorenzo de' Medici as an individual, but the emotional and relational expectations for patrician Florentine men. While historians have made great progress in analysing patrician Italian men as a group, few patrician men are studied as individuals outside of the narrow scope of political history. Their other experiences have been taken for granted, creating the false impression that the experience of patrician manhood was rather uniform. Using Lorenzo as my example, it is my hope that this thesis will demonstrate that the patrician male was made, not born, and that the process of "making," while it followed certain cultural norms, could vary widely. Additionally, by relationally contextualising one patrician male, I aim to show that this process was a communal one; to borrow a phrase I will use later, "making" Lorenzo was a household project. Even the more famous figures of history were the creations of their relational environments, just as much as anyone else.

In the following pages I will first explain my further reasoning behind choosing to write about Lorenzo, who has over the past five hundred years been analysed and re-analysed almost to the point of exhaustion. Next, I will review the relevant recent works on Laurentian history, emotions history, and the history of masculinity, the three main pillars upon which I have built this thesis. Then, I will review my primary sources and the approaches I have used in their analysis. Finally, I will give a brief overview of the five chapters that comprise this thesis.

### **Why Lorenzo?**

Born in 1449 to a family of powerful Florentine bankers, Lorenzo became one of the most powerful members of his family line until the establishment of the grand-ducal Medici in the following century. Though he would never hold a government office, he combined personal influence, wealth, and political savvy to influence the Florentine government, negotiate diplomatic relationships, and act as an arbiter of taste. At the same time, he patronised literature and the arts and even became an accomplished amateur poet in his own right. As the eldest son and later *paterfamilias* of the Medici, he headed a large and diverse household that stretched over several properties and contained dozens – if not hundreds – of members. He made such a deep impact on the course of early Renaissance history that it is nearly impossible to avoid him. As a result, he has become, for many historians, either an icon of Florentine cultural achievement or a symbol of early crony politics.

Since the 1970s, the study of the powerful individual – especially the powerful individual male – has become much less popular in academic circles, with historians preferring to focus on 'ordinary individuals' or the movements of groups and communities. Biographically-leaning studies of

famous and powerful men have, broadly speaking, become more the purview of popular history over academia. However, Barbara Caine suggests that the biographical model can still be useful: “Biography allows for the detailed exploration of individuals in whose hands immense power was concentrated,” and it “can help to illuminate 'an otherwise obscure aspect of the past.’”<sup>2</sup> A close study of such individuals, aided by a variety and volume of sources, can illustrate the myriad possibilities available to historical figures as they navigated their communities.

Regardless of wider academic trends, the lives of powerful figures have also re-emerged as a subject of interest at one specific intersection: that of medieval history and the history of the emotions. Because so many textual sources from the medieval period tend to focus on kings, popes, and other authority figures, medievalists interested in emotional history have explored the ways in which those in power used emotion to establish control or maintain influence.<sup>3</sup> However, this trend has only slowly caught on among scholars of Renaissance Italy.<sup>4</sup> While Laurentian historians such as Francis William Kent and Melissa Bullard have briefly touched on Lorenzo’s uses of emotion for the same purposes, Isabella Lazzarini is the first – and, to my knowledge, only – historian to explicitly approach one of Lorenzo’s tools of political power (in this case, the rhetoric used in his letters) from the

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2. Barbara Caine, *Biography and History* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 25.

3. See, for example, Gerd Althoff, “*Ira Regis*: Prolegomena to a History of Royal Anger,” in *Anger’s Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara Rosenwein (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 59-74.

4. Barbara Rosenwein, “The Place of Renaissance Italy in the History of Emotions,” in *Emotions, Passions, and Power in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Fabrizio Ricciardelli and Andrea Zorzi (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 15.

standpoint of emotions history.<sup>5</sup> However, Lazzarini's scope is limited by length, subject, and source material: her paper focuses specifically on the emotional rhetoric Lorenzo employed in his diplomatic letters. Even here, she is mostly interested in his expressions of hatred and perturbation, along with his use of ironic humour to moderate and defuse the potentially destructive power of these emotions. At the same time, her search for "significant recurrences, common patterns, and personal uses" of specific emotion words and phrases provides a useful starting point for reconstructing the ways Lorenzo understood, expressed, and adapted emotion.<sup>6</sup>

But why limit ourselves? One benefit of working on a well-known figure such as Lorenzo is the sheer magnitude of primary sources he and his associates left behind. There are not only the many published volumes (so far) of his personal letters, but the diaries, chronicles, poetry, inventories, and stage dramas both he and others produced. Even visual depictions of Lorenzo and his circle are potentially rich sources of information. Though the vast treasury of Medicean letters remains the foundation of my research, I have broadened my scope by asking how these "alternative" sources – poetry and art in particular – can be mined for emotional evidence. The emotions communicated in letters are supplemented by other forms of human communication, all equally capable of transmitting ideas about feelings and relationships. With Lorenzo as my guinea pig, this thesis thus represents an

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5. See Francis William Kent, *Princely Citizen: Lorenzo de' Medici and Renaissance Florence*, ed. Carolyn James (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2013); Melissa M. Bullard, *Lorenzo il Magnifico: Image and Anxiety, Politics and Finance* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1994); Isabella Lazzarini, "The Words of Emotion: Political Language and Discursive Resources in Lorenzo de' Medici's Letters (1468-1492)," in *Emotions, Passions, and Power in Renaissance Italy*, 91-110.

6. Lazzarini, "The Words of Emotion," 97.



innovative experiment in the possibilities available to emotions historians, both in terms of methodology and source material.

### **Historiography and Methodology**

#### The Many Lives of Lorenzo

Isidoro del Lungo's 1923 *Gli amori del Magnifico Lorenzo* was one of the few early 20<sup>th</sup> century attempts to combine the poetry and letters of Lorenzo's inner circle to create a coherent picture of Lorenzo's most intimate connections, primarily his love affairs.<sup>7</sup> A few years later, Yvonne Maguire would heavily rely on both the work of del Lungo and the Medicean letter compilations of Janet Ross to more widely explore Lorenzo's formative relationships in her *The Private Life of Lorenzo the Magnificent*.<sup>8</sup> Maguire's complaint was that "there are studies of most aspects of this many-sided man," but virtually nothing on his intimate connections. However, Maguire's work does not go into a deep analysis of the relationships she describes, and she tends to cast modern judgments on her subject matter. Furthermore, as suggested by the title, Maguire conceptualises these relationships as his "private life," necessarily "distinct from a public character."<sup>9</sup> This assumption has, unfortunately, remained mostly unchallenged in Laurentian circles, despite the widespread recognition of historians that premodern private and public lives were not quite so well-partitioned.

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7. Isidoro del Lungo, *Gli amori del Magnifico Lorenzo* (Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1923).

8. Yvonne Maguire, *The Private Life of Lorenzo the Magnificent* (London: Alexander Ouseley, 1936). See Janet Ross, *The Lives of the Early Medici as Told in Their Correspondence* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1910).

9. Maguire, *Private Life*, 7.

The mid-century turn towards social consciousness led to a surge in popularity for subjects such as family history and women's history, and a greater attention to the stories of the disenfranchised. Premodern history saw increased study of the unprivileged masses as historians began critiquing how their field had uncritically favoured the legacies of the elite. This, in turn, led to a decline in the popularity of Laurentian studies. One of the final major pre-1992 biographies of Lorenzo, André Rochon's 1963 *La jeunesse de Laurent de Médicis (1449-1478)*, hints at the beginning of this shift: Rochon intentionally portrayed Lorenzo as a rather ordinary (if shrewd) Renaissance politician who would eventually attain a tyrannical hold over the people of Florence.<sup>10</sup> Even so, Rochon's meticulously referenced chapters on Lorenzo's family life and early relationships provide an excellent starting point for examining these early emotional connections.

1992 saw a resurgence in Laurentian studies and in Medicean research in general. For the five-hundred-year anniversary of il Magnifico's death, various historians and academic societies – especially those based in Florence – published books and papers and held conferences to honour Lorenzo's memory. The Laurentian Year, as it was called in Florence, initiated a period of reappraisal in which historians of the Quattrocento began looking at Lorenzo's life and impact in the light of the recent sociologically-minded developments in historical study.

Significant among those recent developments had been the study of the social network.<sup>11</sup> Personal relationships were now portrayed as being the

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10. André Rochon, *La jeunesse de Laurent de Médicis (1449-1478)* (Paris: Société d'Édition 'Les Belles Lettres,' 1963); Donald Weinstein, review of Rochon, *Speculum* 40, no. 2 (April 1965): 367.

11. See Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Kin, Friends, and Neighbors': The Urban Territory of a Merchant Family in 1400," in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*,

core of an individual's life, from one's love affairs to one's business decisions and politics. The importance of social networks is strongly reflected in the many Laurentian studies published during and shortly after 1992, which is little wonder when one considers his prodigious use of patronage relationships during his career. These works portray personal relationship and political alliance in Renaissance Italy as being inextricably intertwined, and therefore revisit Lorenzo's political policies in the light of these relationships.

However, early interest in Lorenzo's relational networks still treat emotion as unimportant to, or even as incompatible with politics. Bullard, for example, portrays Lorenzo's relationships with his daughter Maddalena and her husband, the Papal bastard Franceschetto Cybo, as little more than a means to political ends.<sup>12</sup> In her view, Lorenzo saw them as "a direct conduit to the pope" and "a host of benefits for Florence and for his family."<sup>13</sup> Bullard seems to imply that Lorenzo's willingness to use his daughter for political gain meant that he did not care about her, not taking into consideration the contemporary expectations of fathers and the emotional norms attached to those expectations.

As historians spent the early nineties studying Lorenzo's politics through a relational lens, others turned their attention to his artistic activities, both as a patron and a hobbyist. Charles Dempsey has made perhaps the most significant recent contribution to the study of Lorenzo's emotional life in his

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trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 68-93; John M. Najemy, *Between Friends: Discourses of Power and Desire in the Machiavelli-Vettori Letters of 1513-1515* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

12. Melissa M. Bullard, "Lorenzo de' Medici: Anxiety, Image Making, and Political Reality in the Renaissance" in *Lorenzo de' Medici studi*, ed. Gian Carlo Garfagnini (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1992), 3-40.

13. Bullard, *Lorenzo il Magnifico*, 151; Bullard, "Lorenzo de' Medici," 22.

study on Botticelli and Medicean Florence.<sup>14</sup> Influenced by del Lungo, Dempsey places Lorenzo's love affair with Lucrezia Donati in the context of the young Lorenzo's early social network: his *brigata*.<sup>15</sup> Lorenzo's interactions with Lucrezia were acted out through a circulation of poetry and letters among these friends, but this does not rob either lover of their sincerity or investment in the affair.<sup>16</sup> The poems were instead a means for Lorenzo to outwardly display his inner dedication to his lady in a symbolic language that the *brigata* built through their exchanges.

The Laurentian Year also ignited a greater interest in other members of Lorenzo's household. Studies by Rab Hatfield and Francis Ames-Lewis on the artworks patronised by Lorenzo's father Piero il Gottoso have illustrated the many ways in which a patrician father like Piero might define his household's identity.<sup>17</sup> Works on Medici women also helped to expand upon the emotional aspects of Lorenzo's relationships, especially studies on his mother Lucrezia Tornabuoni.<sup>18</sup> However, this focus has led to the impression that Lorenzo's most emotionally charged relationships were those he had with women, and that his masculine connections were mostly mercenary in nature.

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14. Charles Dempsey, *The Portrayal of Love: Botticelli's Primavera and Humanist Culture at the Time of Lorenzo de' Medici* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

15. For more on *brigata*, see Chapter One.

16. Dempsey, *Portrayal of Love*, 85.

17. See Rab Hatfield, "Cosimo de' Medici and the Chapel of His Palace," in *Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de' Medici, 1389-1464*, ed. Francis Ames-Lewis (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 244; Francis Ames-Lewis, "Art in the Service of the Family: The Taste and Patronage of Piero di Cosimo de' Medici," in *Piero de' Medici 'il Gottoso' (1416-1469): Kunst im Dienste der Mediceer; Art in the Service of the Family*, ed. Andreas Beyer and Bruce Boucher (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), 207-20.

18. See Maria Grazia Pernis and Laurie Schneider Adams, *Lucrezia Tornabuoni de' Medici and the Medici Family in the Fifteenth Century* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006); Natalie Tomas, *The Medici Women: Gender and Power in Renaissance Florence* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2003); Francis William Kent, "Lorenzo de' Medici and the Love of Women" and "Sainted Mother, Magnificent Son: Lucrezia Tornabuoni and Lorenzo de' Medici," both in *Princely Citizen*, 49-50 and 67-104, respectively.

In Chapters Two and Three, therefore, I will analyse the complex variety of emotions involved in Lorenzo's relationships with his father and brother. Additionally, I shall expand upon the work of Hatfield and Ames-Lewis to demonstrate that Piero used art to influence not only the identities of his sons, but his sons' feelings about those identities. In Chapter Four, I will examine one of Lorenzo's most intimate friendships, and the ways in which a male friendship could potentially transgress social boundaries and even disrupt a patrician male's identity as *paterfamilias*.

The past two decades of research, then, even with their resurgence in interest in Lorenzo il Magnifico and new angles of study, still overwhelmingly focus upon Lorenzo's political and artistic influence. Outside of the above-mentioned paper by Lazzarini, Lorenzo's emotional life, like that of so many 'heroic' figures of the past, has been largely neglected. This present study will not attempt to argue the significance of his impact: it is taken for granted that he was an influential figure. Instead, it will explore those relational and emotional aspects that so often tend to fall on the wayside, in the hopes that it will find the human buried in the hero, and at the same time give some general insight into the emotional and relational lives of patrician men in Quattrocento Florence. What emotions, for example, did these men associate with brotherhood, or with friendship? How did they expect emotions to evolve as boys turned into youths, and youths into men? How did they respond when they – or others – failed or refused to meet those expectations?

### Psychohistory and Emotional Biography

While this thesis is not formally a biography, nor is it a psychohistorical study, it is difficult to approach the emotional life of a single

individual without at least brushing against psychohistory, even unintentionally. Emotions history was, to a considerable extent, first incubated within this wider umbrella of psychohistory.<sup>19</sup> Though emotions has stepped out on its own while psychohistory has (for the most part) fallen out of fashion, psychoanalytical approaches continue to exert a heavy influence on current historians' approaches to historical emotion, especially the emotions of specific historical figures. While Rosenwein and Cristiani were correct in noting that most psychohistorians were not "focused" on the history of emotions themselves, psychohistory was the first methodological school to treat the historical role of human emotion as a serious field of inquiry.<sup>20</sup>

Psychoanalysis was first openly championed as a valid historical tool in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century by Freudian-inspired historians, who pushed for the foundation of psychohistory as "a historical school in its own right."<sup>21</sup> Psychohistory, or the practice of applying psychoanalytical theory to the study of history, first found its home in biographical studies of prominent figures – the primary example being Erik Erikson's monograph *Young Man Luther*.<sup>22</sup> As the practice developed, social historians began applying psychohistorical theories to studies of large-scale social phenomena and even

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19. For approaches to emotions history within psychohistory, see Lucien Febvre, "Une vue d'ensemble: Histoire et psychologie" and "La sensibilité et l'histoire: Comment reconstituer la vie affective d'autrefois?," both in *Combats pour l'histoire*, ed. Réjeanne Toussaint and Jean-Marc Simonet (Paris: Armand Colin, 1992), 207-20, and 221-38, respectively.

20. Barbara Rosenwein and Riccardo Cristiani, *What is the History of Emotions?* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2018), 10.

21. Rudolph Binion, "Psychohistory," in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, accessed 24 January, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B0-08-043076-7/02658-9>.

22. Erik Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York; W. W. Norton & Co., 1958).

entire groups.<sup>23</sup> Psychohistory, however, quickly engendered a great deal of criticism, even from historians who otherwise embraced it. Early psychohistorians would sometimes approach history with a psychological theory already in mind, rather than letting evidence speak for itself.<sup>24</sup> Stephen Greenblatt and Lyndal Roper have criticised the universalist tendencies of psychohistory, which “is achieved ... only by repressing history,” as well as psychohistorians’ tendency to forget that psychoanalysis itself is “a historical creation.”<sup>25</sup> Others have criticised psychoanalytical techniques as being too myopic and losing sight of larger historical narratives through too narrow of a focus.<sup>26</sup> Finally, Rudolph Binion, among many others, has pointed out that by assuming that humans are fundamentally alike in their psychological makeup, historians run the risk of erasing the historicity of (and superimposing their own world-views onto) past figures.<sup>27</sup>

While psychohistory certainly has its weaknesses, more moderate voices began in the 1980’s to argue that the inherently psychoanalytical elements of the historical discipline cannot (and should not) be ignored.<sup>28</sup>

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23. Binion, “Psychohistory,” 349-350. See, for example, Lloyd deMause, ed., *The History of Childhood* (Lanham, MD: Jason Aronson, 1995); Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, rev. ed (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2000).

24. Thomas A. Kohut, “Psychohistory as History,” *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 2 (April 1986): 338, 341.

25. Stephen J. Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (London: Routledge, 1990), 138; Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1994), 13.

26. Mark Salber Phillips, “On the Advantage and Disadvantage of Sentimental History for Life,” *History Workshop Journal*, no. 65 (Spring 2008): 51. See also Lyndal Roper, *Martin Luther: Renegade and Prophet* (New York: Random House, 2016), xxvii.

27. Binion, “Psychohistory,” 350-351.

28. Joseph E. Illick, “Some Thoughts on Psychohistory,” *Political Psychology* 4, no. 4 (December 1983): 760. For one well-known critique of early psychohistory, see David E. Stannard, *Shrinking History: On Freud and the Failure of Psychohistory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

Indeed, they are unavoidable: if “History is what people did,” this necessitates the presence of “motives both conscious and, like it or not, unconscious.”<sup>29</sup> If historians wish to understand the actions and behaviour of people in the past, they will inevitably have to ask what motivations drove them.

Exploring the motivations of historical figures involves the question of the subjective, that is, their internal world. But how are historians to explore internal worlds when all that is left are external representations? How much can we understand about anyone’s inner life, much less those of people who died centuries ago? Cultural and social history proposes that humanity’s internal desires and motivations, however impenetrable some may seem to the postmodern historian, are shaped by sociocultural “codes and structures,” which historians in turn can decipher.<sup>30</sup> This, they hold, is the closest a historian can possibly come to grasping the subjective experiences of the past. Lyndal Roper, however, criticises this view for assuming “the psyche” to be “a kind of blank sheet for social processes to write upon.”<sup>31</sup> Such an approach erases the irrational, assuming that every bewildering behaviour or action has a perfectly rational reason which can be revealed if only we crack the code.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, it tends to erase the free will and individuality of historical people, reducing them to character types with no volition or self-awareness of their own.

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29. Binion, review of *Shrinking History*, *The American Historical Review* 86, no. 2 (April 1981): 370.

30. Michael Roper, “Slipping out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History,” *History Workshop Journal*, no. 59 (Spring 2005), 57.

31. Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 8.

32. Karl Figlio, “Historical Imagination/Psychoanalytic Imagination,” *History Workshop Journal*, no. 45 (Spring 1998): 209.



A psychoanalytical approach can help to temper this imbalance, as it allows room for “the possibility that individuals can think and feel against the social grain.”<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, it gives weight to relational formations of the self, including the ways relationships – and their impacts on the psyche – may both follow and deviate from cultural norms. Traditional psychoanalysis proposes that the most insight into a person’s psyche can be gained from analysing their childhood. However, an over-emphasis on childhood might be quite rightly criticised as “psychologically simplistic and historically reductionistic.”<sup>34</sup> After all, significant events and relationships may impact and shape our psyches throughout our lives. Kohut instead proposes a wider view, writing that the entire “course of an individual’s life ... tells us more about the essence of his personality than do the facts of his childhood.”<sup>35</sup> By examining the patterns of a subject’s “needs and wishes, his aims and ideals, his loves and hates, his conflicts, his basic transferences” over the long term, we will still gain insight into the subject’s psyche without slipping into reductionism.<sup>36</sup>

One entryway into historical subjectivity, as Michael Roper has suggested, is via relationships, which inform people’s understandings of themselves both as individuals and as members of a society.<sup>37</sup> While relationships are, like people, forged within the boundaries of social structures, they are equally as unique as the individuals within them, shaped

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33. Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 9.

34. Kohut, “Psychohistory as History,” 341.

35. Kohut, 342.

36. Kohut.

37. Michael Roper, “Slipping Out of View,” 67.

by the personalities and experiences of those individuals. The material relationships leave behind – letters, portraits, and the like – thus frequently provide evidence of their members negotiating those subjectivities out loud: through agreements, disagreements, sharing news, offering sympathy, and the like.

In my work on Lorenzo, I have attempted to strike a balance between the sociocultural and the psychoanalytical approaches. On the one hand, I acknowledge that Lorenzo's emotional life was contoured by the social codes and structures that governed the lives of not only Quattrocento Florentines and Italians in general, but wealthy elite men in specific. On the other hand, I have also sought to preserve a sense of Lorenzo's subjectivity in my exploration of the ways in which he responded to – and functioned within – these social codes and structures. For these purposes, I have closely analysed several of Lorenzo's formative male relationships for evidence of the ways he – and those close to him – negotiated their subjective emotional experiences with one another. However, so as not to slip into reductionism by over-emphasising childhood, I analyse the significant ways in which these relationships informed and reflected Lorenzo's subjective experiences even up to his death. In a sense, then, I have adopted a quasi-biographical approach to this thesis, tracing the general contours of Lorenzo's emotional lifespan through the rhythms of his paternal, fraternal, platonic, and even sexual relationships.

From the beginning, biography has in fact been the genre which most comfortably incorporates psychohistory.<sup>38</sup> As biography is concerned with the close analysis of an individual's life it follows that this close analysis

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38. Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 9.

might also extend to that individual's internal life. Additionally, biography's interest in the entire scope of an individual life – including their significant experiences and relationships – complements psychohistory's concern with the role those factors play in the development of the psyche. In fact, biography has never quite escaped the influence of psychohistory for this very reason.<sup>39</sup> One might ask whether it even should; after all, can anyone's life and work be truly understood without taking their subjective lives into account? In a sense, psychohistorical approaches are still alive and well in biography. Lyndal Roper has provided one recent example with her biography of Martin Luther as a theologian. She argues that in order to better understand Luther's theology, which evolved over the course of his life, we must “connect it to his psychological conflicts.”<sup>40</sup> Luther's emotional life informed the development of his theology, which in turn shaped the course of his life and prompted further emotional responses – both from himself and from those who came into contact with him or his theological ideas.

Michael Roper favours an almost microhistorical approach to the biographical study of specific people that focuses on their interpersonal relationships within the wider context of a specific culture or time period. This, he writes, “allows us to see the assimilation of cultural codes as a matter of negotiation involving an active subject.”<sup>41</sup> In this way, historians can attend to both a given sociocultural context and to the individual autonomy of the people it shaped. While earlier social historians have indeed explored the way

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39. Paula R. Backscheider, *Reflections on Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 114.

40. Lyndal Roper, *Martin Luther*, xxviii.

41. Michael Roper, “Slipping Out of View,” 65-66.

in which relationships informed the emotional lives of individual Florentines, the relationships in those studies have frequently been those of larger social groups – such as the confraternity, the youth group, or the parish – rather than the one-on-one connections I study here.<sup>42</sup> This intimate approach has allowed me to more carefully explore the nuances of subjective, emotional negotiation processes than would be feasible on the group scale.

Several historians have pointed out the marked similarities between psychoanalytical and historical methods. Karl Figlio has convincingly compared the historical imagination and the psychoanalytical imagination, arguing that both professions explore representations of the past rather than interacting with that past directly.<sup>43</sup> The only difference is that, for historians, the creator of these representations is usually dead. The therapist and the historian both seek to “establish contact between the two cultures” or “the two minds ... that are foreign to each other.”<sup>44</sup> Finally, both are engaged in the business of helping their subject – be it a patient or a society – of processing their past.<sup>45</sup>

Michael Roper has convincingly argued that the concept of transference is also a common feature between psychoanalysis and history. In the traditional Freudian sense, transference refers to the imposition of a patient’s emotions regarding a past relationship onto the analyst in the present

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42. For example, see Richard C. Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980); Konrad Eisenbichler, *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael: A Youth Confraternity in Florence, 1411-1785* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

43. Figlio, “Historical Imagination,” 199.

44. Figlio, 213.

45. Figlio, 204-205.

via “the unconscious aspects of the patient’s communication.”<sup>46</sup> As the field has developed, however, the term has been expanded to also include all “that the patient brings in to the psychoanalytic session.”<sup>47</sup> Though the historian is (usually) not the direct recipient of a subject’s transference, they take on that position when examining source material. Just as “It is the analyst’s task to explore ... why the patient is presenting material to them in this way at this particular time,” historians must do the same as they analyse sources, questioning and exploring the motivations behind their creation and composition.<sup>48</sup> In Chapter Three, for example, I examine the positions of Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano’s visual representations in contemporary artistic pieces. While an artwork’s composition necessarily depends on its type and purpose (the composition of a chapel fresco will, for instance, be quite different from that of a panel altarpiece), I question why – beyond these practical concerns – the artists chose to place the brothers where they did. What might these choices reflect about the patrons’, artists’, and audiences’ perceptions of the brothers? What contemporary assumptions did these choices reflect? In brief, what information are these sources transferring, deliberately or unknowingly, about Lorenzo and Giuliano’s relationship?

Just as historians should not ignore the presence of transference, they should also not shy away from emotion’s role in historical study. Emotional engagement with a historical subject is not only inevitable, but it is “the very stuff of historical evidence, and it behoves us to cultivate an attitude of

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46. Michael Roper, “Psychoanalysis and the Making of History,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Historical Theory*, ed. Nancy Partner and Sarah Foot (London: SAGE Publications, 2012), 314.

47. Michael Roper.

48. Michael Roper.

receptiveness towards” it.<sup>49</sup> In fact, he argues, the relationship the historian cultivates with their subject is not all that different from relationships between living contemporaries. An attuned sense of empathy is therefore not only natural in historical analysis, it is necessary.<sup>50</sup>

One may argue that embracing empathic instincts is inappropriate for the historian, as it may interfere with our ability to think critically about our subject matter. Furthermore, in the orthodox view, the differences between the premodern and the postmodern worldview is so vast that the “individual subjectivities” of distant historical figures are mostly – if not entirely – inaccessible to today’s historians.<sup>51</sup> From this standpoint, any sense of empathy for the long-dead is tenuous, if not entirely illusory. Lyndal Roper, however, argues that “the assumption of difference” between ourselves and early modern people is not only limited in its usefulness, but “it has hampered our understanding of the complexity of early modern individuals.”<sup>52</sup> In fact, she writes, historians should not feel threatened by the possibility “that there are aspects of human nature which are enduring, just as there are aspects of human physiology which are constitutional.”<sup>53</sup> Indeed, if today we are able to feel empathy for people in countries with vast cultural differences from our own, is it so impossible to have the same experience for those who are separated from us by time rather than space?

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49. Michael Roper, 323.

50. Michael Roper, 314.

51. Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 3. See also Stannard, *Shrinking History*, 141-143.

52. Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 3.

53. Lyndal Roper, 13.

Even if “basic psychological experiences” are common to all humans, they “are certain to be expressed in a different psychological language” depending on historical context.<sup>54</sup> Binion has proposed that historians interested in psychoanalysis ought to first “master” and “become immersed” in the relevant historical facts so as to have a thorough understanding of the world which shaped their subject’s internal life.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, in order to avoid anachronisms or instances of “counter-transference,” any psychoanalytical insights ought to be based on and carefully checked against these known facts.<sup>56</sup>

In his 1986 essay Kohut predicted that since, when it comes down to it, “it is no more and no less difficult to understand the psychological concerns of an individual ... than it is to understand that individual’s political and intellectual concerns,” psychohistory would eventually lose its controversy and become simply another historical field, “no less positive or empirical, no less relative, and no more clearly defined or logical than any other sort of history.”<sup>57</sup> In a sense, he was right. While psychohistory as a unique school has faded away, many psychohistorical ideas have been happily adopted by other fields. Psychoanalytical approaches are still alive and well in the realm of biography, and historians in fields such as queer history, gender history, and the history of mentalities have begun incorporating psychoanalytical concepts, even if they do not identify as psychohistorians.<sup>58</sup>

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54. Kohut, “Psychohistory as History,” 340.

55. Binion, “Psychohistory,” 350.

56. Binion, 351.

57. Kohut, “Psychohistory as History,” 353.

58. Binion, “Psychohistory,” 351.

Though this present study is not a psychohistory in the formal sense, it – like other emotions, queer, and gender histories – has incorporated approaches and ideas from psychoanalysis. As Lyndal Roper suggests, I have analysed the source material surrounding Lorenzo “as literary sources that conveyed his emotions and illuminated his relationships with others,” understanding these forms of communication as external manifestations of an internal reality, one which informed the creators’ choices of vocabulary, imagery, and other elements.<sup>59</sup>

### The History of Emotions

I would argue that emotions history more or less picks up where psychohistory left off.<sup>60</sup> The history of emotions first began to distinguish itself from the wider umbrella of psychohistory in the 1980s, when Peter and Carol Stearns coined the term “emotionology” to emphasize the role of cultural context in shaping emotion.<sup>61</sup> While earlier attempts at emotions history had equated “the collective emotional standards of a society” with “the emotional experiences of individuals and groups,” the Stearnses proposed that historians ought to tease out the nuances of how the “emotionology” of a society impacted the ways individuals might understand or express their feelings.<sup>62</sup> This emphasis has since set the foundations of current emotions history, and has spawned two further major “branches” of methodological approach: William Reddy’s paradigm of emotives and emotional regimes, and

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59. Lyndal Roper, *Martin Luther*, xxxi-xxxii.

60. Peter and Carol Stearns made a similar suggestion. See Stearns and Stearns, “Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards,” *American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (October 1985): 815.

61. See Stearns and Stearns, “Emotionology,” 813-36.

62. Stearns and Stearns, 813.



Rosenwein's paradigm of the emotional community.<sup>63</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, I have adapted the latter as my primary approach.

Instead of conceiving a single emotionology for an entire society, Rosenwein proposes that any given society in fact contains a vast number of emotional communities, based in part on Brian Stock's theory of "textual communities."<sup>64</sup> An individual can belong to multiple communities, each with their own emotional norms, and these communities can overlap with one another, allowing for relative freedom of movement between them. They are, quite simply, "[groups] in which people have a common stake, interests, values, and goals," meaning a parish, a guild, a religious confraternity, or even a household could be an emotional community. These communities are defined by "constellations, or sets, of emotions" and often privilege certain emotions over others.<sup>65</sup>

This still, however, leaves us with the question of how to identify these "constellations" within source materials, and even what sources are useful. For example, the various genres of textual sources naturally carry unique problems and deal with emotions in diverse ways. The *amore* described in a sonnet is not necessarily the *amore* described in a hagiography. Rosenwein finds her answer in the study of linguistics: what emotion-related

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63. Stephanie Olsen and Rob Boddice, "Styling Emotions History," *Journal of Social History* 51, no. 3 (Spring 2018): 476-87; Boddice, "The History of Emotions: Past, Present, Future," *Revista de Estudios Sociales* 62 (June 2017): 10-15. See also William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*. For more detailed overviews of emotions historiography, see Erin Sullivan, "The History of the Emotions: Past, Present, Future," *Cultural History* 2, no. 1 (April 2013): 93-102; Andrew Lynch, "Emotional Communities" and Tania M. Colwell, "Emotives and Emotional Regimes," both in *Early Modern Emotions in Early Modern Emotions: An Introduction*, ed. Susan Broomhall (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2017), 3-6 and 7-10, respectively; Rosenwein and Cristianini, *What is the History of Emotions?*.

64. Lynch, "Emotional Community," 4.

65. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 24-26.

vocabulary is used in a text, and how? She suggests the use of emotion lexicons: tables of emotional vocabulary and their translations used in any given source.<sup>66</sup> The words in these lexicons can be cross-referenced with other contemporary sources to spot patterns in usage or meaning. While I have not used lexicons myself, I have found in the process of writing this thesis that this close focus on linguistics and etymology allows the historian to discover emotional meaning even in formulaic expressions in letter writing (for instance, addresses or commendations) which were once dismissed as insincere and mere formality.<sup>67</sup> It is striking, for example, that the formulaic expressions of love and dependency a poet might use in soliciting his patron often echoed the language of homoerotic *amicizia*. Wooing a patron could be much like wooing a lover, and in some cases, they were one in the same.

With this in mind, I have carefully analysed the emotional vocabulary that Lorenzo and his contemporaries used to negotiate multiple types of relationships. Historical dictionaries have proven especially useful in this venture, as such dictionaries frequently provide contemporary examples of these words being used in a variety of genres, which in turn can be compared to the usages I have found in the Medicean sources. At the same time, I compare and contrast the contours of these negotiations with examples from wider Florentine culture – drawn from both the contemporary lived experiences of similar relationships and the prescriptive relational advice given by contemporary writers – to keep Lorenzo’s emotional ties contextualised in the beliefs and language of his time. In this way, we do not

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66. See Rosenwein, 52-53, for an example.

67. Rosenwein, 138-42.

lose sight of how Lorenzo and his contemporaries would have understood and described these negotiations for themselves.

Monique Scheer has proposed an important corrective to the limitations she perceives in Rosenwein's emotional communities. Drawing on Bourdieu's practice theory, she challenges the implication in Rosenwein's work that emotional norms were "coherent" or "mentalised" for all – or even most – of the members of a given community.<sup>68</sup> Rather, she adopts Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the *habitus*, suggesting that many emotional practices are somewhere between the conscious and the subconscious, and are instead automatic reflexes developed over a lifetime: in other words "habits emerging where bodily capacities and cultural requirements meet."<sup>69</sup> This, she believes, brings not only a much-needed elasticity to Rosenwein's emotional communities, but also greater attention to the intrinsically embodied, physical nature of feeling. As she writes, "emotions are indeed something we *do*, not just *have*."<sup>70</sup> By understanding emotions as embodied practices, historians will be more attentive to "what people are doing, and ... the specific situatedness of these doings." This, in turn, opens up a wider field of inquiry into the emotional implications of architecture, objects, and media in the lives of historical subjects. Though she acknowledges that texts "will remain the main sources," these alternative forms and genres of media – including fiction – substantially broaden the potential sources available to emotions historians.<sup>71</sup>

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68. Monique Scheer, "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (And is That What Makes Them Have a History)?: A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion," *History and Theory* 51 (May 2012): 216.

69. Scheer, 202.

70. Scheer, 194.

71. Scheer, 217-18.

In the years following Scheer's essay on emotional practice, the physicality of emotions has become an area of increased focus. Most recently, Michael Stolberg has drawn on Scheer's ideas to remind us that the many emotional expressions we use metaphorically today – such as heartbreak – were considered extremely real for premodern people.<sup>72</sup> Emotional practice was not only cognitive, but physical, and understood as such by humoral medical theory. In an important posthumous paper, Philippa Maddern points out that medieval people did not only “read” others' facial expressions, facial gestures (such as pointing with the chin or rolling the eyes), or “facial outputs” (such as crying or sweating) for emotional cues, but also the “visible signs of humoral constitution” and “facial colouring.”<sup>73</sup> In fact, she argues, premodern people saw these latter features as more trustworthy than the former, because while someone might smile or weep deceptively, it is much harder to control the reddening of one's face, for example, and utterly impossible (at that time) to change the shape of one's face. Maddern demonstrates that emotional communities not only value certain emotions above others, but also the indicators of those emotions.<sup>74</sup>

Maddern's perspective has been particularly useful in my own work. As I shall show in my analyses of various texts, authors would use various references to the face (and especially the eyes) to both demonstrate their own emotional state and to evoke empathy in their readership. Furthermore, the embodied nature of premodern emotion tied it intimately to both gender and

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72. Michael Stolberg, “Emotions and the Body in Early Modern Medicine,” *Emotion Review* 11, no. 2 (April 2019): 113.

73. Philippa Maddern, “Reading Faces: How Did Late Medieval Europeans Interpret Emotions in Faces?” *Postmedieval* 8, no. 1 (March 2017): 15.

74. Maddern, 30.

sexuality, points of identity which are often equally cognitive and the physical.<sup>75</sup> This has, especially in this thesis, opened up fruitful avenues of inquiry into the ways premodern men understood and “felt” their own manhood. An awareness of one’s own body contributed, for example, to an awareness of maturity: not only did teenage boys see their masculinity developing through new patches of hair or deepening voices, but they also physically became men by learning to comport themselves as men. This included learning how to feel in a “manly” fashion: with restraint and dignity. At the same time, youths no doubt took notice of the ways in which certain feelings – such as love and arousal – were manifested in increasingly new ways. Their understanding of these changes were, furthermore, based on their understanding of humoral theory: the increasingly hot humours of youth caused, in this view, the youthful tendencies towards anger and lust, which made it all the more important for influential youths (like Lorenzo) to quickly learn the physical practices of manly composure.

At the same time, the people of the past did not uncritically swallow the norms and ideas of their time; they interacted with those norms and ideas, sometimes playing with them, building on them, or even rejecting them entirely. Some had a greater luxury to do this than others due to their social, political, or economic positions, but a lack of privilege does not necessarily mean a lack of awareness. As I demonstrate in Chapter Four, in which I analyse an interpersonal conflict that took place across the boundaries of both class and gender within the Medici household, even those lacking certain types of power could still deconstruct and push sociocultural boundaries in unique, if limited, ways.

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75. Rosenwein and Cristiani, *What is the History of Emotions?*, 72-74.

As stated previously, Scheer's contributions have further expanded the possibility of interdisciplinary approaches to emotions history. Historians have begun incorporating the insights of not only the sciences, but also literary and artistic scholarship, into emotions history.<sup>76</sup> Additionally, historians have begun returning to various fields within the wider umbrella of social history and applying these new developments in emotions history, as exemplified in Claudia Jarzebowski and Thomas Max Safley's recent volume on emotions within children's history.<sup>77</sup> The issue is no longer whether premodern parents loved their children, but *how*.<sup>78</sup> I apply this question to multiple types of relationships: how did a patrician father and son show love to each other in the context of extremely high expectations? How was brotherly love expressed when both brothers were political figureheads? How did the recklessly youthful love between close male friends adapt to the solemn dignity of adulthood?

### The History of Masculinity

For much of its existence, "gender history" has meant "women's history." As social historians became increasingly conscious of the past of marginalized groups, the history of women saw a massive surge in interest from the 1970s to the 1990s and has since then developed into a staple field of study in the humanities. Historians like Christiane Klapisch-Zuber and

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76. R. S. White, "Language of Emotions," in *Early Modern Emotions*, 34; Aleksandra Hultquist, "Emotion, Affect, and the Eighteenth Century," *The Eighteenth Century* 58, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 275-76. See, for example, Eleonora Pancetti, "'Sorg að segja': The Language of Negative Emotions in Eddic Poetry" (master's thesis, University of Iceland, 2018).

77. Claudia Jarzebowski and Thomas Max Safely, eds., *Childhood and Emotion: Across Cultures 1450-1800* (London: Routledge, 2014).

78. Philippa Maddern, "How Children Were Supposed to Feel; How Children Felt: England, 1350-1530," in *Childhood and Emotion*, 121-40.

Margaret King proposed introducing *feminae* as a new division of medieval life alongside the traditional triad of *oratores*, *bellatores*, and *laboratores*.<sup>79</sup> Joan Kelly, meanwhile, famously declared that women had no Renaissance at all.<sup>80</sup>

Inquiries into male history, however, were for a long time virtually non-existent for the very reason that historians of the late twentieth century believed that we already *knew* about the men – it was the women who had always been invisible. Given that manhood was also already assumed to *have* a history (via political and art history), very few early social historians gave it any attention. One interesting exception is David Herlihy's 1972 essay on the exceptionally violent past of Tuscan towns. Herlihy's explanation – that young, unmarried Tuscan men felt disenfranchised and acted out violently because of it – is perhaps the first foray into seeing premodern masculinity as being a varied experience. The variable in this case were age and marital status. Herlihy's work suggests that premodern Tuscans perceived a major difference between married, stable masculinity and unmarried, unstable masculinity.<sup>81</sup>

As social constructionism gained ground in the late 1980s, gender historians began exploring how feminine identities could be constructed by any number of people and for any number of purposes, some of them self-contradictory or held in acknowledged tension. Caroline Walker Bynum, for

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79. See Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family, and Ritual*; Margaret L. King, *Women of the Renaissance* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).

80. See Joan Kelly, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?," in *Feminism and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 21-47.

81. David Herlihy, "Some Psychological and Social Roots of Violence in Tuscan Cities," in *Violence and Civic Disorder in Italian Cities, 1200-1500*, ed. Lauro Martines (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 149.

example, argues that premodern nuns were able to shape and inform their own ideas of womanhood.<sup>82</sup> While some critics have accused Walker Bynum – perhaps accurately – of generalizing her theories, her insistence that we understand cloistered womanhood *on its own terms* rather than modern terms set a powerful example for future gender historians.<sup>83</sup> Social constructionism led to a proliferation of various 'femininities' across the equally various contexts of locations, classes, and occupations.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, gender historians began wondering whether premodern manhood was not quite so invariable as it appeared. Influenced by Thomas Lacqueur's (and perhaps also by Judith Butler's) explorations of how biological sex itself is socially constructed, Joan Cadden sets out to explore how the bodily experience of sex difference was constructed and explained by medieval people.<sup>84</sup> Medieval manhood, she concludes, was centred on “sexual maleness and gender-linked virility,” in particular “the growth of the beard, and the ability to produce semen ....”<sup>85</sup> All this was based on warm, life-generating humours, the defining internal mechanism of the male body.<sup>86</sup> However, this made premodern biological masculinity intrinsically unstable, because these humours could easily

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82. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 205-207.

83. Elizabeth L'Estrange and Alison More, “Representing Medieval Genders and Sexualities in Europe: Construction, Transformation, and Subversion, 600-1530,” in the volume of the same name (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 4.

84. Joan Cadden, *The Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science and Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993). See Thomas Lacqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

85. Cadden, *Sex Difference*, 181.

86. Cadden, 171.



fluctuate.<sup>87</sup> The defining markers of manhood, the penis and testicles, could even be partially or entirely removed through castration, as in the famous case of Abelard.

Even so, Martin Irvine and Bonnie Wheeler argue, masculinity could still be asserted through performance of manly attributes. This, once again, is illustrated in the case of Abelard, who after his castration began to construct his masculinity through language rather than sexual conquest.<sup>88</sup> Men constructed and deconstructed their own masculinities in response to the needs of their social situations. For example, medieval maleness was often defined by an inherent moral strength which was often not fully developed until maturity.<sup>89</sup> This was frequently accompanied by taking on the social roles of husband and father, but for those who did not marry, manly maturity could be proved through taking on a leadership role in the political, religious, or artisanal spheres.<sup>90</sup>

This brings us back to the demarcation of age. One of the primary foci in histories of premodern masculinity has been the ways in which boys became men. At what point did a boy become masculine, and how were boys

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87. Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 14.

88. See Martin Irvine, "Abelard and (Re)Writing the Male Body: Castration, Identity, and Remasculinization" and Bonnie Wheeler, "Origenary Fantasies: Abelard's Castration and Confession," both in *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 87-106 and 107-28, respectively.

89. Cadden, *Sex Difference*, 187-188; Vern L. Bullough, "On Being a Male in the Middle Ages," in *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ed. Clare A. Lees (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 31-32.

90. See Susan Mosher Stuard, "Burdens of Matrimony: Husbanding and Gender in Medieval Italy," and Stanley Chojnacki, "Subaltern Patriarchs: Patrician Bachelors in Renaissance Venice," both in *Medieval Masculinities*, 63 and 84, respectively. See also Sandra Cavallo, "Bachelorhood and Masculinity in Renaissance and Early Modern Italy," *European History Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (July 2008): 375-97.

raised toward this goal? Being humourally volatile, neither able to grow a beard nor produce sperm, boys lacked many of the physical features to be classified as *manly*. But did they have a masculinity of their own? Historians like Michael Rocke would argue that, because boys so easily took on the 'womanly' roles in both plays and pederasty with little to no censure, their masculinity did not yet exist – or, at the very least, it was still quite fluid.<sup>91</sup> Jennifer Jordan challenges this idea by arguing that, from a very young age, little boys were “perfectly able and indeed encouraged to demonstrate attributes of their manliness” through vigorous activity, industriousness, and mimicking their fathers.<sup>92</sup> As we shall see, throughout his youth Lorenzo was regularly encouraged to closely imitate the examples set by older male relatives, especially that of his grandfather Cosimo il Vecchio. At the same time, however, he would frequently rebel against this example through behaviour that simultaneously affirmed his masculinity and defied the ideals of manly composure and sobriety exemplified in his forebears.

Of particular interest for the purposes of this thesis, therefore, is *gioventù*, that ambiguous period between boyhood and manhood. Ritual behaviours for these almost-men existed across various communities, as Ruth Mazo Karras illustrates: young scholars grew into their manhood through public dispute, while serving an apprenticeship and mastering a skill did the same for young labourers.<sup>93</sup> In this view, young men were responding to an

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91. Michael Rocke, “Gender and Sexual Culture in Renaissance Italy,” in *Gender and Society in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Judith C. Brown and Robert C. Davis (London: Longman, 1998), 150-70.

92. Jennifer Jordan, “To Make a Man Without Reason: Examining Manhood and Manliness in Early Modern England,” in *What is Masculinity?: Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World*, ed. John H. Arnold and Sean Brady (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 256.

93. Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

overall cultural assumption that “until ‘man’s age’ or maturity,” that is, around thirty years, “‘a man is not a man.’”<sup>94</sup> Because thinkers of the time period saw true manhood as contingent upon a mature age, youthful efforts were spent in an attempt to grow into that maturity and prove themselves manly. Because Lorenzo was pressured to mature faster than his peers (a pressure against which, as stated above, he occasionally rebelled), he would have an ambiguous relationship with *gioventù* throughout his life.

Other historians, however, point back to Herlihy's essay on Tuscan violence to show that social disruption was a marker of youthful rebellion against this system.<sup>95</sup> But was violence the main marker of *gioventù* in reality, or just in theory? Herlihy writes that the “diminished masculine influence” on sons (due primarily to the high likelihood that the father would die before the son reached thirty) was the primary cause of this violence.<sup>96</sup> However, this does not take into account the young men like Lorenzo who, upon the deaths of their fathers, found themselves saddled with the responsibility of heading a family. Were all these young men as unruly as Herlihy and others would have us believe? The complaint that all young men are wild and unruly seems more of a stereotype concocted by a frustrated older generation than an accurate portrait of a social group. As Maya Corry has noted, both philosophers and theologians also conceived of youth as an ideal state,

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94. Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 25.

95. See Christopher Fulton, “The Boy Stripped Bare by His Elders: Art and Adolescence in Renaissance Florence,” in “How Men Look: On the Masculine Ideal and the Body Beautiful,” ed. William Stern and William Hook, special issue, *Art Journal* 56, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 32; Sharon T. Strocchia, “Gender and Rites of Honour in Italian Renaissance Cities,” in *Gender and Society in Renaissance Italy*, 50-51; Christopher E. Forth, *Masculinity in the Modern West: Gender, Civilization and the Body* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 28.

96. Herlihy, “Psychological and Social Roots,” 149.

beyond the fragility of childhood but before the decrepitude of age, which best reflected man's capacity for divinity.<sup>97</sup>

Further research has continued to demonstrate that premodern Europeans saw nuance in the youthful male. Rachel Moss argues that premodern parents and educators were far more aware of the gradual nature of maturity than it may appear from "the ideals of the Ages of Man."<sup>98</sup> She points to laws which stagger the ages at which a youth was considered mature enough for various responsibilities, and notes that these laws were meant to reflect the minimum age at which that responsibility was possible, and not necessarily the ideal age at which this level of maturity should be attained. This suggests that premodern people saw a variety of stages within adolescence and responded accordingly. Most importantly for this thesis, Moss identifies the household as "a space within which the adolescent is transformed" into an adult. Additionally, the household was the place in which courtesy literature defined manhood, thanks to the manly "responsible attitude" necessary in managing household affairs.<sup>99</sup>

Other historians have examined the ways in which gender and sexuality intersect. As Jennifer Evans claims, sexual behaviour was an important means of constructing masculinity, but these behaviours and the masculinities they reflected were expected to vary over time. Adolescent boys were expected to be sexually active and adventurous, sowing their wild oats as a demonstration of their exit from boyhood into burgeoning sexual

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97. Maya Corry, "The Alluring Beauty of a Leonardesque Ideal: Masculinity and Spirituality in Renaissance Milan," *Gender & History* 25, no. 3 (November 2013): 568-69.

98. Rachel E. Moss, *Fatherhood and Its Representations in Middle English Texts* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), 44.

99. Moss, 47.

maturity. Upon reaching full adulthood, however, displays of virility were expected to become more controlled, this time being limited to the marital bed and proven by the birth of an heir.<sup>100</sup> As I will demonstrate, Lorenzo's sexual experiences complicate these masculine norms: unlike the majority of his peers, he was expected to keep his adolescent indulgences to a minimum, or at least to be better at hiding them. Additionally, he was expected to give up hedonism in exchange for marriage and heir-making about ten years earlier than most of his peers. At the same time, however, he would occasionally defy these expectations by joining in on this normative youthful behaviour.

Political leaders had even more of an imperative to uphold hegemonic masculinity than most upper-class men.<sup>101</sup> Because their masculinity was on constant display, upsetting the gender of a leader could create even greater disruptions in the social fabric (or so it was feared). Their masculinity was under greater scrutiny than it was for anyone else, which in turn considerably impacted his choice of behaviours and the ways in which he conducted his relationships. He was expected to manage an orderly household, produce an heir, prepare that heir for future rulership, and engage in appropriately masculine pastimes such as hunting.<sup>102</sup> Part of good household management was sexual: not only did the ruler have to restrain his own lechery, but he also had to be sure that the members of his household (especially the women) were above reproach. A lack of control in himself or others was a threat to a ruler's

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100. Jennifer Evans, "'They are called Imperfect men': Male Infertility and Sexual Health in Early Modern England," *Social History of Medicine* 29, no. 2 (May 2016): 311-12.

101. Susan Doran, "Monarchy and Masculinity in Early Modern England," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Masculinity*, ed. Christopher Fletcher et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 207.

102. Doran, 206-208.

masculinity and an inability to govern a household implied an inability to govern a country.<sup>103</sup>

Though Lorenzo was never a ruler in any official capacity, my research reveals that he was also frequently expected to uphold the standards of hegemonic masculinity in ways above and beyond his peers. From childhood onwards, Lorenzo's elders constantly impressed upon him the need for control – both of himself and his household – and many expressed worries that his youth could jeopardize his ability to successfully perform masculinity in a way that would honour both the Medici and Florence. As a result, Lorenzo became so fastidious about his masculine public image that even the occasion of his death became a mad scramble to affirm his manly dignity. One might even argue that because Medici supremacy was not guaranteed by divine right or political office, Lorenzo's ability to maintain an honourable public image was even more crucial than that of a prince.

Though the history of masculinity is yet young, we see many of the same questions emerging – though in far quicker succession – as did for woman's history. How do we locate masculinities? How should we define them or divide them? How big of a factor is age, class, or other social status? And how active were men in shaping their own gender identities? In this thesis, I will revisit some of these questions. I will show that Lorenzo's sense of masculinity was strongly dependent on his ability to behave like a man and fulfil manly roles, even from a very early age. Additionally, this masculinity required constant upkeep: in order to remain manly in the eyes of his contemporaries, he had to carefully manage his relationships in appropriate ways. What counted as “appropriate,” however, was strongly contingent on

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103. Doran, 208-209.

factors such the age, status, and gender of both Lorenzo and those with whom he interacted.

### **Emotion and Masculinity in Renaissance Florence**

Though this thesis is not a study of Lorenzo's place in intellectual or political history, it is still worthwhile to devote some attention to the intellectual and political contexts which informed his understanding of both emotion and gender. The relationships which built his identity were themselves undergirded by presuppositions about how different emotions functioned – both within the individual and among others. Renaissance understandings of the emotions were built on a long history of western thought which encompassed a variety philosophical, theological, and scientific ideas, and whether he was aware of these or not, they still permeated all he knew and did.

Additionally, Lorenzo was not only a Florentine male, but an elite Italian male. While he was not a ruler in any official capacity, he was raised by his ambitious predecessors to join an exclusive network of men (and sometimes women) who ruled Italian city-states. As such, he had to participate in elite masculine behaviours which identified him as belonging to this upper echelon. Successful participation not only proved that he and his *nouveau-riche* family were worthy of power, but that Florence could produce illustrious men of the same mettle as the more established ruling families of the peninsula. However, to maintain popularity and favour at home in republican Florence, Lorenzo also had to strike a careful balance so that elitist masculinity did not become tyrannical masculinity. Thus, what Lorenzo learned about being male in the Renaissance was informed not only by

Florentine norms, but the norms of the highly selective circle to which he tenuously belonged.

### Renaissance Emotions

Lorenzo and his contemporaries inherited an expansive emotional vocabulary, but also a wide range of views and opinions about those emotions, where they came from, and how to correctly feel them. These understandings of emotion fundamentally drew from three major sources – Western philosophy, Christian theology, and premodern medicine – and were built on the variety of expansions and syntheses of these sources which had developed in Western thought over the centuries. Though by the Quattrocento there were some general agreements about what emotions are and how they work, there remained inconsistencies and disagreements which existed side-by-side in the Florentine worldview, because this wide variety of philosophical, theological, and medicinal traditions still had some significant conflicts in the ways they understood emotion. Some thinkers attempted – with varying success – to reconcile these differences, while others picked and chose from traditions which appealed to them or justified their actions and views. Renaissance thought on emotions represented a conglomerate of many traditions, some which overlapped neatly and others which clashed. Renaissance Italians thus had multiple options for thinking and writing about their emotional experiences. They also applied their own innovations to these traditions, occasionally by referring to original, ancient sources and applying them to contemporary life.

Philosophy and theology were inextricably intertwined in the premodern era, and this was no less true for theories of emotion. Renaissance philosophical and theological views of the emotions – or the passions or



affects, as they were frequently called by contemporaries – were often tied into the question of how to live a good (that is, virtuous or holy) life. Although the answers to this question would differ between traditions, the consistency of this concern across these traditions demonstrates a commonly held presupposition that ethical and virtuous behaviour was intrinsically linked to emotions.<sup>104</sup> Renaissance humanists were especially interested in combining ethical conduct with the active, public life. Renaissance humanists built on the philosophical developments of previous centuries, but their enthusiastic study of original ancient Greek and Roman texts led to an eclectic and innovative approach to various philosophical traditions.

Stoic approaches provided humanists with some basic assumptions about emotions, but also served as a foil for their ideal of the active life. Even as the heavily Stoic texts of Cicero and Seneca found a new and eager audience among Italian humanists, Stoic thought had in fact already been closely intertwined with Christian theology for centuries. Many patristic theologians linked the concept of sinful thoughts with the Stoic concept of the “first movements” of emotion.<sup>105</sup> Passion thus became suspect, and a potential gateway into sin and moral degradation. Though he disagreed with the Stoics that a complete escape from the emotions was possible, Augustine was influenced by Stoic and Neoplatonic views and “saw his passions and affections as troubling signs of weakness” which needed to be “overcome ... through sound reasoning.”<sup>106</sup>

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104. Susan James, “The Passions and the Good Life,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Donald Rutherford (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 199.

105. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 46.

106. Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 49-50.

The Stoic “quest for peace of mind” outside of the cares of daily life also complemented the more ascetic aspects of Christianity and thus appealed to the hermetic Desert Fathers. This combination would remain a steady influence well into the early modern period.<sup>107</sup> In Coluccio Salutati’s 1398 letter to his friend Peregrino Zambecari, for example, we learn that Zambecari was considering taking up a life of religious solitude. Salutati quotes Zambecari as wishing to “flee” the “cares” of public life and find “true freedom” through detachment and spiritual contemplation.<sup>108</sup> This form of asceticism was equated with emotional quietude and thus with virtue. As we shall see in Chapter Two, Lorenzo too would link the burdens of public life with unnecessary emotional turmoil as he mused that a departure from busy city life would “lift from my fragile nature / that weight which increases the aggravation and weariness” and “clear from the heart every thought.”<sup>109</sup> Here, Lorenzo is also drawing on the ancient ideal of *otium*, a withdrawal into the countryside for the sake of tranquillity and private study. A regulated amount of societal detachment via *otium* was considered healthy and conducive to inner harmony, but it was also risky if overindulged, as demonstrated by religious ascetics’ tendency to slip into the sin of *acedia*.<sup>110</sup>

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107. Cavallo and Tessa Storey, *Healthy Living in Late Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 181.

108. Coluccio Salutati to Pellegrino Zambecari, 23 April, 1398, in *The Earthly Republic: Italian Humanists on Government and Society*, ed. Benjamin G. Kohl and Ronald G. Witt (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), 101.

109. “et per levare da mia fragile natura / quel peso che a salir l’aggrava et lassa.” Lorenzo de’ Medici, “De sommo bono,” in *Tutte le opere*, ed. Orvieto (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 1992), 2:927, lines 8-9; “e ’l cor d’ogni pensiero si sgombra.” Lorenzo de’ Medici, line 15.

110. See Dan Hanchey, “*Otium* as Civic and Personal Stability in Cicero’s Dialogues,” *The Classical World* 106, no. 2 (Winter 2013): 171-197; Juliann Vitullo, “*Otium* and *Negotium* in Alberti’s *I libri della famiglia*,” *Annali d’Italianistica* 32 (2014): 73-89.

However, even as Stoic detachment remained a tempting option for those tired of the emotionally draining demands of society, Renaissance humanists believed that a virtuous life necessitated some amount of active engagement with society. They, in turn, adapted ideas from philosophical views which offered alternatives for managing emotions in a virtuous way. Aristotle offered one such alternative. Rosenwein notes that Aristotle had a very “cognitive” view of the emotions: in his estimation, they were a natural part of being human and represented a person’s appraisal of life and the wider world.<sup>111</sup> His concern was whether any given emotion was appropriate to its circumstances, with a specific focus on “how socially appropriate it was. The more normative, the better.”<sup>112</sup> An ethical emotion is one which is beneficial to society, and in most cases, this means that emotions ought to be guided by prudence and good judgement rather than repression or excess.<sup>113</sup> Immoderate or inappropriate emotion could be corrected through a careful process of reasoning through whatever false beliefs had led to the misstep.

Aristotle’s call for a reasoned moderation of the emotions had left a heavy influence on many medieval philosophers and theologians, most notably Thomas Aquinas. He identified eleven basic emotions – “present-related passions (love, hatred, courage, anger, joy and sorrow) and future-related passions (desire, aversion, hope, despair and fear)” – and argued that these could be virtuous and even holy so long as each was felt in its proper

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111. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 35-37. See also Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 78-81.

112. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 37.

113. See John Martin, “Inventing Sincerity, Refashioning Prudence: The Discovery of the Individual in Renaissance Europe,” *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (December 1997): 18; Nussbaum, *Therapy of Desire*, 81-82.

context.<sup>114</sup> For example, he argued that since God was described in the Bible as experiencing anger, anger must not be inherently sinful if it is rightly ordered – for instance, when it arises in response to evil and is directed against evil.<sup>115</sup> Furthermore, since Christ – fully human and fully divine – experienced anger and remained holy, humans must therefore also have that capability.<sup>116</sup>

Aquinas believed that even if the first physiological movements of passion were involuntary, the cognitive aspects of emotion could be made holy through the application of rational willpower in accordance with the cardinal virtues.<sup>117</sup> A soul guided by divinely-inspired reason could transcend earthly passions and experience emotions as “‘acts of the will’ (*actus voluntatis*)” as God and the angels do.<sup>118</sup> However, unlike Augustine, Aquinas did not see reason as a strict taskmaster standing over the passions with whip in hand; rather, he believed they were interdependent. Passions were created by God to instinctively guide human reason towards the good (and thus towards God), while reason in turn keeps the passions well-ordered and prevents them from taking over.<sup>119</sup> In this way, humans are (theoretically) able to maintain a healthy balance within themselves as well as healthy relationships with God and their fellow men.

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114. Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions*, 43.

115. Dixon, 55.

116. Jean Delumeau, *Sin and Fear: The Emergence of a Western Guilt Culture, 13th-18th Centuries*, trans. Eric Nicholson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 40.

117. Peter King, “Emotions,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 216-217.

118. Martin Pickavé, “Emotions,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Ethics*, ed. Thomas Williams (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 261.

119. Nicholas E. Lombardo, “Emotions and Psychological Health in Aquinas,” in *Emotions and Health, 1200-1700*, ed. Elena Carrera (Boston: Brill, 2013), 35-40.

Though we may think today of Aquinas as quintessentially medieval, his deeply Aristotelian views continued to be a major touchstone for Renaissance humanists' understandings of emotion. For example, in trying to convince his friend not to withdraw into a monastery, Salutati argues against Stoic-influenced asceticism, writing that human affections are "fundamental to social life," and that in fact certain situations – such as a great tragedy – *requires* a person to have an emotional reaction if they wish to live virtuously.<sup>120</sup> For instance, failing to shed a tear for a friend in distress would indicate not only a lack of ethics but an absence of humanity. At the same time, humanists emphasized an Aristotelian prudence in emotional expression. Excessive or inappropriate emotion could be impolitic and dangerously disruptive to a society which relied so heavily on carefully curated social networks on the streets and in courts.<sup>121</sup>

Platonist and Neoplatonist traditions offered yet more options to eclectic humanist thought. Plato, like Aristotle, believed that emotions were natural, and that reason must be used to manage them. However, Plato's view of the passions was far less optimistic than Aristotle's, framing them as inherently violent rather than inherently rational, and he accordingly favoured repression over moderation.<sup>122</sup> A peaceful life was only possible if the rational head ruled over the rebellious heart with an iron fist. Plato's fairly negative appraisal of the emotions would go on to influence both the Stoics and early

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120. Richard Strier, "Against the Rule of Reason: Praise of Passion from Petrarch to Luther to Shakespeare to Herbert," in *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotions*, ed. Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, and Mary Floyd-Wilson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 25.

121. Martin, "Inventing Sincerity," 19; James, "Passions and the Good Life," 198.

122. Simo Knuutila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 5; Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, 35.

Neoplatonists, though Neoplatonist theologians like Augustine was cautiously optimistic about “holy affections guided by the will,” that is, emotions inspired by or directed towards God.<sup>123</sup>

Surprisingly, Marsilio Ficino, the most well-known Neoplatonist of the Italian Renaissance, promoted a considerably more enthusiastic and tolerant opinion of which emotions were virtuous. He appropriated both theological and Aristotelian arguments to augment his Neoplatonism with a decidedly positive attitude towards the potential of emotions such as love and joy. While other Neoplatonic theologians such as Augustine promoted an almost silent divine ecstasy as the ideal expression of joy (a joy which, of course, was centred entirely on God), Ficino argued that the more human expressions of joy, such as smiling and laughing, were not only licit but divine in and of themselves.<sup>124</sup> Joyous, “gracious” laughter was a microcosmic manifestation of the procreative “laughter” of the universe, which engendered life itself.<sup>125</sup> Laughter could also be correctly utilized to ridicule bad behaviour and thus serve as a form of correction.<sup>126</sup> However, Ficino also warns against “a long, immoderate laughter,” which could be harmful to the body.<sup>127</sup> He would furthermore also warn Lorenzo against any demonstration

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123. Katrin Ettenhuber, “‘Tears of Passion’ and ‘Inordinate Lamentation’: Complicated Grief in Donne and Augustine,” in *Passions and Subjectivity in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Brian Cummings and Freya Sierhuis (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2013), 203.

124. Marjorie O’Rourke Boyle, “Gracious Laughter: Marsilio Ficino’s Anthropology,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (Autumn, 1999): 729.

125. O’Rourke Boyle, 722-723.

126. O’Rourke Boyle, 720.

127. Marsilio Ficino, *Three Books on Life*, ed. and trans. Carol V. Kaske and John R. Clark (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, with the Renaissance Society of America, 1987), 189.

of taking pleasure in things which displease God.<sup>128</sup> This would suggest that Ficino believed there were forms of “ungracious” laughter which comes from illicit pleasures, such as listening to sacrilegious jokes.

Ficino’s concern over which types of laughter were best is indicative of a new trend in Renaissance thought, as philosophers and theologians began further categorizing emotions into various types and subtypes, some of which they deemed holy and socially appropriate and others which were sinful and detrimental to society. While carefully distinguishing the types of licit and illicit emotions was of course not new, the Renaissance saw an intensified discussion about the very specific ways humans can – and should – feel.<sup>129</sup> Ficino, for example, saw love as “the active creative principle” on both a divine and a natural level.<sup>130</sup> For him, this passion was a manifestation within the human soul of a divine truth, thus opening a route for the soul to ascend through human love into divine love and divine understanding. The highest and purest form of human love – and the best way of approaching divine truth – was the emotional, homoerotic bond between men.<sup>131</sup> Ficino was careful to distinguish this from outright sodomy, insisting that the ideal Platonic love affair was a chaste one. It was also decidedly male: relationships between men and women were good in that they led to procreation, but they were also

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128. Ficino to Lorenzo de’ Medici, *Divine Lettere*, trans. Felice Figliucci (Venice: Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, 1546), 1:189v-190r.

129. For example, Aquinas carefully differentiated between “types” of licit and illicit love. See Peter King, “Emotions,” 221.

130. Joseph Milne, “Ficino on the Nature of Love and the Beautiful,” in *Friend to Mankind: Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499)*, ed. Michael Shepherd (London: Shephard-Walwyn, 1999), 79.

131. Jill Kraye, “The Transformation of Platonic Love in the Italian Renaissance,” in *Platonism and the English Imagination*, ed. Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 83.

bound to physical appetites and thus lower.<sup>132</sup> Sexuality of any kind – heterosexual or homosexual – was thus a pollutant that prevented love’s ascent. Women, being lesser reflections of the divine than men, were also simply not suitable companions for a journey into heavenly love: their bodies and souls were too different from men’s.

Lorenzo would be deeply influenced by Ficino’s interpretation of Platonic love. His poetic adaptation of Ficino’s prose reflects the process by which the loving tutelage of wiser, older men leads younger men to an understanding of the Divine and contributes to the sanctification of both. In his non-religious works, however, he would go considerably off-script and apply Neoplatonist ideas to women and sexuality. Lorenzo’s comedic poetry frequently turns pornographic, but in his love poems he combines Neoplatonist concepts with *dolce stil novo* tropes to creatively portray sexual intercourse as a foundation from which one can ascend to the heavens via the praise and worship of feminine beauty.<sup>133</sup> For Lorenzo, the joy and love felt in the presence of a mistress is itself a manifestation of the divine within the human. While he was strongly influenced by the philosophical ideas of his inner circle, Lorenzo clearly also felt free to play with those ideas in ways that the philosophers and theologians of the day may not have considered entirely licit.

Medicine offered yet another set of perspectives on the emotions. In traditional Galenic humouralism, emotions were the product of “movements in the systems of the liver and the heart which affect other functions of the

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132. Krave, 83-84.

133. Krave, 84.



inner systems.”<sup>134</sup> Humans could fall into one of four humoral types – phlegmatic, melancholic, sanguine, and choleric – which predisposed them to certain personality traits and emotional patterns.<sup>135</sup> A type could be inherent to the individual in question, and people of all types could live healthy, fulfilling lives with the appropriately balanced regimens of food, exercise, and other activities.

At the same time, a person’s humoral balance could be subject to change from external influences, both the uncontrollable (illnesses or changes in season) and the controllable (daily habits and activities). This could be a source of danger, such as when scholars – who already tended to be melancholics by nature – drove themselves into imbalanced (and thus unhealthy) melancholy via excessive study.<sup>136</sup> However, it was also possible to manipulate the humours for the sake of healing, because it meant that a change in scenery, diet, or behaviour could lead to an improvement in troublesome symptoms.<sup>137</sup> Even emotions themselves had the potential to influence the humours, just as the humours influenced emotions. This could occur if an individual felt “excessive emotions,” such as when a moment of extreme grief might plunge someone into deep melancholy.<sup>138</sup> At the same time, humoral imbalances could be corrected by practicing healthy emotional

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134. Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 97.

135. Angus Gowland, “Melancholy, Passions and Identity in the Renaissance,” in *Passions and Subjectivity*, 80.

136. Cavallo and Storey, *Healthy Living*, 186; see also Ficino, *The Book of Life*, trans. Charles Boer (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1980), 6-7.

137. Cavallo and Storey, *Healthy Living*, 190.

138. Knuuttila, *Emotions*, 96-97.

habits, such as avoiding unnecessarily distressing sights or regularly engaging in pleasant and edifying conversations.<sup>139</sup>

Like philosophers and theologians, doctors began to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy forms of emotion. As stated above, from a medical point of view Ficino believed that excessive laughter could strain the body beyond its natural limits. Anger, meanwhile, could be dangerous to health and safety for the simple fact that it often moved people (young men, especially) to make rash, risky decisions.<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, “the excessive heat produced by anger” could create an opening for sicknesses such as the plague.<sup>141</sup> However, the relative health of a given emotion was far more dependent on the bodily constitution of the patient in question. For instance, “a patient suffering from inflammation of the liver and the spleen should avoid excessive anger,” as its heat could seriously exacerbate their problem.<sup>142</sup> On the other hand, the dry heat created by anger could be therapeutic and strengthening for those with a “weak or sluggish” body or an overabundance of wet, cold humours.<sup>143</sup> Similar effects could be achieved through exercise, laughter and amusing conversations with friends, or listening to invigorating music.<sup>144</sup>

Renaissance doctors and scholars added their own findings and interpretations to the Galenic model, often informed by contemporary

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139. Cavallo and Storey, *Healthy Living*, 191.

140. Carrera, “Anger and the Mind-Body Connection in Medieval and Early Modern Medicine,” in *Emotions and Health*, 102.

141. Carrera, 135.

142. Carrera, 139.

143. Carrera, 140-141.

144. Carrera, 136.

philosophy and Catholic theology. Melancholy in particular posed a significant problem for Catholic doctors, who linked it with original sin: “All diseases were commonly thought to be consequences of the Fall ... but melancholy especially so expressed ....”<sup>145</sup> Melancholy was an embodied illness, caused by an excess of black bile which physically afflicted the brain, but it was simultaneously a uniquely psychic (and thus spiritual) illness which impeded human reason.<sup>146</sup> If reason is the means by which humans manage their passions and attain virtue, then an impaired sense of reason threatens dire ethical and spiritual consequences. Meanwhile, Renaissance physicians described the ideal human condition as *allegrezza*, a cheerful and balanced sense of contentment that could be attained (and maintained) both through good habits and by dwelling on delightful things.<sup>147</sup>

At the same time, however, views of health were still heavily influenced by astrology. Ficino and his philosophical heir, Pico della Mirandola, used arguments based in astrology to somewhat redeem melancholy from its negative connotations. Though they still accepted that melancholy brought health risks of its own and was harmful in abundance, they believed that melancholia’s Saturnine nature imbued the afflicted with “the aptitude for the investigation of the highest secrets.”<sup>148</sup> In other words, melancholy is a mark of genius. To keep a balance with Saturn’s deleterious effects, however, melancholic geniuses were encouraged to seek out the influences of Apollo and Jupiter.<sup>149</sup> Influenced by both Ficino and Pico,

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145. Gowland, “Melancholy,” 86.

146. Gowland, 77, 81.

147. Cavallo and Storey, *Healthy Living*, 183-185.

148. Delumeau, *Sin and Fear*, 173.

149. Delumeau, 174.

Lorenzo took up this idea and once again made it his own. He would explicitly connect his poetic leanings to his melancholic nature, and even label himself a Saturnian, doubly burdened by melancholy and genius.<sup>150</sup> Indeed, his astrological and Galenic diagnosis as a melancholic Saturnian may have influenced doctors' analyses of his final illness: according to Poliziano, the ailing Lorenzo suffered from debilitating "hypochondriac" pains from deep within his abdomen.<sup>151</sup> The hypochondrium, or "the abdominal organs," was the seat of melancholy's black bile: "Thus melancholy," writes Delumeau, "is essentially an illness of the abdominal area ... from where toxic emissions travel to the brain."<sup>152</sup> From the point of view of Renaissance medicine, then, the Saturnine aspects which granted Lorenzo his genius may also have been what ultimately killed him.

It is likely that Lorenzo would have been at least somewhat exposed to the above conceptions about emotions, even those which contradicted one another. He no doubt imbibed the disparate ideas of various traditions from tutors, family members, doctors, preachers, and even popular culture. He was educated, but philosophy was not his greatest passion, so it is unclear how accurately he could have attributed his own preconceptions about emotion to their respective traditions, but that does not negate their influence. Even if he was not actively "aware" of them per se, he was nevertheless affected by their ubiquitous presence throughout Renaissance Florentine culture. It is also probable that he took in at least some of these concepts consciously; Ficino's

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150. Delumeau, 173.

151. Angelo Poliziano to Iacopo Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, ed. and trans. Shane Butler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 1:228.

152. Delumeau, *Sin and Fear*, 171.

*Three Books on Life*, for example, were dedicated to him, and he likely read at least some of them, or was otherwise exposed to Ficino's ideas through their conversations.

Furthermore, Lorenzo's emotions – or at the very least his expression of emotions – were from his childhood the object of constant scrutiny from members of his household, fellow Florentines, and foreign diplomats. As the heir apparent – and then the leader – of the first house of the Florentine Republic, he had to carefully curate his behaviour as he navigated the “small face-to-face society” of his time, to borrow Dale Kent's words.<sup>153</sup> The delicate machinations of Florentine – and indeed Italian – politics required a certain level of dissimulation and inscrutability in order to keep things running smoothly. Cosimo and Piero seem to have mastered this art, though excessive calm apparently incurred some criticism: in their later years, some described them both as “*uomini freddi*,” men so devoted to maintaining calm that they appeared avoidant and even cowardly.<sup>154</sup> Lorenzo's hot, youthful passions would provide quite the contrast, even though he worked hard (and usually succeeded) at maintaining public decorum.

Throughout his youth and even into his adulthood, his elders would carefully instruct Lorenzo on how he was to display emotions like mirth, sorrow, and anger so that he would not bring shame upon his house or city. Until his death, his “youthful” persona cast his emotional maturity into doubt, which required him to work all the harder at conscientiously expressing his feelings in word, action, gesture, and facial expression. As we shall see, even

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153. Dale Kent, “Illegitimate and Legitimizing Passions in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Political Discourses,” *Cultural and Social History* 2, no. 1 (2005): 49.

154. Dale Kent, 59.

those who depended on him for protection and a livelihood were keenly alert to Lorenzo's every emotional movement, for a moment of annoyance could potentially mean the ruin of their career. Ambassadors, too, made a careful study of his facial expressions and gestures in their reports. Indeed, the letters of Guidone Aldrovandini to his employer Ercole d'Este reflect the considerable struggle Lorenzo sometimes had in controlling his temper in public.<sup>155</sup> This increased obligation may have been an element of the political "burden" (*fatica*) which I shall analyse in Chapter Two.

At the same time, however, it is important to note with Konstan that "in no society are the emotions, either severally or as a whole, understood in a uniform way across time and place or class and gender."<sup>156</sup> Lorenzo's understandings of the emotions would have been strongly influenced by the various traditions informing his culture, but even then they were highly malleable. Lorenzo and his contemporaries were able (to an extent) to pick and choose which concepts they agreed with, accepting some and discarding others depending on situation and need. They also were able to adapt and manipulate these ideas for their own purposes according to the circumstances, as we have seen Lorenzo do above. Finally, they may have formed their own ideas about the emotions based on their personal experiences and

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155. "egli stette un pezzo che non poté aprir bocca di agonia e stizza ...." Guidone Aldrovandini to Ercole d'Este, 20 November, 1486, quoted in "Lettere di Lorenzo de' Medici detto il Magnifico conservate nell'Archivio Palatino di Modena con Notizie tratte dai carteggi diplomatici degli oratori estensi a Firenze," in *Atti e memorie delle RR. Deputazioni di Storia Patria per le provincie Modenesi e Parmensi*, ed. Antonio Cappelli (Modena: Carlo Vincenzi, 1863), 1:63; "e mi voltò le spalle .... Io il volsi vedere per intendere quello che volea dire: non vi fu rimedio: non mi volse dire altro." Guidone Aldrovandini to Ercole d'Este, 7 July, 1487, quoted in "Lettere di Lorenzo," 1:66.

156. David Konstan, *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 261.

relationships, potentially rebelling against the conclusions of philosophy, theology, or medicine.

### Princely Masculinity

As the fifteenth century progressed, elite masculinity became uniquely identified with the concept of magnificence. While middle- and upper-class Florentine men had their own set of expectations for correct manly behaviour, Lorenzo's participation in an international circle of elite lords and princes meant that he had to balance the expectations of republican Florentine masculinity with those of princely masculinity. While this thesis will primarily focus on Lorenzo's interactions with men close to home in Florence, his international role as an unofficial lord was not neatly separated from that of his local role as an elite Florentine man. The two bled into one another, and indeed he likely would have viewed them as intrinsically connected. As such, his conduct as a man always carried the extra burden of the need to be magnificent.

In response to the economic boom occurring in late Trecento and Quattrocento Florence, and the fast growth of a new class of ultra-wealthy mercantile families, Bishop Antonino defined magnificence as “‘the making great of man,’ who, ‘outstanding in rank’ (*nobilissima*), was to be honoured.”<sup>157</sup> However, great wealth did not automatically confer magnificence. Rather, Antonino believed that men achieved magnificence when they used their wealth responsibly in ways which promoted the honour of God and the good of the republic. Under this definition, building projects – not only of churches and hospitals, but also political and private structures

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157. Peter Howard, “Preaching Magnificence in Renaissance Florence,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 333.

– became the chief way men could use their wealth to build their magnificence.<sup>158</sup> Personal magnificence was thus inextricably tied to the magnificence of the *città* at large. Inspired by Aristotelian and Thomistic views, the appropriate use of money would remain an important aspect of magnificence for years to come. This, however, did not mean the hoarding of money; rather, it “became the mean between baseness or vulgarity ... and over-refined or inappropriate forms of expenditure.”<sup>159</sup> Magnificent men were willing to exchange money for quality and craftsmanship, and the admiration their investments generated fed back into their personal magnificence while also bolstering that of their family or fellow citizens. This, in turn, helped to create the vibrant patronage network that stretched across Italy, and inextricably linked magnificence to the patronage of skilled artists and craftsmen.

According to Peter Howard, Florence’s more communally-minded definition of magnificence stood in stark contrast with that of the “Northern Italian territorial states,” whose “notion of magnificence was appropriated to impress the populace with the splendour and power of a particular despot ...”<sup>160</sup> Duke Ercole I d’Este of Ferrara, for example, built up his ducal magnificence by fostering an air of sanctified distance and formality, setting himself apart from the populace.<sup>161</sup> In Milan, Galeazzo Maria Sforza quite

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158. Howard, 337, 355.

159. Evelyn Welch, “Public Magnificence and Private Display: Giovanni Pontano’s *De splendore* (1498) and the Domestic Arts,” *Journal of Design History* 15, no. 4 (2002): 214-15.

160. Peter Howard, “Preaching Magnificence,” 358.

161. Joseph Manca, “The Presentation of a Renaissance Lord: Portraiture of Ercole I d’Este, Duke of Ferrara (1471-1505),” *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 52, no. 4 (1989): 523-24.



literally wore his magnificence on his sleeve: splendour was defined by the glittering, adorned bodies of the duke and his courtiers, all of them dressed in fashionably extravagant clothes.<sup>162</sup>

Howard suggests that the Florentine situation changed with Lorenzo, who in the latter half of his life pushed his definition of magnificence closer to that of his authoritarian neighbours.<sup>163</sup> However, this is not entirely accurate: evidence indicates that Medicean magnificence began shifting towards princely styles well before Cosimo il Vecchio died. Furthermore, even as he participated in specifically princely styles of magnificence, Lorenzo carefully managed his magnificence so that he could stand among princes without compromising his image as a good republican. Like the lords and princes with whom he brushed shoulders, his magnificence was deeply gendered, intertwined not only with his reputation as a patron and politician, but as the worthy *pater* of both his house and homeland.

As men controlled the majority of Renaissance Italy's growing wealth, good financial stewardship became a mark of responsible, mature masculinity. This was even more true for lords and princes, who controlled an incredible amount of wealth compared to the average Italian man. As magnificence became increasingly associated with splendid investments, so did manhood: indeed, "the splendid man had to be prepared to pay an appropriate sum in order to ensure that his goods were copious, rare and elegant."<sup>164</sup> As this ideal of magnificence grew to encompass not only the

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162. Timothy McCall, "Brilliant Bodies: Material Culture and the Adornment of Men in North Italy's Quattrocento Courts," *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 16, no. 1 (September 2013): 451.

163. Peter Howard, "Preaching Magnificence," 360.

164. Welch, "Public Magnificence," 215.

construction of palaces but also the objects one put inside those palaces, elite men across Italy began to demonstrate their magnificence – and thus their masculinity – through the collection and display of beautiful things. A varied, rich collection was a demonstration not only of wealth and wise investment, but of power, influence, and good social skills, as collectors had to make use of a far-reaching social network in order to acquire such a vast range of treasures.<sup>165</sup> Collectors lent and gifted objects to one another as means of cementing diplomatic ties, and the recipients would display the gifts – which had frequently been marked with the giver’s coat-of-arms – as reminders to others of these powerful associations.<sup>166</sup>

Eva Helfenstein attributes the Renaissance enthusiasm for treasure-collecting to the royal courts of France and Burgundy. King Charles V of France would set aside time each afternoon “to entertain and delight himself by looking at precious objects,” which were kept in his private study.<sup>167</sup> This, she writes, filtered down into Italy through “the Visconti and Sforza courts of Milan, geographically close and well-connected through marriage alliances with northern courts ....”<sup>168</sup> While most well-to-do Florentines in the early Quattrocento (including Cosimo il Vecchio) had respectable collections of fine silver, it had become fashionable for the lords and princes of northern courts to collect “jewels, furs, ... exotic *naturalia*” and “hardstone vessels”

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165. Leah R. Clark, “Collecting, Exchange, and Sociability in the Renaissance *Studiolo*,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 25, no. 2 (2013): 173.

166. Leah R. Clark, 175.

167. Christine de Pizan, *Le Livre des Faits et Bonnes Moeurs du roi Charles V le Sage*, ed. and trans. Eric Hicks and Thérèse Moreau (Paris: Stock, 1997), 67-68, quoted in Eva Helfenstein, “Lorenzo de’ Medici’s Magnificent Cups: Precious Vessels as Status Symbols in Fifteenth-Century Europe,” *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 16, no. 1 (September 2013): 430. Translation by Hicks and Moreau.

168. Helfenstein, 424.

meticulously carved from rare, fine stone.<sup>169</sup> Piero il Gottoso, Lorenzo's father, was the first to break from tradition in favour of imitating these northern princes. Piero would, like King Charles, spend time in his study (*studiolo*) "[taking] great pleasure and delight" in examining his collection and meditating on the artistry of the pieces.<sup>170</sup> Piero's treasures would go on to become the seeds of a collection that would grow to a staggering size under Lorenzo, whose *studiolo* collection became a testament to the "kingly splendour" (*regii splendoris*) of a man who was never a royal at all.<sup>171</sup>

Cecil Clough has suggested that the intensely private and personal nature of the princely *studiolo* indicates that the décor and contents of the *studiolo* "were not intended to impress subjects, or visitors, with the ruler's 'Magnificence' and all its implications," but were rather to foster his own contemplation and study.<sup>172</sup> However, I would argue that the treasures of the princely *studiolo* – for example, the portraits of illustrious men lining the walls of Duke Federico da Montefeltro's study – were not solely for the ruler to contemplate and learn from their qualities, but additionally for him to remind himself of his own magnificence. By surrounding himself with princely artefacts and the faces of great men, the lord created a space in which he could place himself among them as an image of authority. This would have been an important function of the study for *condottieri*-turned-rulers like

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169. Helfenstein, 419-20, 429.

170. John R. Spencer, ed. and trans., *Filarete's Treatise on Architecture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965), 2:187r. Translation by Spencer.

171. Bernardo Rucellai, *De bello Italico commentarius* (London: William Bowyer, 1733), 53.

172. Cecil H. Clough, "Art as Power in the Decoration of the Study of an Italian Renaissance Prince: The Case of Federico da Montefeltro," *Artibus et Historiae* 16, no. 31 (1995): 22.

Federico da Montefeltro or Ercole d'Este, who frequently sought out ways to legitimise their newfound authority in the eyes of all – including their own. This was no doubt attractive to both Piero and Lorenzo as well, as they each pushed their ambitions beyond those of humble bankers.

While elite women could have their own private studies, or might participate in the culture of art collection, the *studiolo* was by and large a highly masculine space, and it was used to build specifically elite masculine social networks. The contents of the *studiolo* thus became a way for youthful regimes to assert their elite masculinity and magnificence specifically to one another. When lords and princes visited one another's palaces, a visit to the *studiolo* was usually on the itinerary. Galeazzo Maria Sforza was invited by Piero to admire the contents of the Palazzo Medici *studiolo*, and Cardinal Giovanni of Aragon received a similar tour of the same room by Lorenzo decades later. A special selection of objects of interest was also assembled on a table outside of the small *studiolo*, where these illustrious visitors and their courtiers could more comfortably spend time admiring and commenting on the pieces. This, too, was in imitation of royal courts to the north, from Milan all the way to Brussels.<sup>173</sup>

However, Helfenstein has noted that unlike these northern lords, who on special occasions would display some of their finest pieces in the more public rooms of their palaces, Piero and Lorenzo generally only publicly displayed the fine silver pieces traditional for wealthy Florentine families.<sup>174</sup> The open display of such kingly finery for all to see would have been taken by fellow Florentines as a sign of tyrannical aspirations unsuited to a republic.

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173. Helfenstein, "Magnificent Cups," 431-32.

174. Helfenstein, 442.

The table full of artefacts mentioned above was, notably, only set out for select elite visitors from out of town. Though Piero and Lorenzo pushed the boundary of what was acceptable for a good Florentine republican, they could thus simultaneously cultivate a more elitist, international sense of magnificence with princely visitors.

While Lorenzo kept his most “princely” objects stored in his study, the rest of his palace was filled with objects that advertised his power and magnificence without overtly crossing the line into despotic symbolism. He displayed his long reach by decorating his home with objects from all over the world, including as far away as China.<sup>175</sup> In his rooms on the ground floor, which also served as a sort of office, he displayed images of the dukes of Milan and Urbino, thus reminding visitors of his powerful friends. Featured prominently on the walls was the three-panel painting of Uccello’s *Battle of San Romano*, which effectively set him against the backdrop of Florentine military might.<sup>176</sup> The main room (*sala grande*) of the *piano nobile* upstairs, which would have been used for a variety of social purposes, was festooned with “Seven shields with a number of arms and guilds and of the Medici.”<sup>177</sup> This in and of itself was not altogether unusual, but Piero – whose décor stayed in place during Lorenzo’s lifetime – had also hung paintings depicting St John the Baptist and caged lions, both symbols of Florence. Also decorating the walls of this sala were a series of paintings depicting the labours of Hercules, which Stapleford suggests may have been meant to

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175. Richard Stapleford, trans., *Lorenzo de’ Medici at Home: The Inventory of the Palazzo Medici in 1492* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013), 74.

176. Stapleford, 71.

177. Stapleford, 86.

represent “the Herculean efforts of the Medici family in its leadership of the Florentine state.”<sup>178</sup> The Medici would not be the only Italian leaders to use a Herculean motif. Ercole d’Este, whose name gave him a special affinity for the Greek demigod, also frequently invoked these myths in his self-construction as a powerful and dignified ruler.<sup>179</sup> It is safe to assume that the Medici were also hoping to cultivate an association with these qualities.

Elite masculinity was not only cultivated through magnificent possessions, but also participating in magnificent activities. Noble manhood throughout much of Europe was at this time highly influenced by chivalric ideals, which, even among non-knights, were best expressed from atop a horse. Though warfare in Italy – and especially in Florence – had largely shifted to hiring *condottieri*, “Italian noblemen worked increasingly hard to preserve the chivalric identity their class had acquired at the height of knighthood,” including knightly “riding traditions.”<sup>180</sup> Nobles were expected to have well-equipped stables full of “well-bred and well-trained horses,” and to know how to use them.<sup>181</sup> However, this was not a closed tradition; as more and more families gained the economic standing to afford stables of their own, the mercantile *nouveau-riche* began appropriating chivalric trappings for themselves by participating in such traditions. Horsemanship was thus an essential part of education for any upper-class young man, often starting with

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178. Stapleford, 20-21.

179. See Manca, “Presentation,” 525; Tim Shephard, “A Mirror for Princes: The Ferrarese Mirror Frame in the V&A and the Instruction of Heirs,” *Journal of Design History* 26, no. 1 (2013): 107-108.

180. Mackenzie Cooley, “Marketing Nobility: Horsemanship in Renaissance Italy,” in *Animals and Courts: Europe, c. 1200-1800*, ed. Mark Hengerer and Nadir Weber (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019), 115-16.

181. Cooley, 111.

ponies in boyhood.<sup>182</sup> Lorenzo himself learned to ride early and maintained a passion for horses and horsemanship throughout his life.<sup>183</sup> Indeed, in his waning months, he would advise his son Giovanni that a well-managed household was marked, first and foremost, by a “beautiful stable” (*bella stalla*).<sup>184</sup>

Owning and riding horses was one mark of nobility, but the elite participated in other equestrian activities as well. The Gonzaga built up the magnificence of their court through a vibrant business of breeding and trading horses, especially racehorses.<sup>185</sup> In fact, only the wealthiest families could afford to import, own, and breed the animals that competed in the famed *palio* races. This circle included not only members of the Gonzaga family, but the Este, Malatesta, and Strozzi families, as well as the kings of Naples.<sup>186</sup> However, this too created avenues for wealthy non-nobles like Lorenzo to take on the trappings of nobility and elevate themselves, both among their fellow elite horse owners and the cheering crowds. This may partly explain why he became so intensely competitive in this venture.<sup>187</sup>

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182. Lorenzo, for example, apparently promised his son Piero that the then-eight-year-old boy could have a pony of his own if he did well in his studies. See Piero il Fatuo to Lorenzo de' Medici, 26 May, 1479, in *Letterine d'un bambino fiorentino alunno di messer Angelo Ambrogini Poliziano*, ed. del Lungo (Florence: Tipi dell'Arte della Stampa, 1887), 17.

183. See Mario Martelli, “Nelle stalle di Lorenzo,” *Archivio storico italiano* 150, no. 2 (April-June 1992): 267-302; Michael Mallett, “Horse-Racing and Politics in Lorenzo's Florence,” in *Lorenzo de' Medici: Culture and Politics*, ed. Mallett and Nicholas Mann (London: Warburg Institute, 1996), 253-62.

184. Lorenzo de' Medici to Giovanni de' Medici, 1492, quoted in Angelo Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis Magnifici Vita* (Pisa: Jacobus Gratiolius, 1784), 2:311.

185. Cooley, “Marketing Nobility,” 112-13.

186. Elizabeth MacKenzie Tobey, “The *Palio* in Italian Renaissance Art, Thought, and Culture” (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2005), 243-44.

187. See Francis William Kent, *Lorenzo de' Medici and the Art of Magnificence* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 129-30.

Fine racehorses made excellent diplomatic gifts, which allowed elite men – for indeed, it was almost always men – to strengthen bonds with one another while also demonstrating their prowess at buying and breeding. The Gonzaga, for example, exchanged gift horses with “the French, Spanish, and English [courts].”<sup>188</sup> Ferdinand I of Naples, upon learning that Lorenzo had “affection” (*affectione*) for his horses Fals’amico and Abruzese, sent both to Lorenzo, alongside a heavy hint that more such gifts would be sent to Florence should Lorenzo send aid to Naples in its fight against the Turks.<sup>189</sup> Elite horse-owners would enter their prize horses into *palio* races against one another, and in this way engage in more-or-less friendly competition with their rivals while demonstrating the might of their own magnificent stables. This reflected well on themselves and their houses, which in turn served political ends: as he petitioned Rome to make his son Giovanni a cardinal, for example, Lorenzo entered his horses into Roman races.<sup>190</sup>

Of course, owners did not compete in races themselves; this was left to jockeys. Regardless, they still counted the wins as theirs, as they were responsible for financing and directing the winning steeds’ breeding and training. The horses and their jockeys wore the owners’ colours, and the owners collected the trophies.<sup>191</sup> Lorenzo mounted seven trophies from the races of San Giovanni on candelabra in his ground-floor bedroom and placed four more on the bedstead.<sup>192</sup> There was yet another trophy in his room on the

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188. Tobey, “The *Palio*,” 259.

189. See Luigi Pulci to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 27 February, 1471, in *Lettere di Luigi Pulci a Lorenzo il Magnifico* (Lucca: Tipografia Giusti, 1868), 47-50.

190. Mallett, “Horse-Racing,” 259.

191. Tobey, “The *Palio*,” 244.

192. Stapleford, *Lorenzo de’ Medici at Home*, 71-72.



*piano nobile*, but it is notable that the bulk of them had been incorporated into the décor of the ground floor room, where it was more likely that others might see them.<sup>193</sup>

Other displays of physical prowess, including weapons proficiency and hunting, were essential pursuits for noblemen.<sup>194</sup> Like equestrian sports, the Renaissance saw these activities becoming more accessible to non-nobles who hoped to raise their social status by participating in traditionally chivalric pastimes. However, they remained mostly limited to those of means, as weaponry, armour, hounds, hawks, and other essential equipment could be staggeringly expensive. Horses, of course, were frequently used for these activities as well, setting the price of participation yet higher.

Generally, jousts and other ritualised armed feats were associated with young men, whose hot blood predisposed them to violence. Ritual violence gave elite youths a healthy outlet for their antisocial urges while allowing them to prove their masculinity and win honour and prestige.<sup>195</sup> As I will mention later, jousts were held in honour of both Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano as they reached the cusp of adult manhood. Though Lorenzo downplays his performance at his own joust, participation in these activities remained a point of pride for the men of the family: at Lorenzo's death,

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193. Stapleford, 88.

194. Heide Wunder, "Construction of Masculinity and Male Identity in Personal Testimonies: Hans von Schweinichen (1552-1616) in His *Memorial*," in *Time, Space, and Women's Lives in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anne Jacobson Schutte, Thomas Kuehn, and Silvana Seidel Menchi (Kirkville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2001), 319; Cooley, "Marketing Nobility," 114.

195. Stephanie R. Miller, "Parenting in the Palazzo: Images and Artifacts of Children in the Italian Renaissance Home," in *The Early Modern Italian Domestic Interior, 1400-1700: Objects, Spaces, Domesticities*, ed. Erin J. Campbell, Stephanie R. Miller, and Elizabeth Carroll Consavari (London: Routledge, 2013), 79; Maria DePrano, "*Chi vuol esser lieto, sia*: Objects of Entertainment in the Tornabuoni Palace in Florence," in Campbell, Stephanie R. Miller, and Consavari, 130-31.

jousting prizes and mementos – including helmets, lances, and banners – decorated the walls of his teenaged sons’ bedrooms.<sup>196</sup> The walls of his youngest son, Giuliano (the future Duke of Nemours) were also decorated with a set of *spalliera* paintings “depicting the story of the joust of Lorenzo” in 1469.<sup>197</sup> These may have hung on Giuliano’s walls not only to remind him of his father’s valiant deeds, but to encourage him to follow in those footsteps as he grew into manhood. Meanwhile, Lorenzo’s eldest son, Piero il Fatuo, had an entire armoury of his own, in which he stored not only his own jousting armour and weapons, but also those of his deceased uncle Giuliano.<sup>198</sup>

Elite men not only wielded weapons against one another, they also wielded them against animals while enjoying the “‘virile’ recreations” of “hunting and hawking.”<sup>199</sup> Hunting could be just as dangerous as a joust: hunters could be thrown from horses, wounded in accidents with weapons, or even attacked by their prey. This recreation thus acted as a further proof of manhood, both to oneself and one’s companions. Hunting scenes thus became a favourite theme of princely art and a “standard form of palace decoration” in the dwellings of rulers like the Duke of Burgundy, Alberto d’Este, Borso d’Este, and Gian Galeazzo Visconti.<sup>200</sup> Lorenzo had a deep love of falconry – which shall come into play in Chapter Four – but his inventory indicates an interest in hunting as well. His household inventory contains various hunting paraphernalia, including boar-hunting spears, bird snares, and “a hood for a

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196. Stapleford, *Lorenzo de’ Medici at Home*, 135, 143.

197. Stapleford, 135.

198. Stapleford, 151-56.

199. Doran, “Monarchy and Masculinity,” 206.

200. Welch, “Galeazzo Maria Sforza and the Castello di Pavia, 1469,” *The Art Bulletin* 71, no. 3 (September 1989): 361, 367.

sparrow hawk.”<sup>201</sup> Also listed are “Three antlers trimmed in silver,” which may have been keepsakes from successful deer hunts, and a brass horn.<sup>202</sup>

Even once he became too infirm to participate in such strenuous activities, he continued to fill his home with the princely art of the hunt. Multiple palace tapestries depicted scenes of hunts and tournaments, including one which depicted the Duke of Burgundy hunting, tying Lorenzo to this northern ally in their shared love of a royal pastime.<sup>203</sup> Even his ground floor bedroom emphasised his love of these activities: his bed-curtains were arranged to look like a tent, and the matching set was “embroidered with herons and falcons.”<sup>204</sup> Well-bred hunting dogs were prized companions for princes, and frequently appeared in hunting scenes in rulers’ palaces. In 1472, Galeazzo Maria Sforza became obsessed with greyhounds and, knowing that Lorenzo owned some of fine quality, hoped that the latter might gift him with “a couple” that were “beautiful and good.”<sup>205</sup> Presumably, he wanted to breed his own from Lorenzo’s stock. Lorenzo appears to have enjoyed such canine companionship: his inventory lists items like a curtain for a dog’s door and a dog bed, and his collection of treasures included four sets of gold brocade dog collars with matching silver leashes.<sup>206</sup>

Finally, elite men asserted their masculinity through love and sex. Ideally, the elite courtly male was not only “a perfect warrior,” but also “a

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201. Stapleford, *Lorenzo de’ Medici at Home*, 75, 106, 142, 177.

202. Stapleford, 70.

203. Stapleford, 67, 69.

204. Stapleford, 72.

205. Angelo della Stufa to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 27 June, 1470, MAP XXVI, 4, c.4 bis r, quoted in Welch, “Galeazzo Maria Sforza,” 374.

206. Stapleford, *Lorenzo de’ Medici at Home*, 69, 113, 159.

perfect servant” to a beloved lady.<sup>207</sup> Courtly masculinity was lived out through “debasement” and “temperance,” and a perfect nobleman wished for nothing more than to chastely serve his mistress.<sup>208</sup> Extramarital love was pure, while sex only occurred within the bounds of marriage. Reality rarely lived up to this romantic ideal: sexual affairs and dalliances were in fact incredibly common. Male elites like Galeazzo Maria and Ludovico Sforza frequently took mistresses, and Lorenzo was no different.<sup>209</sup> While the love between a lord and his mistress may frequently have been deeply sincere, these affairs also served the lord by cementing his image as a man.<sup>210</sup> Maria Maurer notes that some rulers “depicted themselves as men whose love for their mistresses demonstrated their spiritual and physical superiority.”<sup>211</sup> Federico II Gonzaga, for example, built his Palazzo Te not as a private hideaway for himself and his mistress, but as a masculine space in which he could demonstrate his prowess as a lover to other men, impressing them and “[facilitating] homosocial masculine bonding.”<sup>212</sup> Meanwhile, Francesco II Gonzaga exchanged “bawdy epistles” with his friends and associates to both cement his reputation as a virile lover and bond with his fellow men.

As I shall discuss in Chapters Two and Four, Lorenzo participated in similar rituals with other men, sharing and comparing romantic and sexual

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207. I. F. Moulton, “Castiglione: Love, Power, and Masculinity,” in *The Poetics of Masculinity in Early Modern Italy and Spain*, ed. G. Milligan and J. Tylus (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 130.

208. Moulton, 120, 134.

209. See Francis William Kent, “Love of Women,” 42-54.

210. Maria F. Maurer, “A Love that Burns: Eroticism, Torment and Identity at the Palazzo Te,” *Renaissance Studies* 30, no. 3 (June 2016): 372-73.

211. Maurer, 379.

212. Maurer, 371.

experiences in person, but also through the mediums of letters and poems. However, Lorenzo's tenuous, unofficial hold on authority meant that he had to be far more circumspect in his affairs than his lordly neighbours. As we shall see, libidinousness did not fit into the sober image of a mature patrician Florentine man, and critics would in fact use Lorenzo's sexual appetites as a mark against his capacity to lead.

Given that centuries later, Lorenzo still carries the nickname *il Magnifico*, it is safe to say that he succeeded in living up to the highly masculine idea of magnificence. However, his lack of official title or role set him apart from other elite males. He could take on the trappings of male nobility, but only up to a point. Adapting too many of these trappings would undermine his claim to be a simple Florentine citizen, and would, ironically, mean a loss of authority in his proudly republican city. As with much else in his life, he had to keep up a careful balancing act between acting as a lord when he was among foreign lords, but as a citizen among Florentines. This, in turn, entailed constructing a form of masculinity which could adapt easily to multiple audiences and their expectations.

### **Sources**

There are, thankfully, a wide variety of sources left to us from the early Medici, particularly from Lorenzo. He wrote prolifically, both in his own hand and via dictation. Additionally, I intend to use contemporary sources, both textual and visual, in order to get a more complete picture of the cultural world in which Lorenzo lived and moved. I will not be covering every source – or indeed type of source – that I intend on using for this dissertation. Instead, this is a presentation of the main sources on which I will be relying.

## Letters

For the purposes of this thesis, I will be relying mainly on letters circulated between Lorenzo and his inner circle. There are, thankfully, thousands of letters left to us from the early Medici and their cohort. A good number have been published in various volumes, making them easily accessible to the researcher. Of Lorenzo's letters alone, sixteen volumes have been published thus far.<sup>213</sup> Other, unpublished letters have also been made easily accessible thanks to digitization efforts by the Florentine Archivio di Stato and the Biblioteca Nazionale.<sup>214</sup>

Unfortunately, as Eric Ketelaar has noted, letters between officials or between clients and patrons tend to be preserved more often than the personal letters between family members or friends, and Lorenzo's letters are no exception.<sup>215</sup> Lorenzo's personal secretaries recorded at least 50,000 letters, if not more, sent out under Lorenzo's authority between the years of 1473 and 1492, and the vast majority have never been found.<sup>216</sup> Only a handful of Lorenzo's letters to his parents, for example, have been saved.

There are, however, some means of working around this deficiency. There are, for instance, published collections of letters written by Lorenzo's

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213. Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, 16 vols, ed. Nicolai Rubinstein et al. (Florence: Giunti, 1977-2011).

214. Francesca Klein et al., "Mediceo Avanti il Principato: Riproduzione digitale integrale del fondo Mediceo Avanti il Principato," Archivio di Stato di Firenze, accessed 27 July, 2019, <http://www.archiviodistato.firenze.it/map/>; "TECA BNCF - Manoscritti e Incunaboli," Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, accessed 27 July, 2019, <https://teca.bncf.firenze.sbn.it/manos/>.

215. Eric Ketelaar, "The Genealogical Gaze: Family Identities and Family Archives in the Fourteenth to Seventeenth Centuries," in "Personal Papers in History: Papers from the Third International Conference on the History of Records and Archives," ed. Barbara L. Craig, special issue, *Libraries & the Cultural Record* 44, no. 1 (2009): 18.

216. Marcello del Piaggio, ed., *Protocolli del Carteggio di Lorenzo il Magnifico per gli Anni 1473-74, 1477-92* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1956).

friends and family, including letters that discuss Lorenzo's relationships and feelings. Intimates like Angelo Poliziano, Luigi Pulci, and Matteo Franco wrote multiple letters to and about Lorenzo and his family, and we also have collections of letters by his parents, his wife, and his children. Using these, we may be able to grasp some insight into the structures of Lorenzo's emotional community (or communities), if not his emotions themselves. Letters to dignitaries and clients, too, help fill in gaps: Lorenzo, for instance, wrote several letters to Rome about his brother, and the careful historian may use these letters to delve further into his concerns and preoccupations regarding Giuliano. Finally, letters between outsiders record their observations and opinions of Lorenzo and his closest relationships, providing a unique perspective of how these relationships conformed to multiple and occasionally conflicting societal expectations.

There are, of course, some overall concerns when working with letters. Letters are, by necessity, a picture of a relationship in tension. Even when writer and reader were getting on well, they were communicating from a distance, unable to speak face-to-face. James Daybell suggests that "distance provided a safe buffer and time for reflection" before and between communications.<sup>217</sup> One might also argue that the very act of letter-writing creates a new level of tension: because the two parties cannot see or hear one another, there is an increased possibility of misunderstanding. This possibility, Gary Schneider suggests, led to an increase in the performance of affection, with writers couching their statements in effusive declarations of love to minimize the possibility of offence – a phenomenon that occurs "in

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217. James Daybell, "Social Negotiations in Correspondence between Mothers and Daughters in Tudor and Early Stuart England," *Women's History Review* 24, no. 4 (March 2015): 507.

letters of all types....”<sup>218</sup> The presence of loving declarations, then, may represent emotions other than love itself, or perhaps simple formalities added in by secretaries.

Because so many authors used scribes to write for them, and because letters were so often read in public or circulated, it is also important for the historian to keep in mind the self-censorship that likely governed an author. More intimate details of life, vulnerable thoughts and feelings, or socially unacceptable expressions of emotion are far less likely to be put down in writing. An author's anger, for instance, is likely going to be carefully placed within appropriate cultural scripts, which may mute the intensity of this emotion for the modern reader. Daybell specifically points to evidence of eroticism or sexuality, which, as it was such a delicate subject, was far less likely to be committed to paper.<sup>219</sup> The erotic lives of historical figures tend to be harder to trace the further back one goes and the more authors depended on clerical intercession for writing. Ann Crabb agrees that “autograph letters are often more intimate than scribal ones ....”<sup>220</sup> The presence or absence of different letter-writing formalities, the use of a scribe, and even the length of a letter all provide additional insight into the author's frame of mind.

If we are to use letters to analyse emotion, then, how are we to go about it? Given that letters seem to be rather delicate constructions embedded

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218. Gary Schneider, “Affecting Correspondences: Body, Behavior, and the Textualization of Emotion in Early Modern English Letters,” *Prose Studies* 23, no. 1 (December 2000): 47.

219. James Daybell, “‘I wold wyshe my doings might be ... secret’: Privacy and the Social Practices of Reading Women’s Letters in Sixteenth-Century England,” in *Women’s Letters across Europe, 1400-1700*, ed. Jane Couchmann and Ann Crabb (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005), 154.

220. Ann Crabb, “‘If I could write’: Margherita Datini and Letter Writing, 1385-1410,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 1195.



in any variety of relational and cultural contexts, it seems rather daunting to use them to build any sort of emotional portrait. Bullard suggests that, when analysing letters, historians look for “constellations and repetitions of pungent, evocative expressions” in order to “capture the elusive emotional intensity in particular situations.”<sup>221</sup> Paul McLean attempts this in his “A Frame Analysis of Favor Seeking in the Renaissance,” in which he traces the patterns of frequently-used words and phrases in patron-client letters.<sup>222</sup> McLean finds that different 'clusters' of words appear in specific contexts: “diligence (*diligenza*), effort (*fatica*), and ingenuity (*ingegno*)” appear most frequently when a client is seeking financial assistance, whereas friendship (*amicizia*) is invoked in letters of recommendation.<sup>223</sup> More recently, Linda Pollock as proposed “a cluster concept” for thinking about kindness in a historical setting, tracing its links to other concepts like “affection, courtesy, sympathy, attention,” and the like.<sup>224</sup> Pollock's approach is more intuitive than quantitative, whereas McLean's approach requires speciality in statistics-based research and a good understanding of computer programming, making it less accessible to most historians.

While McLean's mathematical analysis of vocabulary seems a bit overly intensive, close attention to these constellations and clusters could give

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221. Melissa M. Bullard, “‘Hammering Away at the Pope’: Nofri Tornabuoni, Lorenzo de' Medici's Agent and Collaborator in Rome,” in *Florence and Beyond: Culture, Society, and Politics in Renaissance Italy: Essays in Honour of John M. Najemy*, ed. David S. Peterson and Daniel E. Bornstein (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2008), 384.

222. Paul D. McLean, “A Frame Analysis of Favor Seeking in the Renaissance: Agency, Networks, and Political Culture,” *American Journal of Sociology* 104, no. 1 (July 1998): 51-91.

223. McLean, 58, 61-62.

224. Linda Pollock, “The Practice of Kindness in Early Modern Elite Society,” *Past and Present*, no. 211 (May 2011): 124.

valuable insight into the way Lorenzo and others framed his relationships. Though his letters may not be an unfiltered insight into his emotional life, close attention to the way he used – whether consciously or unconsciously – phrases and expressions in his letters can at least give us an indication of his expectations regarding those relationships. These expectations become all the more visible when others don't live up to them.

Above all, of course, is the context. Is a short, blunt note a stern reprimand, or is it a simple request? We must look to what we already know of the rhythms of Lorenzo's life if we are to guess at his emotional state or the emotional valence he gave to any one relationship. As war, excommunication, family quarrels, and deaths affected the Medici circle, relationships and emotional attachments fluctuated, adapted, or broke. A close analysis of the vocabulary used in letters will illustrate these rhythms.

### Poetry

Poetry, I believe, offers another potential avenue for exploring the emotional lives of Lorenzo and his circle. As discussed previously, Scheer has suggested that “[fictional] representations . . . can be analysed as artefacts” of past emotional practices and norms, and how the people of those times read the emotions of others.<sup>225</sup> Historians who have since worked with fictional genres, particularly poetry and drama, have emphasized the indirect nature of these sources, and the necessity of approaching them creatively. Stephanie Trigg writes that because poetry works through “ambiguity, displacement, and suggestion, rather than on the analytic dissection of feeling or the simple naming of emotions,” it is often better to look at what she calls “the verbal

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225. Scheer, “A Kind of Practice,” 217-18.

textures” of a poem.<sup>226</sup> As an example, Trigg points to alliterative poetry, which makes use of “clusters” of words to “form strong patterns of association” which, in turn, evoke various sensations and emotions.<sup>227</sup> Inspired by the concept of *habitus* mentioned above, she also suggests that certain “lines function like ‘emotion scripts,’ innate, learned patterns of emotional response that show, as well as tell us, how to respond.”<sup>228</sup> By identifying these “scripts” in poetry, historians can learn more about what emotional responses were expected, and perhaps even clues about how authors expected those emotional responses to be received by their audience.

Karen Simecek, meanwhile, demonstrates how poetry can evoke emotional responses without relying solely on narrative structure in the same way plays, novels, and histories do. Rather, she argues, “perspective is more fundamental to the emotions than narrative.”<sup>229</sup> Perspective is more “than a mere point of view,” but also incorporates the writer’s time period, location, worldview, and values.<sup>230</sup> In other words, we must understand the context from which the poet is writing in order to fully understand the emotional information contained in the poem. Diana Barnes warns that a poem’s historical context must also be supplemented with an understanding of the generic context: that is, the typical tropes and conventions of any one genre of poetry.<sup>231</sup> An early modern poet writing a Petrarchan sonnet, for example,

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226. Stephanie Trigg, “Langland’s Tears: Poetry, Emotion, and Mouvance,” *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* 26 (2012): 30-31.

227. Trigg, 32.

228. Trigg, 33.

229. Karen Simecek, “Beyond Narrative: Poetry, Emotion, and the Perspectival View,” *British Journal of Aesthetics* 55, no. 4 (October 2015): 500.

230. Simecek, 501.

231. Diana G. Barnes, “Poetry,” in *Early Modern Emotions*, 91.

may not be truly in love with the woman he (for it was usually a he) addresses, but instead demonstrating his mastery of the genre. However, even these poetic exercises can reflect the norms and conventions in expressing love and admiration.

In this thesis, I am primarily concerned with the specific historical context of certain poems: not only the year and location, but where, exactly, these poetic works fit into the lives of their authors. What, I ask, was happening in the authors' lives when they were composing their poetry? Who was their intended audience? What relationships and events were influencing them? Thankfully, many of the poems I analyse in this thesis are dated, or at the very least the timing of their composition can be narrowed down to a specific period in the author's life. By looking carefully at the imagery and tropes they use in the poems written during these circumstances, I believe I can unravel something of the "emotional style" – to borrow Scheer's term – of the author. What poetic conventions did a writer habitually turn to when trying to express sorrow, for example? Can we use these habitual conventions to then hazard a guess at the context of undated works, even if only tentatively? What, then, do these poems reveal about the ways the author understood and framed their own and others' emotions?

I will primarily be analysing the poetry written by Lorenzo himself, and by his close friend Poliziano. Lorenzo was an accomplished amateur poet who wrote prolifically over the course of his life. His work covers everything from ribald comedy to Neo-Platonist theology, and in a wide variety of styles and voices. It also contains a wealth of information about the ways in which Lorenzo understood his and others' emotions. Long before the popularisation of emotions history, André Chastel identified what Trigg might call "clusters"

of words related to melancholy and grief in Lorenzo's sonnets.<sup>232</sup> Furthermore, he links these expressions of melancholy to Lorenzo's broader understanding of love. Love entails "submission" to the inevitable sorrows and frustrations that go along with it, and this fatalism leads to a kind of "despair" as the author gives himself over to a kind of lifelong imprisonment to this emotion.<sup>233</sup> Melancholy additionally becomes a framework through which Lorenzo views history: both his own, and his people's.<sup>234</sup> Though Chastel warns us not to take these stylized, poetic portrayals of emotions like melancholia as actual indications of real depression, they do seem to adhere to a unique emotional style and framework.<sup>235</sup> I do not address the melancholic tendencies of Lorenzo's poetry in this thesis, but I will identify and use other patterns in Lorenzo's poetry to unravel the ways in which he – and his audience – understood not only specific emotions, but also sex and gender.

Other historians have made forays into the social contextualisation of Lorenzo's poetic works. Sara Sturm suggests that his earlier poems were meant to be for the entertainment of his *brigata*.<sup>236</sup> Indeed, it seems that Lorenzo's poetry was heavily influenced over time by that of his friends, including Pulci, Poliziano, Marsilio Ficino, and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, and that these poetic influences waxed and waned as these

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232. André Chastel, "Melancholia in the Sonnets of Lorenzo de' Medici," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 8 (1945): 61-67.

233. Chastel, 63-65.

234. Chastel, 65.

235. Chastel, 63.

236. Sara Sturm, *Lorenzo de' Medici* (Boston: Twayne, 1975), 35.

friendships developed, transformed, and in some cases, faded away.<sup>237</sup> He wrote within and in response to a social circle that changed shape in response to the developments of his life. Konrad Eisenbichler, though far more interested in Lorenzo's political motivations than his emotional life, also frames one of Lorenzo's works, the *Rappresentazione di SS. Giovanni e Paolo*, relationally. It is imperative, Eisenbichler argues, that this playscript be viewed in the context of Lorenzo's investment in his son Giuliano. In order to fully understand the dynastic messages within the script, one must know the relational context of a father writing for – and instructing – his son.<sup>238</sup>

In the same way that people in Lorenzo's communities shaped his work, his presence in those same communities in turn influenced their work, and not only because of his role as a patron. Poliziano was perhaps the most significant of the poets in Lorenzo's inner circle, and in fact one of his many roles in the Medici household (alongside tutor, translator, and occasional scribe) was that of court poet. Vittore Branca pays close attention to the personal and relational context of Poliziano's work, situating it within the "*brigata familiare*" surrounding Lorenzo.<sup>239</sup> Of particular interest is Branca's analysis of the *Orfeo*. He argues that lofty interpretations of the *Orfeo* as a philosophical or theological statement are missing the mark: instead, Poliziano's Orpheus is merely "a tender and impassioned lover" who meets a

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237. James Wyatt Cook, introduction to Lorenzo de' Medici, *The Autobiography of Lorenzo de' Medici the Magnificent: A Commentary on My Sonnets* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000), 17; Francesco Caruso, "Philology as Thanatology: A Study on Angelo Poliziano's Intellectual Biography" (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2013), 61.

238. Eisenbichler, "Confraternities and Carnival: The Context of Lorenzo de' Medici's *Rappresentazione di SS. Giovanni e Paolo*," in "Continental Medieval Drama," special issue, *Comparative Drama* 27, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 128-39.

239. Vittore Branca, *Poliziano e l'umanesimo della parola* (Turin: Einaudi, 1983), 37.

desperate, fateful end.<sup>240</sup> Rather, he writes, the *Orfeo*, when viewed in context, is Poliziano lashing out in pain against the so-called comforts of philosophy: written in the wake of the calamitous Pazzi conspiracy of 1478, it “exposes ... the fragility and impermanence” of “that humanistic ideal” in the face of such evil.<sup>241</sup> Branca suggests that Poliziano’s Orpheus is “shaded” with an “autobiographical tint ...”<sup>242</sup> I plan on going even further: I will argue that this portrayal of Orpheus was intensely autobiographical, and deeply influenced not only by the tragedy of the Pazzi conspiracy, but also by the disruptions and changes that had occurred in Poliziano’s most intimate relationships in the years following. It is not merely a philosophical (or anti-philosophical) statement, but a reflection of Poliziano’s very real frustration and grief for a relationship that had imploded.

#### Visual Sources

Art historians have looked at premodern art within a relational context for a long time. Michael Baxandall famously described the Renaissance painting as “the deposit of a social relationship,” that is, between patron and artist.<sup>243</sup> However, I believe certain forms of art – specifically those depicting human figures – can communicate even more about social relationships beyond only the patron-artist collaboration, and how they were viewed by their contemporaries. Both Leora Auslander and Peter Burke have complained that historians (presumably those outside of the field of art

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240. Vittore Branca, 63.

241. Vittore Branca, 64.

242. Vittore Branca, 63.

243. Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 1.

history) have a tendency to “view words as the most trustworthy as well as the most informative sources” and to treat images as “mere illustrations.”<sup>244</sup> This is a terrible waste, since “[each] form of human communication has its unique attributes and capabilities,” and to rely only on written texts is to miss out on a wide variety of equally informative source material.<sup>245</sup> Burke sees images as forms of knowing and experience, and while he acknowledges that some images do have specific embedded messages, he warns of the inherent weaknesses in trying to use images “to learn something that the artists did not know they were teaching.”<sup>246</sup>

In this case, Burke appears to be referring to the iconological method, through which historians have frequently been tempted to find patterns and codes of meaning in the assumption that this will help them to uncover a cultural or temporal *zeitgeist*.<sup>247</sup> He does not totally reject iconology as a methodology, but rather advises caution: iconology, he suggests, would be better suited to the microhistorical scale, such as studying developments in artistic portrayals of a specific biblical scene.<sup>248</sup> As I shall demonstrate in Chapter Three, this method is equally useful in analysing changes in the way family members were artistically portrayed, both together and separately.

However, Burke also suggests other approaches to supplement a limited iconology. The most significant of these for the purposes of my thesis

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244. Leora Auslander, “Beyond Words,” *American Historical Review* 110, no. 4 (October 2005): 1015; Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), 10.

245. Auslander, “Beyond Words,” 1015.

246. Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 14.

247. See Burke, 40-42.

248. Burke, 54.



are the social histories of art. These examine the ways art pieces interacted with various social groups and structures.<sup>249</sup> Particularly applicable is reception theory: what audience did the patron and artist anticipate for the piece? What did they believe the audience would take away from the piece, and how did those expectations shape the work?<sup>250</sup> For example, as I shall show in Chapter Three, a medallist might add words or phrases to guide the viewer in their interpretation of the symbolism. A painter, on the other hand, may portray figures in certain poses, arrangements, or making gestures which guide the viewer's eyes and lead them to make assumptions about the relationships between these figures and signals.

Keeping in mind Burke's recommendations – to consider the subjectivity of artists and their socio-cultural context, to study a series of images instead of a single image, and to keep a close eye to detail – I have approached the visual sources in this thesis with what I call an interrogative stance.<sup>251</sup> I first come up with a single, overarching question: what does a given visual source communicate about the relationship I wish to explore? In Chapter Three, the relationship in question is between Lorenzo and his younger brother, Giuliano. In this case, I then sought out all known depictions of the brothers together. Because that chapter is only concerned with the way the brothers were viewed within Lorenzo's lifetime, I limited the scope of my research to visual depictions produced before 1492. After researching all I could about the various pieces, their creators, their patrons, and their contexts, I focused my analysis on the poses, gestures, appearances, and position of the

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249. Burke, 178.

250. See Burke, 179 for his recommendations on approaching art.

251. Burke, 187-88.

brothers within the piece. How did these factors change over time, and how did they remain consistent? What political messages – for indeed, all depictions of the Medici brothers were political – did these pieces wish to impart, and why? What, I then ask, does this tell us about the ways in which outsiders viewed the relationship between Lorenzo and Giuliano? Can it tell us anything about how the brothers saw themselves?

### **The Contents of this Thesis**

#### Chapter One: The Medici Household

Lorenzo's emotional life did not exist in a vacuum. Rather, his emotional world was closely tied to his environment, especially to those who most closely shared his space. His status as family heir (and then as *paterfamilias*) furthermore gave him a unique emotional position in relation to other household members. Issues of authority and patronage thus became enmeshed with all his other emotional exchanges.

In this chapter, I will build on the current historiography of household studies, but I will also lay the groundwork for the rest of the thesis by redefining the composition of the Renaissance household. Household studies generally define the household by those who live inside of the main dwelling, usually kin and servants. However, in this chapter I will demonstrate that the household could also extend to those who lived outside of the main dwelling (or only lived there intermittently) but who were also intimately involved in the daily activities of the household. Furthermore, I will emphasise the fact that household membership could extend beyond kin or servants – the most common subjects of household studies – to include people who were neither related nor servile. Finally, I will demonstrate that the hierarchy within the household was far more malleable than household historians have previously

imagined: for example, while the *paterfamilias* was the official head of the household, other forms of power co-existed – and sometimes competed – with his own.

Additionally, I argue that the *brigata* was a crucial aspect of household structure and composition. Though the household has been a growing field of interest and study since the seventies, the *brigata* has received very little attention as a field in and of itself. Until now, historians have mostly considered it to be either a group that was limited only to males, or, if mixed-gender, to brief periods of travel. On the contrary, I will argue that *brigata* could take many forms and that they functioned, in many cases, as extensions of the household. This was especially true during periods of mobility, and far from being a minor exception to the rule, these periods of mixed-gender travel were a key household activity in the Renaissance upper classes.

## Chapter Two: Raising Lorenzo

The father-son relationship was central to Florentine society; as a highly patriarchal culture, this society was structured on the political, social, and financial inheritance passed from father to son. This social pattern put extreme importance on the son's performance and made the father-son relationship one of intense pressure and high expectations. This was especially true for patrician sons, whose upbringing – according to popular understanding – could make or break a dynasty. Yet Lorenzo's adolescence, during which his father rushed him through important milestones at a pace that was unusual even for his fellow patrician youths, would impact him into adulthood and would lead to a preoccupation with the inherent transience of life.

While fatherhood has recently become a topic of greater interest in histories of the premodern family, a significant amount of work remains to be done, especially regarding the history of emotions. Though many family historians now take it for granted that early modern families were just as emotionally vibrant as families today, studies of emotion in premodern familial relationships still tends to focus on relationships between men and women or between women alone. The father-son relationship is still, it seems, implicitly assumed to be somehow less emotional because of its close ties to economic and political family goals.

Just as important were the issues of gender. How, in the fifteenth century, did a Florentine boy become a man? How could this process be sped up in cases like Lorenzo's, and how did wider society respond to this process when it seemed to occur so quickly? Did grown politicians, for example, accept Lorenzo as a fellow adult man? In this chapter, I find that adult manhood was as closely associated with "correct" performance as it was with physical growth, and that young men like Lorenzo had to perform their adulthood all the more convincingly to make up for their obvious physical youth. Much of this performance had to do with sexuality, which was equally performative. Adult men were expected to behave far differently than youths in matters of the bedroom, and a young man like Lorenzo would have been given extremely mixed signals about what was expected – and encouraged – from different social groups. This, too, would haunt him into adulthood, and his sexuality would remain characterised as "youthful" by his contemporaries.

Finally, this chapter further postulates that the matter of turning Lorenzo from a boy into a man was not only the business of his father Piero. Rather, it was a household project, involving not only blood kin but nearly

everyone who frequented the Medici household. This included tutors and clerics, but it also expanded to servants, artists, and even neighbours. Piero's expectations for his son would not colour only their relationship, but that of the entire household community.

### Chapter Three: Another You: Brotherhood and Medicean Identity

In both emotions history and the history of the premodern family, “horizontal” relationships – such as those between siblings – have only just started coming to the fore. However, fraternal relationships are still highly neglected outside of studies on primogeniture. Though the seeds of primogeniture were starting to take root in this period among the upper classes – as I believe is illustrated in Lorenzo and Giuliano's relationship – it was far from the norm, especially in Republican Florence. Needless to say, studies on fraternal relationships prior to the development of primogeniture are still lacking. Additionally, there is virtually no material dedicated to examining the relationship between Lorenzo and Giuliano. In this chapter, I will seek to fill that void by treating Lorenzo and Giuliano's relationship as a kind of case study for the ways in which a sibling relationship could develop over time as a household's situation fluctuated.

Of the most important of these fluctuations was the Pazzi conspiracy of 1478, an assassination attempt which would wound Lorenzo and claim Giuliano's life. However, as I will argue, the sibling relationship did not end with death; Lorenzo continued to have a relationship with his deceased younger brother for the rest of his life. In fact, this relationship became an important part of Lorenzo's self-fashioning as a martyred and bereaved persona in the public eye.

One virtually unused source for exploring this relationship, from childhood and beyond Giuliano's death, are the three known contemporaneous visual depictions of the brothers together. As I will argue in this chapter, these three pieces – created at various points across both brothers' lives – depict the changing realities of their public perception. All three were used to send specific political messages to their audience and the tenor of this political message changed with the brothers' relationship to one another.

#### Chapter Four: The Patron, the Wife, and the Poet

Sexuality and gender had a deep impact on the household, and on how members of the household associated with one another. Attached to this was the question of status: the ways in which men and women related to one another within a household depended not only on their gender but on their status in the household. As the basis for this chapter, I will be examining one of the more infamous disputes within the Medici household between Lorenzo's wife, Clarice Orsini, and Angelo Poliziano, Lorenzo's close friend, court poet, and the tutor to his children. I will examine the historical context to argue that – contrary to previous retellings of the dispute – this conflict was not primarily fuelled by ideological dispute, but by a myriad of external and interpersonal issues that were brought to a head by the tensions of 1478.

Critically, I will propose a new dimension to this conflict which, to my knowledge, has never been explored before: sexual jealousy. I will argue that Poliziano's presence within the Medici household represented rivalry to Clarice's authority as wife. I believe that by situating the writing of both men – which includes both their poetry and correspondence – in the context of homoerotic *amicizia* so common in Florence, it is possible to glean new

insights about this rupture in the household. As I will argue, homoeroticism was inseparable from Florentine masculinity – especially youthful masculinity – and played an important role in male socialisation. Male intimacy, including but not limited to sex, helped to build and solidify the social networks that were intrinsic to politics, business, and patronage. However, male intimacy was expected to grow and mature alongside the men who experienced it.

Lorenzo and Poliziano grew up in this homosocial culture alongside other Florentine boys, but most scholars have only acknowledged this in passing, if at all. In this chapter, I will argue that the changes in both men's lives during the months and years immediately following the Pazzi conspiracy were accompanied by a major juncture in their friendship. As I will demonstrate, the dramatic nature of this juncture brings Renaissance Florentine norms and expectations for male intimacy into sharp relief. *Amicizia* could function as an intense bond, but as the lives of the men involved changed over time, their relationships also had to change. This could be even more dramatic when an entire household – and the friendships inside of it – was required to change form in response to outside circumstances. What happened, then, if those involved did not agree on what those changes should look like? How did they navigate these disagreements, and how did their navigation differ based on their positions both in the household and the friendship?

#### Chapter Five: The Magnificent Death

To Renaissance Florentines, the way in which a man died spoke volumes about his life. Western traditions surrounding death were informed by both Christian and classical traditions, both of which valued a calm,

realistic approach to death. The proliferation of various *artes moriendi* texts reflected the societal concern with dying well, which in this case meant dying in a way which demonstrated a firm yet humble hope in Christ and a close adherence to Church practices. However, just as there was a “correct” way to die, there were “incorrect” ways as well. If one died in fear or despair, in defiance towards God, or in an unexpected or violent way, this was considered bad, but even worse was a death by suicide.

Additionally, there were correct and incorrect ways to grieve for the dead. Grief had recently undergone a metamorphosis in Tuscany, one which evolved along gendered lines. Though it had once been “manly” to grieve by baring one’s head, wailing aloud, and beating one’s breast in public, open and dramatic grief had now become feminised. Men were now expected to grieve with sombre composure, expressing themselves primarily through the humanist revival of the *consolatio* genre. Men who were on their deathbeds, meanwhile, were expected to grieve over their sins, but not to the point of despair.

From almost the moment he died, Lorenzo’s death was the subject of intense debate. Adding to the already delicate situation was the mysterious death of Lorenzo’s personal doctor, Piero Leoni, who was found headfirst in a well in an apparent suicide only hours later.

As I shall demonstrate, the narrative changed shape depending on the political affiliations of those telling the story, and Leoni’s unfortunate end was consistently used as a foil. The emotions of all parties – Lorenzo, his mourning companions, and Leoni – were presented as evidence for all versions. Mediceans unanimously framed Lorenzo’s death as manly and virtuous but insisted that Leoni’s death had been a shameful suicide, done out



of madness or fear. Meanwhile, political enemies tended to be far less charitable to Lorenzo and his companions, while either suggesting or fully insisting that Leoni had been murdered. Emotion thus contributed to establishing – or challenging – Lorenzo’s reputation, even after he was long dead.

## Chapter One: The Medici Household

In order to situate Lorenzo's emotional life within his household, it is first important to understand what the Renaissance Florentine household *was*. As we shall see, historians have attempted to define the historical household in multiple ways, including in terms of size, structure, and membership. They have moved beyond the concept of the nuclear and kin-based models to embrace a complex, diverse vision of the premodern household. This chapter, and more generally this thesis, build on their work, but also rely heavily on Rosenwein's concept of the emotional community: the household is in fact the first emotional community most children experience, and it is this community which so often defines the ways in which they approach the world beyond it. By looking beyond the traditional ideas of household models or structures, and instead synthesising multiple potential definitions for the household, I believe historians can come to a better understanding of how household relationships informed the emotional lives of their participants. This chapter will also briefly survey the more recent definitions of the premodern household, including those based on co-residence, functionality, and structures of authority, and apply them to the emotional community of the Medici household. Additionally, I will incorporate Naomi Tadmor's theory that the most effective means of understanding a historical household is to let that household's members define it for themselves.<sup>1</sup> To that end, I will also analyse the language which Lorenzo and other members of his household used to describe themselves.

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1. Naomi Tadmor, "The Concept of the Household-Family in Eighteenth-Century England," *Past & Present*, no. 151 (May 1996): 113.

For a long time, it was generally an assumed fact that sometime during the transition from the medieval to the modern age, what we today call the ‘nuclear family’ – that is, a household consisting of two parents and their children – formed. Historians have long since concluded that the premodern upper-class family was complex and elastic by nature and not, as Richard Goldthwaite once proposed, slowly moving from the clan model to the nuclear family.<sup>2</sup> As Tadmor has argued, the size and complexity of premodern households (including those of the upper classes) could actually “evolve very rapidly .... without apparently changing their contemporary definition as families” in the minds of the household members. This indicates that “perhaps the structural boundaries between the ‘nuclear family’ and the ‘extended family’ were less clear than is commonly assumed.”<sup>3</sup> In any case, given the size and complexity of the Medici household throughout Lorenzo’s life, the question of its structure is a moot point: nuclearity was out of the question. From Lorenzo’s childhood until his death, the Medici household was filled with all manner of people: he was raised in a three-generation household which also included his paternal uncle, and in his adulthood his household extended vertically to include his widowed mother and laterally to include his brother. Additionally, the Medici constantly lived among a staff of servants and slaves, bodyguards, priests, tutors, doctors, secretaries, and others.

Nevertheless, the nature of the complex premodern household-family has remained a source of debate. Even the presupposition that a household is

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2. Richard A. Goldthwaite, “The Florentine Palace as Domestic Architecture,” *The American Historical Review* 77, no. 4 (October 1972): 988. For a contemporary response to Goldthwaite, see David Herlihy, “Mapping Households in Medieval Italy,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 58, no. 1 (April 1972): 1-24.

3. Tadmor, “Concept of the Household-Family,” 133-34.

defined by co-residence can be called into question, as even though a household was often based in a centralised location such as a palace, co-residence “is a particularly slippery standard.”<sup>4</sup> This is most certainly true of the Medici, who, though based in the palace on the Via Larga, also owned residences throughout Tuscany that could be occupied by different household members during the year. These members would sometimes be miles apart, communicating only by correspondence and perhaps only joining up with the rest of the household for special occasions. As I shall demonstrate, the division of a household into *brigade*, or travelling parties, did not disrupt its identity as a household.

## **Historiography**

### Household Histories

In the 1980s, social scientists Richard Wilk and Robert Netting wanted to “[change] the question from one grounded in structure ... to one grounded in activity” and function.<sup>5</sup> By taking a task-based approach, they suggest, researchers might better come to comprehend the deeper significance households hold in both individual lives and wider societies. Because household members all share an interest in preserving and expanding household resources, households can be defined both by units of property and by resource production. When “junior household members cease contributing” to a household’s resource-production or preservation, this

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4. Robert McC. Netting, Richard R. Wilk, and Eric J. Arnould, eds., introduction to *Households: Comparative and Historical Studies of the Domestic Group* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xxvi.

5. Wilk and Netting, “Households: Changing Forms and Functions,” in *Households*, 4.

marks the mitosis of a new household unit.<sup>6</sup> On an individual level, meanwhile, households provided these members with a platform for self-definition, including “the expression of age and sex roles, kinship, socialization, and economic cooperation where the very stuff of culture is mediated and transformed into action.”<sup>7</sup> The personal activity of becoming, of self-actualisation, is very often inseparable from a household’s other functions. In fact, it is such a collaborative household effort that it can hardly be called “personal” at all.

The historical field has adopted anthropology’s findings gradually.<sup>8</sup> While most historians have remained focused on co-residence, they have also widened the study of members beyond the limits of kin and servants. A wealthy household included members from a vast spectrum of social strata, among them not only servants, but also apprentices and other employees.<sup>9</sup> Examining middle- and upper-class Florentine households, Francis William Kent identified instances in which “smaller [households] merged into larger ones ... ruled by adult brothers, an uncle or a grandfather.”<sup>10</sup> He also widens the spectrum of household membership even further: patrons’ households would not only take in servants, but also what he calls clients. Some of Lorenzo’s proteges, including Poliziano and a young Michelangelo, at times

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6. Netting, Wilk, and Arnould, introduction to *Households*, xxiv.

7. Netting, Wilk, and Arnould, xxii.

8. For example, see David Herlihy, *Medieval Households* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 132.

9. Herlihy, 153-55.

10. Francis William Kent, “Palaces, Politics and Society in Fifteenth-Century Florence,” *I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance* 2 (January 1987): 45.

were counted as part of his household.<sup>11</sup> Often, artists played multiple roles within the household: Poliziano was a poet, tutor, librarian, and sometimes-secretary, while sculptor and medallist Bertoldo di Giovanni also served as a valet.<sup>12</sup>

Influenced by the social sciences, historians began looking beyond economic and age demographics for a deeper understanding of historical households. By the early 1990s, social historians like David Kertzer were arguing in favour of a flexible model of the premodern household, in which both kin and non-kin “often flowed in and out as the need arose.”<sup>13</sup> The subject of mutability is taken up by Tadmor in her studies on early modern household-families in England.<sup>14</sup> She finds that tasks often served as criteria for membership: contracts of employment sometimes “involved an exchange of work and material benefits.”<sup>15</sup> Tadmor further defines households by their structures of authority and submission: “The master’s place on the one hand, and the servants’ place on the other, mark the boundaries of the household-family.”<sup>16</sup> There could be a wide range of individuals between the *paterfamilias* and the servant, including family members, priests, tutors, and secretaries, but all were considered to be within the realm of his authority.

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11. Francis William Kent, 65.

12. Ernst H. Gombrich, “The Early Medici as Patrons of Art,” in *Norm and Form: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon Press, 1966), 56.

13. David I. Kertzer, “Household Histories and Sociological Theory,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 17 (1991): 168.

14. Tadmor, “Concept of the Household-Family,” 133-34.

15. Tadmor, 123.

16. Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 23.

Tied to the concept of authority were the expectations and emotions involved when people either joined or exited the household. These expectations varied depending on who was joining, as I shall demonstrate later in this thesis: incoming servants would have very different expectations of how they would be treated than would a new wife. In both situations, these expectations could be laid out in writing, whether as marriage contracts or employment contracts. In upper-class families, a new husband “usually made special arrangements to receive his bride into his place of residence,” and once she was settled in, she “might make further changes” of her own. A well-born bride expected that her living situation would be as well arranged as her husband’s: everything “would of course be noted by other members of the bride’s entourage, and by visitors” coming to congratulate the new couple. The close attention paid by all demonstrates how people thought new brides ought to be accepted into the household community: as a representative of a separate lineage, she was to receive “equal honour” at her wedding.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, servants could claim far less from a *paterfamilias*, while their membership in a household was far more dependent upon their submission. A servant’s breach of contract represented a rejection of “their membership” in the household, as they were denying both their duties to participate in household tasks as well as denying submission to the *paterfamilias*.<sup>18</sup> In return for their participation and submission, they were, like children,

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17. Peter Thornton, *The Italian Renaissance Interior: 1400-1600* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), 349.

18. Dennis Romano, *Housecraft and Statecraft: Domestic Service in Renaissance Venice, 1400-1600* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 210.

provided with a place of residence – or at least a stipend on which to live – as well as other daily necessities.<sup>19</sup>

Dennis Romano lists the complaints made by both masters and servants about broken expectations. Servants were often accused of shameful behaviour, including illicit pregnancy, ingratitude, theft, mistreating their masters, and even of consuming more than their share of household provisions. Meanwhile, masters could violate servants' expectations through verbal, physical, and sexual violence, unrealistic or unfair demands, and a failure or refusal to provide for the servants.<sup>20</sup> A servant's membership in the household was thus defined differently by each party: the servant saw themselves as rejected from the household when the master refused to provide for them or treat them kindly, and the master saw the servant as rejecting their membership when they disobeyed, took advantage of their masters' generosity, or acted in ways that embarrassed the rest of the household. It's not hard to imagine how such different definitions of household membership could lead to conflict. If unresolved, the membership of the more vulnerable party – generally the servant – was the most in jeopardy. Meanwhile, good relationships between the different strata of the household served to “[integrate] the whole household into a single spiritual family.”<sup>21</sup> As I shall demonstrate in chapter four, the differences in the expectations for household members could sometimes cause dramatic clashes. When Lorenzo's wife

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19. Romano, 211.

20. Romano, 208-16.

21. Andrea Brady, “‘A share of sorrows’: Death in the Early Modern English Household,” in *Emotions in the Household, 1200-1500*, ed. Susan Broomhall (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 192.



clashed with the household tutor, part of her complaint was that a mere employee was assuming more authority than he was due.

More recently, historians have adapted Rosenwein's concept of the emotional community to reassess household boundaries, asking if households could be defined by their emotional bonds with one another. Because households aren't always defined by marriage or blood ties, the emotional boundaries of a household may not exclusively be tied to the emotions between spouses or parents and children. After all, non-kin members of the household – such as servants, secretaries or apprentices – lived in extremely close proximity to kin members, and vice versa. Stephanie Tarbin suggests that in such “close physical confines ... emotional distance may have offered psychological space and security,” but also acknowledges that any kind of emotional distance was likely extremely difficult for non-kin members, as they were often also deeply invested in the household.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, this comes into play in both the third and fourth chapters as non-kin household members got involved in conflicts between kin members.

Membership in the household is thus expanded from co-residence, submission, and shared tasks to include a shared emotional culture.<sup>23</sup> Major emotional events, such as illness or death, deeply impacted *all* members, and non-kin members were often expected to participate fully in the mourning process.<sup>24</sup> Both servants and apprentices became like children to the

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22. Stephanie Tarbin, “‘Good Friendship’ in the Household: Illicit Sexuality, Emotions and Women’s Relationships in Late Sixteenth-Century England,” in *Emotions in the Household*, 141.

23. Susan Broomhall, “Emotions in the Household,” in *Emotions in the Household*, 3.

24. Andrea Brady, “‘A share of sorrows,’” 194.

household head: they dined together, travelled together, and these non-kin members witnessed or participated in his emotional ups and downs.<sup>25</sup> This was especially true of secretaries, who were “embroiled in the emotional politics of the ... household” by virtue of their near-constant presence at the side of their employers.<sup>26</sup> Cosimo il Vecchio had one such relationship with his secretary Alessio Pelli. Alessio dined with his employer, travelled with him, and even advised him. He became an ingrained part of the Medici household, forging a close friendship with Cosimo’s sons, even intervening in father-son conflicts.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Niccolò Michelozzi, one of Lorenzo’s longest-serving secretaries, was present for many of the intense altercations between household members and often found himself writing letters for the quarrelling parties. He bore witness to Lorenzo’s emotional outbursts, and given his lifelong association with the Medici, it is hard to imagine that he did not participate in the often-intense emotional culture of the household. Eventually, both Niccolò and Alessio moved on as their lives took them elsewhere, and they left the Medici household. This does not necessarily mean that the emotional ties between them ended: even years later, letters between Giovanni di Cosimo and the elderly Alessio were warm and familiar.<sup>28</sup> Their household membership had been contingent upon employment, but the emotional ties endured. As we shall see in chapters three through five, other household members – including priests, tutors, poets,

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25. Caroline R. Sherman, “Resentment and Rebellion in the Scholarly Household: Son and Amanuensis in the Godefroy Family,” in *Emotions in the Household*, 161.

26. Broomhall, “Emotions in the Household,” 23.

27. Dale Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust in Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 116-17.

28. Dale Kent, 118.

artists, and doctors – could become just as intimately involved in the emotional life of the household.

Household emotional communities did not necessarily end at the front door. As Andrea Brady demonstrates, “the idea that the household served as a limit for emotional display is misleading, as the space of the home was regularly filled with visitors, doctors, ministers and friends” that participated in various emotional and ritual events including weddings, births, christenings, and deaths.<sup>29</sup> The household emotional community was woven into the wider emotional communities of the local parish, *gonfalone* (neighbourhood), or even *quartiere* (quarter). This interweaving occurred both on a personal level and a ritual level: through business ties and local friendships or alliances on the one hand, and through the ritual events mentioned above on the other hand. Participation in a household’s emotional community could also grant a kind of membership. Inviting friends to a meal was a means of “literally demonstrating the extensions of the family to include chosen companions outside the domestic circle.”<sup>30</sup> The closest friendships often formed among neighbours, and this was no different for Lorenzo: Braccio Martelli and Sigismondo della Stufa, his boyhood friends and companions, grew up on either side of the Palazzo Medici. They ate, played, and travelled together, and this granted both boys emotional membership in the Medici household: when writing to Lorenzo’s father Piero, they all three signed the letter as his “sons.”<sup>31</sup>

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29. Andrea Brady, “A share of sorrows,” 185.

30. Dale Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust*, 128.

31. Dale Kent, 161.

Household membership thus involved some combination of co-residence, participation in household tasks, submission to the household head (or heads), or participation in the household emotional community. However, as we have seen, most of these criteria are flexible to the point that they become almost useless on their own. Tadmor offers an interesting solution: she doesn't do away with these criteria, but she does supplement them with one further standard: how did household members define household membership? She intentionally "adopt[s] the archaic concept of the family," that is, she defines exactly what her subjects – eighteenth-century English household heads – meant when they wrote 'family' and uses it as her starting point.<sup>32</sup> Tadmor finds that when her subjects used the word 'family,' what they usually meant was, in fact, what modern scholars call the household: "'Family' in their language could mean a household, including its diverse dependants, such as servants, apprentices and co-resident relatives."<sup>33</sup> As I shall demonstrate in the next two sections, the situation was much the same for Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Florentines. Their choices in language and architecture reflect how they saw their households in relation to both themselves and the wider world.

### *Casa, Famiglia, Brigata*

If household membership was as flexible as it appears to be from the historiography, and furthermore, if definitions and views of membership varied between members of the household, is 'household' still a useful term? I would argue that it is, despite its flaws, and in certain contexts. For the

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32. Tadmor, "Concept of the Household-Family," 113.

33. Tadmor, 112.

purposes of this thesis, I intend to use it to describe the group of people, at large, whose lives and activities orbited around the twin centres of, primarily, Lorenzo's branch of the Medici family, and secondarily, around the palace on the Via Larga. This includes Lorenzo's many villas, as they were all attached economically to the Medici 'headquarters' in Florence.

However, as Tadmor has proposed, "we ... need to turn our attention to the language in which" contemporary terms such as *casa*, *famiglia*, and *brigata* "were coined, expressed, and negotiated."<sup>34</sup> The trouble here is that Renaissance Italians had no word that directly translates to the modern English understanding of the word 'household.' Both *famiglia* and *casa* can refer to a similar concept, but depending on the context, these words can also mean a number of other things, including blood-related kin or a literal architectural structure. Though for convenience's and brevity's sake I do intend to use 'household' to encompass the concepts discussed above, it is still important to examine more closely the vocabulary used by Lorenzo and his contemporaries which are summarized in this term.

To define these words, I will be relying on both *Tesoro della lingua Italiana delle Origini* (hereafter TLIO), a historical and literary dictionary of premodern Italian, and the letters of the Medici and their associates.<sup>35</sup> Though TLIO mainly covers the high and late middle ages, it will give a fuller understanding of the etymology, both literary and legal, that Lorenzo inherited. Contemporary letters will therefore clarify the ways in which

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34. Tadmor, *Family and Friends*, 10.

35. Pietro G. Beltrami et al., TLIO, accessed 12 September, 2016, <http://tlio.ovi.cnr.it/TLIO/>.

Florentines used these words, and whether – and if so, how greatly – their usage had changed by the Quattrocento.

I am here following the concept of the language community: that is, the “working proposition” that when an author “wrote words such as ‘family’ or ‘friend’ they generally understood what these words meant” and “probably also shared this understanding with at least some of their contemporaries.”<sup>36</sup> In the same way, when Lorenzo wrote “*famiglia*” in one of his letters, he assumed that the recipient would understand his meaning. Responses to his letters confirm this, as they generally indicate they understood his meaning and carried out his instructions, if any. By comparing the language community found in the Medici letters with those reflected by the sources in TLIO, it may be possible to distinguish what was unique – or what was typical – about the way Lorenzo and his circle defined their terms.

### *Casa*

TLIO provides two general meanings for the word *casa*. The first is the physical structure: “A construction, in stone, masonry, or wood, subdivided in rooms, intended as housing.” An Italian could “be at home” or “go home” (*a casa*). One would “take [up] house” (*prendere casa*) when settling down in a new location.<sup>37</sup> An Italian was said to “have neither house nor roof” when they were in financial ruin.<sup>38</sup> These physical houses could be metaphorical: the kingdom of heaven was “the house of the Father” (*la casa*

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36. Tadmor, *Family and Friends*, 16.

37. “Costruzione, in pietra, muratura o legno, suddivisa in vani, destinata ad abitazione.” TLIO, s.v. “casa s.f.,” accessed 12 September, 2016, <http://tlio.ovi.cnr.it/voci/022394.htm>.

38. “non avere né casa né tetto.” TLIO, s.v. “casa s.f.”

*del Padre*), “the house of God” (*la casa di Dio*), “the house of Israel” (*la casa d’Israele*) or “the blessed houses” (*le beate case*); hell, on the other hand, was “the house of the devil” (*la casa del diavolo*) or “the infernal house” (*la casa inferna*). “The house of God” could also be the physical church building, reflected in the tendency of various Italian cities, Florence included, to call their major cathedral a “*duomo*,” based on the Latin word for house (*domus*).<sup>39</sup>

We find this usage in Quattrocento Florentine writings as well, often to indicate a variety of dwellings. Filigno de’ Medici, a fourteenth-century predecessor of Lorenzo, recorded “memories of past things” in part to create a record of “lands and houses” (*terre e chase*) in the family’s possession.<sup>40</sup> Lorenzo mentions in his *ricordanze* that his uncle Giovanni passed away “in our house in Florence” (*nella nostra casa di Firenze*), referring to the Palazzo Medici.<sup>41</sup> Matteo Franco, a priest in service of the Medici household, writes that their travelling party “entered the house” (*n’entramo in casa*) to indicate that they entered into the Palazzo Medici. In the next sentence, he reports that he then “went away to [his] house” (*anda’mene a casa mia*) when describing how he returned to his own humbler abode nearby.<sup>42</sup> *Casa* could also refer to a villa: household tutor Poliziano complained to Lorenzo’s mother, Lucrezia Tornabuoni, that bad winter weather was keeping himself and the Medici

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39. TLIO, s.v. “casa s.f.”

40. “farò memoria delle cose passate chio vedrò ... che conserviate quelle terre e chase, che troverete inscrite in questo libro ....” Filigno seems here to mean ‘vidi’ rather than ‘vedrò.’ Filigno de’ Medici, quoted in Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis*, 2:5.

41. Lorenzo de’ Medici, quoted in Fabroni, 7.

42. Matteo Franco to Piero Dovizi, 12 May, 1485, in Franco, *Lettere*, ed. Giovanna Frosini (Florence: Accademia della Crusca, 1990), 83.

children stuck inside the villa of Cafaggiolo: “we have so much water, and so constantly, that we cannot exit the house ....”<sup>43</sup>

The second meaning pertains to “the set of people that live in a habitation.”<sup>44</sup> This was the meaning used to designate a taxable household in official tax-rolls (*catasti*), but it was also used in daily life. When the poet Luigi Pulci wanted to convey greetings, he asked Lorenzo to salute “everyone in the house” (*tutti in casa*).<sup>45</sup> Clarice insisted to Franceschetto Cybo, the husband of her daughter Maddalena, that “it would be far better for [Cybo], for madonna Maddalena, and for [Cybo’s] house to keep [Matteo Franco] close to himself ....”<sup>46</sup> Franco was, in Clarice’s view, an indispensable member of her own *casa*, and for this reason she had chosen him above all others to become a part of her beloved daughter’s marital *casa* in Rome.

The *casa* could also take on the meaning of a lineage, especially of a noble or important family. God could “build up the house” (*edificare la casa*) of Tuscan families by granting them children.<sup>47</sup> Houses could also be “built up” when members earned honour and prestige: when Giovanni di Lorenzo was made a Cardinal, Lorenzo saw it as “the greatest dignity” that their *casa* had received.<sup>48</sup> Sadly, the *casa* could also be diminished: Filigno de’ Medici

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43. “noi habbiamo tanta acqua et si continua che non possiamo uscire di casa ....” Poliziano to Lucrezia Tornabuoni, 18 December 1478, in Tornabuoni, *Lettere, 1425-1482*, ed. Patrizia Salvadori (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1993), 153-54.

44. “L’insieme delle persone che vivono in un’abitazione.” TLIO, s.v. “casa s.f.”

45. Pulci to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 12 January, 1467, in Pulci, *Morgante e Lettere*, ed. Domenico de Robertis (Florence: Sasoni, 1959), 953.

46. Franco to Dovizi, 6 May, 1488, in Franco, *Lettere*, 88.

47. TLIO, s.v. “casa s.f.”

48. Lorenzo de’ Medici to Giovanni de’ Medici, 1492, quoted in Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis*, 2:308.



reported of his lineage that “since I was born there have died in our house [*casa*] around a hundred men ....”<sup>49</sup> *Case* could also, as lineages, form alliances and friendships. Lucrezia Tornabuoni, in recommending a Ser Pavolo to her son, describes him as “an old friend of our house.”<sup>50</sup> Ser Pavolo, in being a friend to multiple generations of Medici, was thus a friend to the entire *casa*, the entire lineage.

*Casa*, therefore, had several overarching definitions that, though not synonymous, were also closely connected to one another: it was a physical edifice, but also those who dwelt inside it. At the same time, all one’s ancestors were enduring and eternal members of the *casa*, unifying the lineage into the visible form of living descendants and their hearths. It was the locus of an Italian’s possessions and citizenship, representing their presence within the *patria* as well as the origins of that presence and citizenship.

### *Famiglia*

*Famiglia* has an even wider and more diverse range of meanings attached to it. TLIO primarily defines it as

A social group composed of people, generally cohabitants, linked by the bonds of marriage or by the relations of kinship .... A set of blood relatives and of servants who live in the same house and are subject to the authority of the *paterfamilias*.<sup>51</sup>

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49. “E’ nota poi chio naqqi sono morti di casa nostra intorno a cento uomeni ....” Filigno de’ Medici, quoted in Fabroni, 6.

50. “il quale è antico amico di casa nostra.” Tornabuoni to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 27 October, 1467, in Tornabuoni, *Lettere*, 67-68.

51. “Nucleo sociale composto da persone, gen[er]almente] coabitanti, legate dal vincolo matrimoniale o da un rapporto di parentela .... Insieme dei consanguinei e dei servitori che abitano in una stessa casa e sono soggetti all’autorità del *paterfamilias*.” TLIO, s.v. “famiglia (1) s.f.,” accessed 13 September, 2016, <http://tlio.ovi.cnr.it/voci/024777.htm>.

A *famiglia* was thus primarily a cohabiting kin group; that is, what we in the modern west would call a household. This group was formed through matrimony or blood relation, but ostensibly this could include a wide number of permutations depending on economics and other factors such as the mortality rate. *Famiglia* could extend to include not just the kin living together, but also servants. In fact, *famiglia* could be used, in some contexts, to refer specifically to a group of domestic servants.<sup>52</sup> The *famiglia* of the Sforza court, for example, included not only family members and courtiers, but also attendants and servants.<sup>53</sup> The definitive element is that all members, whether kin or servant, were ideally subject to a patriarchal household head. This household head, the *capo di famiglia*, was usually also the *padre di famiglia*, or *paterfamilias*, who was recognized as leader by both legal texts and cultural mores. In casual correspondence, however, the interpretation of this word can be tricky. Clarice Orsini, for example, sent word to her mother-in-law requesting “four pairs of sheets for us and four for the *famiglia* ....”<sup>54</sup> It seems that Clarice is asking for four pairs for herself and the children, along with four pairs for their attendants.

*Famiglia* could also be stretched to an even more abstract level, referring to “members of a group, a community, or of a court.”<sup>55</sup> In this way,

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52. TLIO, s.v. “famiglia (1) s.f.”

53. Sabine Eiche, “Towards a Study of the ‘Famiglia’ of the Sforza Court at Pesaro.” *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et réforme* 9, no. 2 (May 1985): 79; Guido Guerzoni and Guido Alfani, “Court History and Career Analysis: A Prosopographic Approach to the Court of Renaissance Ferrara,” *The Court Historian* 12, no. 1 (2007): 9.

54. “Mandatemi ... 4 paia di lençuola per noi e 4 per la famiglia ....” Clarice Orsini to Tornabuoni, 2 June, 1479, in Tornabuoni, *Lettere*, 156.

55. “membri di un gruppo, di una comunità o di una corte.” TLIO, s.v. “famiglia (1) s.f.”

the members of a monastery, all subject to the authority of their abbot, could form a *famiglia*, as could the courtiers and servants of a noble. When referring to his son Giovanni and his new retinue in Rome, Lorenzo calls them “the new family and the new master.”<sup>56</sup> It could even act as a synonym for the physical *casa*: “I would sooner want a beautiful stable and a clean and orderly house [*famiglia*] than a rich and pompous one,” Lorenzo advised Giovanni.<sup>57</sup> By tying *famiglia* to the physical edifice of the stable, Lorenzo seems to be explicitly using *famiglia* in a physical sense, though it could also by extension include the cleanliness and orderliness of all those living and working within that home.

In everyday writing and correspondence, however, the Medici and their associates used other words than would be expected; rather than using *famiglia* or *casa* to indicate a household, they often used more informal substitutes. These synonyms provide a more detailed picture of how they saw the *casa* and the *famiglia*. Filigno de’ Medici described his living family as being made up of “around fifty men.”<sup>58</sup> He gives us no estimate of the women or children, suggesting that men were the backbone of the lineage. Often, when talking about home, travelling family members would simply say “there” (*costà*, or the less poetic *costì*). Lucrezia promised to tell her husband Piero more details “when I am there” (*quando sarò costà*), meaning in Florence with Piero.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, she regretfully reported to her son that “we

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56. “la famiglia [e] il padron nuovo.” Lorenzo de’ Medici to Giovanni de’ Medici, 1492, quoted in Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis*, 2:311.

57. “più presto vorrei bella stalla & famiglia ordinata & polita, che ricca & pomposa.” Fabroni, 311.

58. “E’ oggi in questo di, lodato Idio, siamo uomeni intorno cinquanta.” Filigno de’ Medici, Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis*, 2:6.

59. Tornabuoni to Piero il Gottoso, 5 April, 1467, in Tornabuoni, *Lettere*, 64.

will not be there [*costi*] before Monday.”<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, when expressing his wish to return to Florence and his new wife, Lorenzo simply wrote that he desired “to be back” (*essere tornato*).<sup>61</sup>

Italians could also refer to *famiglia* simply as “ours” (*nostro*). The priest Cristofano di Maso preceded news about Medici family members with the sympathetic musing that “hearing news about the well-being of ‘ours’” can bring “contentment and happiness” to the recipient.<sup>62</sup> By using these simplifications in their letters, Florentines demonstrated both personalization and commonality in the way they thought about home: it was “there” (or sometimes “here”), that is, in Florence with one’s fellow household members. *Casa*, *famiglia*, and even *patria* were thus all lumped together in the same vague terminology. Household members were family, but on a more basic level they were simply “ours,” revealing a deep sense of both ownership and belonging.

### *Brigata*

One synonym for both *casa* and *famiglia* that appears multiple times throughout the Medici letters is the term *brigata*, which translates most closely into English as ‘brigade,’ though this translation is specifically militaristic. Few historians have looked at the *brigata* as a historical social construct, and until now it appears that none have looked explicitly at the

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60. “Prima che lunedì non saremo costì ....” Tornabuoni to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 18 June, 1477, in Tornabuoni, 88.

61. Lorenzo de’ Medici to Clarice Orsini, 22 July, 1469, in Lorenzo de’ Medici, *Lettere*, 1:42.

62. “quanto più del bene nostro se ne sente novelle, più è d’averne contentamento e alegrça ....” Cristofano d’Antonio di Maso to Tornabuoni, 25 September, 1473, in Tornabuoni, *Lettere*, 123.

instances in which *brigata* was used to indicate household, or when household and *brigata* overlapped. The entire household could be referred to as a *brigata*, especially during times of travel. Households could also be divided into separate *brigata* as one or more household groups travelled and another remained at home. Members of the household might belong to separate *brigata*, such as Lorenzo and Giuliano, who had their own *brigata* of young friends outside of the household *brigata*, though some members of this *brigata*, such as Pulci, were also counted as part of the Medici household at various points in their lives. This social group was, like the household, amorphous and ever-changing.

TLIO, which relies mainly upon literary sources, reflects the more traditional definition of the *brigata* that is described in literary works like Boccaccio's *Decameron*. According to TLIO, the *brigata* was primarily "a group of people assembled for pleasure."<sup>63</sup> Dante speaks of the *brigata spendereccia*, a group of men who got together for the purposes of spending lavishly. Giovanni Villani, meanwhile, speaks of *brigata* assembled for the purposes of amusements and celebration.<sup>64</sup> Florentines would *fare*, 'make,' *brigata* on special occasions, "once or twice a year," in order to celebrate or have fun together.<sup>65</sup> Boccaccio tells us that often this would involve "dressing up together," quite possibly in matching outfits, "riding through the land together," and "dining and supping together."<sup>66</sup> Members could be 'in' (*stare*

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63. "Gruppo di persone che stanno assieme per diporto." TLIO, s.v. "brigata s.f.," accessed 19 October, 2016, <http://tlio.ovni.cnr.it/voci/006678.htm>.

64. Giovanni Villani, quoted in TLIO.

65. "una volta o due l'anno ...." TLIO.

66. "vestirsi insime ..., cavalcare per la terra insieme, desinare e cenare insieme ...." Giovanni Boccaccio, quoted in TLIO.

*in* or *essere in*) a *brigata* as well as being ‘at’ (*essere a*) a *brigata*. Boccaccio writes “‘Tonight I was at the *brigata*’” when a character means he was at one of the regular banquets held by an exclusive group of associates.<sup>67</sup> In this instance, the *brigata* is identified so strongly with the group’s dinners that they are one in the same: to be at a dinner is to be at the *brigata*, and vice versa. People would *brigatare*, or ‘go brigading,’ for lack of a better term, when they joined up with others to seek out “‘pleasure.’”<sup>68</sup>

However, we find in TLIO that pleasure and dining were not the only contexts in which Florentines used this word. *Brigata* could also apply to the “companies” or “followings” of rulers. A more enduring definition, one which is still in use today, is explicitly militaristic. As mentioned above, the literal modern translation of *brigata* is ‘brigade,’ that is, a group of soldiers – a use which stretches back to at least the early fourteenth century. Leaders or cities could “make a brigade” (*fare brigata*), and an individual could join a militia, or “put oneself in a brigade” (*mettersi in brigata*) during times of conflict. Rulers or communities could also “welcome” or “accommodate a brigade” of soldiers (*accogliere brigata*) into a city or territory for political or military purposes.<sup>69</sup>

Historians of Quattrocento Florence tend to use the vocabulary of the *brigata* when writing about friendship. These friendships could include both quasi-militaristic violence and hedonistic pleasure-seeking. Carol Lansing defines *brigate* as “groups of idle young men, some of them trained in the

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67. “‘Stanotte fu’ io alla brigata.’” TLIO.

68. TLIO, s.v. “brigatare v.,” accessed 28 October, 2016, <http://tlio.ovl.cnr.it/voci/006679.htm>.

69. TLIO, s.v. “brigata s.f.”

military and most of them left with few responsibilities” who “rode together” and had a tendency towards violent brawls – especially with the *brigata* of other lineages.<sup>70</sup> When interpreting letters between friends, meanwhile, Dale Kent focuses on the use of *brigata* as “a group of friends” who spent their time dining and pursuing pleasure. If one friend was away, the rest of the *brigata* “bemoaned his absence,” especially “on festive occasions.”<sup>71</sup>

Teodolinda Barolini, too, sees the *brigata* as a primarily hedonistic group. However, Barolini imposes several limitations upon membership in *brigata*. “Making a *brigata*” could involve, according to Boccaccio, one’s neighbours in the same district.<sup>72</sup> However, this did not include all one’s neighbours: those involved in a *brigata* would, by necessity, have to be rich enough to participate fully in the often-expensive travelling and feasting.<sup>73</sup> One such *brigata* required that new members dress formally for their “first presentation,” and it was expected that members of a *brigata* would take turns hosting one another or contribute to the cost of the group dinners.<sup>74</sup> In “*brigata* of amusements” (*brigata di sollazzi*), then, membership was determined not only by location but by wealth.

However, even more important than wealth in Barolini’s view is gender: “the mixed-gender *brigata* of the *Decameron*,” she emphasizes, “is a

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70. Carol Lansing, *The Florentine Magnates: Lineage and Faction in a Medieval Commune* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 188.

71. Dale Kent, *Friendship, Love and Trust*, 72.

72. Teodolinda Barolini, “Sociology of the *Brigata*: Gendered Groups in Dante, Forese, Folgore, Boccaccio – From ‘Guido, i’ vorrei’ to Griselda,” *Italian Studies* 67, no. 1 (March 2012): 13.

73. “quegli vicini, li quali per costumi e per ricchezza poteano ....” TLIO, s.v. “brigata s.f.”

74. Barolini, “Sociology of the Brigata,” 14-15.

veritable impossibility.”<sup>75</sup> She argues that historians are mistaken to interpret the word *brigata* as the sort of mixed-gender social group found in the *Decameron*. In fact, she points out, “Boccaccio himself ... offers only two instances” of mixed-gender *brigata* “in the *novelle*,” both of which involve only “brief and necessary travel to reach a destination.”<sup>76</sup> The “fundamentally normative” *brigata* was masculine in nature and held together by patriarchal expectations.<sup>77</sup> In this view, even if the men of the *brigata* occasionally enjoyed socializing with fine ladies at parties or tournaments, these ladies were not considered to be a part of the *brigata* itself: no matter what their relationship to the men, they were still denied membership.<sup>78</sup> Female presence was far more often considered to be a ball and chain around the ankles of men who were trying to have a good time: in the company of gentlewomen, men had to rein in their appetites for food, wine, violence, and loose women.

These current definitions of Florentine *brigata* appear to be overly focused on the aspect of pleasure-seeking over all else. This is not to say that entertainment was not an important characteristic of many *brigata*, but it was certainly not the only one. Neither Dale Kent nor Barolini pay much attention to the possible importance of other activities, like worshipping or travelling, to many *brigata*; Barolini in fact downplays the role of travel in the life of these social groups. Only Lansing stresses the tendency of *brigata* members to ride together, and even then, the violent tendencies implicit in this group

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75. Barolini, 5.

76. Barolini, 15-16.

77. Barolini, 20.

78. Barolini, 12.



activity are emphasized over the activity itself. There is also a focus, as we have seen, on the exclusivity of *brigata*: one must be young, male, and wealthy enough to participate in group activities.

There is still a significant gap in the current research pertaining to how Quattrocento Florentines defined *brigata* on a daily, casual, and non-literary basis. In what situations did they use it, and what did it usually signify? What were different types of *brigata*, and what were their typical activities? I do not intend to redefine the parameters of Quattrocento Florentine *brigata* at large; rather, I am concerned with the question of how Lorenzo and his correspondents in specific used *brigata*, and how these *brigata* interacted and overlapped with Lorenzo's household. As we shall see, much like Tadmor's concept of the elastic household-family, there was in Florence a similarly elastic concept of a household-*brigata*.

Though *brigata* are in current scholarship often associated with young male friendships, as we see in Lansing's definition, letters between Lorenzo, his friends, and his family would suggest that one of the chief uses of the word in the Quattrocento was as a synonym for the household/family as a whole or specific groups of household members. Francis William Kent notes in passing that tax records often used *brigata* interchangeably with *famiglia* when speaking of household units.<sup>79</sup> This can also be explicitly illustrated by comparing two letters from Lorenzo's youth: Lorenzo and Giuliano sent news to their father from Cafaggiolo that "the family [*famiglia*] of Maestro Zanobi has gone to Ghagliano," and the same day, a worker from Cafaggiolo,

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79. Francis William Kent, *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence: The Family Life of the Capponi, Ginori and Rucellai* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 5.

Francesco Fracassini, reported to Piero that “Maestro Zanobi left yesterday evening with his *brigata* ....”<sup>80</sup> Lorenzo, Giuliano, and Fracassini were all referring to the same group of people – that is, Maestro Zanobi and his cohort – and each party apparently assumed that Piero would grasp their meaning.

That *brigata* could be used in place of *casa* or *famiglia* is borne out in other Medici letters. Lucrezia Tornabuoni wrote to her husband in 1468 while she was away at the baths, asking him to “Comfort the whole *brigata* on my behalf.”<sup>81</sup> Though Lucrezia does not mention who was in this *brigata* in this particular letter, her closing remark echoes those of other letters in which she lists household members: a few weeks before, she’d told Piero to “Comfort those children” for her.<sup>82</sup> Using similar language, she also told Piero at one point to “Salute that whole *brigata* of ours.”<sup>83</sup> Much like the *famiglia*, the *brigata* was ‘ours,’ and when it was used as a synonym for the household, it was often ‘head-quartered’ back in Florence.

This is supported by a similar usage in one of Lorenzo’s early letters to Clarice only a year later: “be good company to Piero and to Lady Lucrezia, and tell Nannina that I will return Bernardo [Rucellai] safe and sound. Salute the whole other *brigata* on my behalf, and be careful to stay healthy.”<sup>84</sup> The

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80. “la famiglia di maestro Zanobi n’andasse a Ghagliano ....” Lorenzo and Giuliano de’ Medici to Piero il Gottoso, 7 June, 1464, in Lorenzo de’ Medici, *Lettere*, 1:9; “Zanobi maestro partì iersera cholla sua brigata ....”; Francesco Fracassini to Piero il Gottoso, 7 June, 1464, quoted in Lorenzo de’ Medici, *Lettere*, 1:9n3. ‘Gaghliano’ is probably today’s Galliano, a small village that once belonged to the Medici

81. “Conforta tuta la brighata per mia parte.” Tornabuoni to Piero il Gottoso, 1 July, 1468, in Tornabuoni, *Lettere*, 69.

82. “Conforta chotesti figliuoli ....” Tornabuoni to Piero il Gottoso, 4 May, 1467, in Tornabuoni, 67.

83. “Saluta tutta cotesta nostra brigata ....” Tornabuoni to Piero il Gottoso, 13 April, 1467, in Tornabuoni, 66.

84. “Intanto fa buona compagnia a Piero et a m(onn)a Lucretia, et di’ alla Nannina che io li rimenerò Bernardo tosto et bene. Saluta tutta l’altra brigata per mia parte, e attendi

clarification of “the whole **other brigata**” (*tutta l'altra brigata*) seems to imply that the family members at home *already* constituted at least one *brigata*, the other perhaps being the group of close friends mentioned above.

Addressing Niccolò Michelozzi, Lucrezia wrote:

I had great consolation of the *brigata*'s health, and may it please God to maintain it forever. I ask you to more frequently give me news of their health, because there is nothing more joyous that you can do for me. Salute the *brigata* on my behalf and commend me to Lorenzo and to everyone; say how I am well and how the baths do me the greatest profit, thanks be to God.<sup>85</sup>

Two days later, she wrote him again, emphasizing that “about the healthy *brigata* and about the other news you gave me great consolation.” Lucrezia depended upon the ever-reliable household secretary to relay news about the household-*brigata*'s well-being and doings, and from her letters, it seems he was quite dutiful in this regard. In another such letter, she reports that a recent message was “of great comfort” (*di gran conforto*), especially because of “the healthy *brigata* and such happy and eager children.”<sup>86</sup> In singling out her very young grandchildren in the same breath as the *brigata*, Lucrezia may have considered them to also be part of the *brigata*: the household-*brigata* thus spanned multiple generations rather than, like the youthful *brigata*, being mainly made up of a single age group.

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a stare sana.” Lorenzo de' Medici to Clarice Orsini, 24 July, 1469, in Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, 1:43. “Tosto et bene” can be literally translated as “tough and well.”

85. “Ho auto consolatione grande della brigata sana, che così piaccia a Dio sempre mantenere. Pregovi che più spesso pote[te] di lor valitudine mi diate aviso, perché nessuna cosa più gioconda far mi potresti. Salutate la brigata per mia parte e a Lorenzo e a tutti mi raccomandate; dite come io sono sana e come el bagno parmi facci profitto grandissimo, Idio gratia.” Tornabuoni to Michelozzi, 20 May, 1477, in Tornabuoni, *Lettere*, 82.

86. “m'è stata di gran conforto, massime intendendo la brigata sana e ' fanciugli sì lieti e di buona vogla ....” Tornabuoni to Michelozzi, 5 June, 1477, in Tornabuoni, 85.

The *brigata* could also be a travelling party, usually made up of family members, associates, and attendants. This usage is of interest in Chapter 4, in which it is used to designate a group of household members, including Clarice, Poliziano, the Medici children, at least one priest, and servants, all of whom were sent away to the Mugello for safety.<sup>87</sup> Though travelling in *brigata* to villas was a regular activity in Renaissance Italy, this was a notably extraordinary circumstance in which the Medici household's nuclear centre was split in two for an extended period, causing strain on each half. Letters from Clarice suggest that the separated group in the Mugello was also a form of household-*brigata*: "I would like you to send some things from there [*costi*]," she asked her mother-in-law, once again using *costi* as shorthand for Florence. She adds, "if I receive nothing, I have no management of this *brigata*."<sup>88</sup> Poliziano's letters further support this, as he exclusively uses *brigata* to refer to this group. "Madonna Clarice is well," he reports, "and so is the whole of this *brigata*."<sup>89</sup> Clarice, mentioned individually, is not separate from this *brigata* but, rather, has primacy of place. This is made clear in later letters, when Poliziano reports, "This whole *brigata* of yours is well" before going on to speak of the individuals within the *brigata*, Clarice among them.<sup>90</sup>

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87. The Mugello is a valley north of Florence and the historic homeland of the Medici family. Lorenzo and his family owned several villas in this area, including Cafaggiolo and Trebbio. With the triple threat in Florence of political unrest, war, and plague after the Pazzi conspiracy of 1478, Lorenzo sent his wife and children to the Mugello for safekeeping.

88. "Vorrei mi mandassi delle cose di costi, che se mi avenissi nulla, non ho da governare questa brighata." Clarice Orsini to Tornabuoni, 2 June, 1479, in Tornabuoni, *Lettere*, 156.

89. "Madonna Clarice sta bene, e così tutta questa brigata." Poliziano to Lorenzo de' Medici, 26 August, 1478, in Poliziano, *Prose volgare inedite e poesie latine e greche edite e inedite*, ed. del Lungo (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1867), 59.

90. "Tutta questa vostra brigata sta bene." Poliziano to Lorenzo de' Medici, 31 August, 1478, in Poliziano, 61.

Contemporary correspondence suggests that women – at least noble or wealthy women – could be leaders of mixed-gender *brigata*, contrary to current literary scholarship on these groups. Clarice’s continued primacy of place in mentions of the *brigata* in the Mugello suggests that she was the main authority of this household-*brigata*. Lorenzo’s eldest daughter, also named Lucrezia, sent her grandmother news that another female-led *brigata*, “Lady Bartolomea with all her *brigata*,” came to visit Clarice’s *brigata* at the Medici villa in Careggi.<sup>91</sup> Lucrezia Tornabuoni had held authority over *brigata* as well. She wrote to Piero in Florence in 1458: “I see all my *brigata* is well,” likely responding to Piero’s most recent message, “I had the great consolation to hear they are healthy, for which I thank you ....”<sup>92</sup> At the time, Lucrezia Tornabuoni was likely in Careggi, and was accompanied by her young sons Lorenzo and Giuliano, as well as their tutor. Even though she and her children (over whom she had the most direct authority) were absent, the *brigata* back home was not just **a** *brigata* but **her** *brigata*, implying a sense of authority over what may have been a mixed-gender group.

In upper-class households like that of the Medici, then, the *brigata* was not only a travelling party, nor was it an exclusively male group of friends, but rather another potential manifestation of the household, especially when that household was mobile. Households could briefly break into one or multiple *brigata*, but this never changed the household’s core identity as a unified group. Likewise, it did not change the nature of the household

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91. “et e qui con noi mona Bartolomea con tutta la sua brighata ....” Lucrezia di Lorenzo de’ Medici to Tornabuoni, 24 May, 1477, in Tornabuoni, *Lettere*, 145.

92. “Veggio tutta la brigata mia sta bene, che m’è suto di gran consolatione sentire loro essere sani, che ti ringratio ....” Tornabuoni to Piero il Gottoso, 28 February, 1458, in Tornabuoni, 55.

members in the *brigata*; they remained household members. However, as we shall see in chapter four, the physical distance between *brigata* and the rest of the household could contribute to tensions between separated household members, especially if those members had different views and goals regarding household activity.

This chapter has, I hope, helped to set the scene for the rest of this thesis. In order to fully understand the emotional connections which shaped Lorenzo as a person, it is important to understand the setting in which that identity was forged. Just as important is understanding the way he and his household thought of themselves as a group, as well as the expectations which accompanied these self-conceptions. Vocabulary choices reflected how household members viewed themselves and their households: a household was a structure, a family, and an in-group, but it was also “ours” (*nostrum*) or “here” (*qui, qua*). The household/family was also closely connected to the *brigata*, as seen in the way Florentines regularly used this word to refer to household members. Their shared vocabulary allowed them to communicate unspoken, shared ideas about their lives together as well as build up their sense of camaraderie and, by extension, their individual identities. The Medici household was a permeable structure, both literally and figuratively. Visitors could enter even the most sacred of spaces as tourists, and the boundaries of the household extended far beyond the walls of the palace. In the same way, membership depended not only on kinship or economic bonds, but also on emotional bonds. Those who became emotionally entangled with the Medici household could become a part of it, with, as we shall see, various results.

## Chapter Two: Raising Lorenzo

By Lorenzo's birth in 1449, his grandfather, Cosimo il Vecchio, had built the Medici bank into one of the greatest centres of wealth in Europe and had overcome political opposition to make his family the unofficial citizen-rulers of the Florentine Republic. With his two sons, Piero and Giovanni, Cosimo began to consider establishing a lasting Medicean dynasty which could weather the turbulent Florentine political scene. He likely anticipated, as did Medicean philosopher Marsilio Ficino, a line of first citizens who led republican Florence through personal influence rather than brute force.<sup>1</sup> Lorenzo was to be the next link in a patrilineal chain ensuring Medici dominance; in effect, a new Cosimo. The old Cosimo passed away when Lorenzo was only fifteen, but as we shall see, his formidable presence would continue to influence Lorenzo throughout his life.

As Lorenzo's father, Piero il Gottoso was the primary parent responsible for overseeing and ensuring his development. Florentine legal and social systems emphasized the unique bond between fathers and sons. Sons were literal embodiments of their fathers, and their virtues and abilities defined the destiny of the family. However, Piero was also debilitated by his ill health for most of his adulthood, leading him to rely on his eldest son even more than usual. The emotional relationship between Lorenzo and his father was formed within this context, and it was intensified by the constant reminders to grow up faster (and better) than his peers and become a man worthy of Cosimo's legacy. Though their relationship reflected aspects of the typical father-son bond in Renaissance Florence, it also reflected the intense

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1. See Marsilio Ficino to Michelozzi, 21 January, 1473, in Ficino, *Epistolae Marsilii Ficini Florentini* (Nuremberg: Anton Koberger, 1497), 10v-11r.

pressure that Medici men placed on their sons. This chapter will focus on the vocabulary used by Lorenzo and Piero with an aim to better understand the emotions running through this relationship and their legacy in Lorenzo's life.

Under the leadership of *paterfamilias* Piero, grooming Lorenzo into a future leader was a household project. It involved not only his parents and close kin, such as his mother Lucrezia and paternal uncle Giovanni, but all those with whom he shared space in the palace on the Via Larga, especially tutors and spiritual advisors such as Marsilio Ficino and Gentile Becchi. These men would provide guidance both in- and outside the home, allowing the infirm Piero to extend his influence over his son farther than he would be able to otherwise. Though this process was unique in scope and goal, it did not supplant traditional Florentine expectations for rearing sons; rather, it used those expectations as a foundation. Lorenzo had to meet all the typical milestones of young Florentine patricians, but these milestones came earlier and carried greater weight than they would for his peers.

In Renaissance Florence, as in much of premodern Europe, a male's growth from childhood into adulthood was closely tied to popular conceptions of masculinity. However, immature masculinity was considered quite different from mature masculinity: while adolescent boys were wild, licentious, and energetic, adult manhood was characterised by decorum, temperance, and reason. Youth (*gioventù*) was therefore a critical period, in which youths (*giovani*) learned to be men. Their success in this venture played a crucial role in whether they or their lineages survived. The notable ways in which Lorenzo's youth diverged from that of his peers thus throw the experiences of the "typical" young man into stark relief. Lorenzo's high-pressure upbringing would not only compress this developmental period, but



its effects would last well into mature manhood. As an adult, Lorenzo tried to recapture the *gioventù* which he felt had gone by too swiftly, leading his critics to frequently characterise him as something of a perpetual adolescent. Indeed, as I shall demonstrate, he even embraced this persona.

## Historiography

### Fathers and Sons

The history of Italian fatherhood, especially the premodern father-son relationship, has evolved rapidly in a short time. The first major modern historian of children and the family, Philippe Ariès, paid little attention to fathers, assuming them to be mostly uninvolved and uninterested in the lives of their children.<sup>2</sup> Following Ariès, Klapisch-Zuber suggests that fathers only began to show interest in children in the early modern period, and then only in “the very young child,” romanticised as a figure of innocence and playfulness.<sup>3</sup> After that delicate age, sons were primarily a vessel for their male ancestors’ immortality.<sup>4</sup> From the numerical data on premodern Tuscan naming practices, she concludes, the father was emotionally invested in his children only as a means of resurrecting past attachments, not as individuals.<sup>5</sup>

The rise of a scholarly interest in mourning in the 1980s and 1990s led to a rise in studies on humanist consolation literature, which in turn

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2. Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (London: Cape, 1962), 30.

3. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, “Childhood in Tuscany at the Beginning of the Fifteenth Century,” in *Women, Family, and Ritual*, 114.

4. Klapisch-Zuber, “Childhood in Tuscany,” 111; Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, “The Name ‘Remade’: The Transmission of Given Names in Florence in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,” in *Women, Family, and Ritual*, 290.

5. Klapisch-Zuber, “The Name ‘Remade,’” 300.

created a new interest in consolations by and for fathers in response to the loss of a child. George McClure primarily explores humanist fathers' philosophical approaches to grief after their sons had died.<sup>6</sup> The nature of the father-son bond is explained only in terms of these fathers' loss of an heir, a "crutch" (*baculus*) in their "old age" (*senectutis*).<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, King argues that "excessive" grief was still taboo for men: "the great majority of the parents who grieved" for children, she writes, "were mothers."<sup>8</sup> Mourning literature was not reflective of most fathers' actual mourning process. In her view, fathers were less likely to mourn the child if it was under seven, for those years were the business of the mother. The mother, who spent more time with the infant, and whose relationship was almost entirely emotional, thus mourned more deeply.<sup>9</sup> Fathers were more concerned with "[preparing] the child to fulfil the responsibilities of class and rank" than nurture, and though they might supervise their babies' nursing, they generally remained less emotionally invested in young children.<sup>10</sup> The extreme grief found in consolation literature, King suggests, is an aberration, reflecting "the particular sensitivity of men of letters" and the feminization, so to speak, of the learned classes.<sup>11</sup> She further writes that excessive grief might have been

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6. George W. McClure, "The Art of Mourning: Autobiographical Writings on the Loss of a Son in Italian Humanist Thought," *Renaissance Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (Autumn 1986): 440-475.

7. McClure, 460.

8. Margaret L. King, *The Death of the Child Valerio Marcello* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 149.

9. Margaret L. King, 150-51.

10. Margaret L. King, 151.

11. Margaret L. King, 155.

due to transference: a child's death might have "accumulated all of [the father's] unexpressed sorrow" from the un-mourned deaths of others.<sup>12</sup>

Richard Trexler analyses the personal account of Giovanni Morelli, who was emotionally devastated by the loss of his son Alberto. Like King, Trexler attributes this extreme grief to transference: Morelli transferred the traumatic experience of his father's death during his own childhood onto his son's death.<sup>13</sup> Trexler explicitly ties Morelli's feelings of childhood abandonment to his guilt at not being a better, more caring father: just as both he and his father had been orphaned, he was guilty of emotionally "orphaning" Alberto, and not realizing it until it was too late.<sup>14</sup> For Morelli, the core of the ideal father-son relationship was the guidance, authority, wisdom, and virtue that the father provided to the son.<sup>15</sup> This relationship, because the father and the son are existentially the same person, was the purest possible form of human love.<sup>16</sup> However, this early study of Florentine father-son relationships is limited. Morelli writes out of extreme guilt and regret as a means of cleansing himself. His sins are therefore the focus. If interpreted literally, it seems as if Renaissance fathers had very little to do with their sons outside of correcting and chastising them. Morelli's picture of himself as a father is one who is emotionally closed off and distant.

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12. Margaret L. King, 157-58. Transference is a Freudian concept, describing the psychological "phenomenon ... in which there is an unconscious redirection of feelings from one person to another." Shirah Vollmer, "Transference: Does the past influence the present?," *Learning to Play* (blog), *Psychology Today*, 6 January, 2010, accessed 18 March, 2019, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/learning-play/201001/transference>.

13. Trexler, *Dependence in Context in Renaissance Florence* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1994), 171.

14. Trexler, 173-74.

15. Trexler, *Public Life*, 171.

16. Trexler, 172.

The first major attempt to propose an alternative to this bleak view was came from Louis Haas, who argues that premodern fathers had always been emotionally engaged in their children's lives. This hypothesis, he admits, was formed from "a presupposition" that, if we look at "the structures of everyday life regarding childhood," we will find more continuity than change.<sup>17</sup> However, he also admits he has "deliberately excluded most legal sources" because they "can give an indistinct and even overly patriarchal cast to society."<sup>18</sup> Despite his attempts to correct earlier views, Haas follows previous family historians in assuming that patriarchy necessitates a repression of emotion between fathers and sons. Instead, because he finds evidence of affection in such relationships, he seems to believe that premodern Florence was not as patriarchal as previously assumed. While premodern fatherhood could be far more affectionate than previously recognised, Haas seems too quick to dismiss very real evidence of male hegemony in Florentine society. Furthermore, he makes the common mistake of equating affection with strong emotion. Even if men in a patriarchal culture are indeed less openly affectionate, they are not necessarily also less emotional: "negative" emotions such as anger and disappointment are still indicative of emotional investment in a relationship.

Following Haas, Chara Armon argues that Italian pedagogical and parental advice pamphlets are about control and discipline, which are implied to be contrary to a "true" emotional connection.<sup>19</sup> The cults of Joseph and the

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17. Louis Haas, *The Renaissance Man and His Children: Childbirth and Early Childhood in Florence, 1300-1600* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 9.

18. Haas, 13.

19. Chara Armon, "Fatherhood and the Language of Delight in Fifteenth-Century Italian Texts," in *Florence and Beyond*, 215.

Christ-child offered a Reddy-esque emotional refuge from this repression by emphasising the physicality of love: men, like Joseph, could kiss, coddle, and hug their infant sons.<sup>20</sup> But does an ethic of discipline and control necessarily oppose love and affection? Is emotion not involved in discipline and punishment? Is affection necessarily in opposition to (or exclusive of) anger, resentment, sadness, hurt, or other emotions associated with a controlling father?

Historians of premodern Italy have much to learn from scholars of premodern British masculinities. In 1999, authors like William Aird and Lisa Wilson began examining how British father-son relationships fit into the structure of hegemonic masculinity, in which there are power differentials not only between men and women, but also among men – including fathers and sons.<sup>21</sup> In a patriarchal culture, the father was expected to use his more powerful position to raise his sons into capable men. This process could involve a considerable amount of sternness and discipline, especially as growing sons might resent paternal authority and crave independence. According to Wilson, these fathers viewed discipline as a form of love: it not only prepared children for their future, but it protected their souls.<sup>22</sup> Joanne Bailey suggests that historians analyse premodern parenting by reframing it contextually, recognising “that parents can implement practices that might be

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20. Armon, 215-18.

21. W. M. Aird, “Frustrated Masculinity: The Relationship between William the Conqueror and his Eldest Son,” in *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. D. M. Hadley (Harlow, UK: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999), 39-55; Lisa Wilson, “‘Ye Heart of a Father’: Male Parenting in Colonial New England,” *Journal of Family History* 24, no. 3 (July 1999): 255-74.

22. Wilson, “‘Ye Heart of a Father,’” 255.

disapproved of in other times and places as a result of love for their children and in an attempt to act in their best interests.”<sup>23</sup>

Following on this, Moss approaches the subject by trying “to understand the late medieval father-son relationship on its own terms,” analysing how these relationships were constructed in writing.<sup>24</sup> She argues that the apparently formulaic and stilted nature of letters reflects the hierarchical nature of the father-son relationship, which “far from being devoid of emotional significance, was in fact based on an expectation of familial feeling.”<sup>25</sup> Rather than being “purely” affectionate, these relationships were characterised by a “blending of duty and affection” from both parties.<sup>26</sup>

As I shall demonstrate in this chapter, the relationship between Lorenzo and his father was also characterised by this “blending of duty and affection” as Piero prepared his eldest son to become his successor. As Moss illustrates, this process could cause significant tension between fathers and sons, but these “antagonistic elements ... [do] not preclude affectional ties.”<sup>27</sup> Rooted in both the wider Florentine expectations for masculine growth and behaviour, Lorenzo and Piero’s relationship was built upon a strong sense of mutual obligation and affection. However, Piero’s abilities as a father were limited due to his illness, and his heavy reliance on others to help him parent

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23. Joanne Bailey, “Reassessing Parenting in Eighteenth-Century England,” in *The Family in Early Modern England*, ed. Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 210.

24. Moss, *Fatherhood and Its Representations*, 73.

25. Moss, 82.

26. Moss, 88.

27. Moss, 110.

Lorenzo meant that Piero's fathering was often done at a distance. Additionally, the rushed nature of Lorenzo's youth – in which he was occasionally required to parent himself – seems to have engendered a certain sense of resentment in the young man. As I shall demonstrate through a close analysis of the emotional vocabulary used by both parties, the immensity of the obligation could become oppressive for the son, who may have felt he had no choice in the matter. This would heavily impact not only his early years, but also his adulthood.

### The Young Lorenzo

Most of Lorenzo's biographers have touched upon his youth and upbringing, but few have approached it as a subject worthy of study in and of itself. At most, it has been treated as a brief and transient period, only of importance insofar as it illustrates his political education. Rochon was the first historian to approach this period of Lorenzo's life as a unique area of study, though he does so out of the belief that he is examining the formation of a tyrant.<sup>28</sup> Rochon's text laid the groundwork for nearly all subsequent studies of Lorenzo's youth. However, his emotional insights into Lorenzo's early life are largely incidental to the study of Lorenzo's literary interests and education.

Following Rochon, Trexler proposes that Lorenzo easily stepped into the messianic imagery bequeathed to him by his elders during childhood.<sup>29</sup> This implies that this appropriation of religious imagery both came naturally to him and went unquestioned. In his analysis, the child Lorenzo easily grew

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28. Rochon, *La jeunesse*, 10, 85.

29. Trexler, "Lorenzo de' Medici and Savonarola, Martyrs for Florence," *Renaissance Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (Autumn 1978): 293-308.

into what was expected of him, acting as more of a holy doll for his family's usage rather than an active agent.<sup>30</sup> Trexler even describes Lorenzo as "a wax icon," whose "patterns of ... adult behaviour" did not manifest until much later.<sup>31</sup> In this analysis, the boy simply "embodied the status of his ailing father, of his family, and the hopes" of their supporters.<sup>32</sup> As I shall demonstrate, however, Lorenzo's writings reflect mixed feelings about being thrust into this position. Combined with letters from his elders, these sources suggest that Lorenzo sometimes had his own ideas about his life.

While Francis William Kent, like Rochon, is committed to a human portrait of Lorenzo, he takes issue with Rochon's description of the boy as a "young tyrant" practicing the moves of a future despot.<sup>33</sup> His actions were not nearly as self-assured as they would become, neither was his power as unquestioned. There was a learning curve – one that was far from easy. Kent's analysis gives Lorenzo far more agency, emphasizing the extreme pressure Piero put on Lorenzo to quickly become a competent political successor. This resulted in nostalgia throughout Lorenzo's writings, in which childhood and youth are quickly stolen away by time.<sup>34</sup> However, Kent doesn't take his analysis of Lorenzo and Piero's relationship further than this intense political pressure. Other sources suggest that their emotional connection contained more depth and nuance than the simple diametric of the anxious father and

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30. Trexler, *Public Life*, 428-32.

31. Trexler, 432.

32. Trexler, 433.

33. Francis William Kent, "The Young Lorenzo, 1449-69," in *Princely Citizen*, 36.

34. Francis William Kent, 2.



resentful teenager. As Piero groomed his son for the “throne,” there was, presumably, a variety of emotions involved between them.

Because historians have often overlooked Piero il Gottoso, his relationship with Lorenzo – along with the emotions involved – is difficult to trace.<sup>35</sup> His official “reign” was short due to his father’s longevity and his own chronic illness, and compared to the other men of his family, he was an introverted and reserved public figure. This lack of scholarly interest stands in stark contrast to works on his wife, Lucrezia. In fact, Lorenzo’s close relationship to his mother has long been acknowledged. Lucrezia was, to paraphrase Lorenzo’s own words, his safe haven from the world, someone he could turn to in times of weakness or pain. Her death was a devastating loss.<sup>36</sup> The domestic nature of their relationship seems to come with the assumption that it was more emotional, and therefore more central, to Lorenzo’s identity than his relationship with his father.

Francis William Kent was to further remark that there is “a life of Lorenzo framed by women, not just by Medici patriarchs,” which needs to be explored.<sup>37</sup> This interior life, he implies, was more emotional in nature than his male-defined life of patronage and politics. It is certainly true that most biographies of Lorenzo have emphasized the men in his life, but this suggests that Lorenzo’s masculine influences were lacking in a deeper emotional connection. Indeed, until now, the assumption has been that Lorenzo the

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35. For one of the few volumes devoted to Piero il Gottoso, see Beyer and Boucher, eds., *Piero de Medici ‘il Gottoso’ (1416-1469)*.

36. “avendo perduto non solamente la madre, ma uno unico refugio di molti mia fastidii et sublevamento de molte fatiche.” Lorenzo de’ Medici to Eleonora d’Aragona, 25 March, 1482, in Lorenzo de’ Medici, *Lettere*, 6:285-86.

37. Francis William Kent, “Love of Women,” 47.

patriarch, existing in a masculine world of politics and business, was a different man from the emotional poet and family man, who enjoyed coddling his children and admiring nature.<sup>38</sup> Emotion was no stranger to politics in the Renaissance; neither was it a stranger to male relationships, especially the father-son relationship. This connection may have been highly politicized, and it certainly involved different emotional behaviour than that between Lorenzo and his mother, but it was certainly not less emotionally charged.

Lorenzo, as I shall demonstrate, experienced an increased level of dissonance during his youth: he shared a liminal status in society alongside his peers, but his unique position obliged him to take on responsibilities that many of those peers would not experience for at least another decade. In the same way, his father educated him in patterns that were typical of Florentine fathers, but with even greater pressure on his son to quickly grow into his future role. Accordingly, his behaviour and even his emotions were closely regulated to ensure that he conformed to the image of the ideal Medici heir. The pressure and paternal control he experienced during this dissonant period affected him not only during his youth, but into his adulthood.

### **Youthful Ambiguities**

For most patrician Florentine males, youth was something of a limbo: neither children nor men, they were big enough to go out on their own, and even earn money, yet remained dependents under *patria potestas*. They were old enough to understand politics and participate in public spectacle, but they

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38. This characterisation goes back at least to Machiavelli, who described Lorenzo as divided between the identities of stern statesman and doting family man. See Niccolò Machiavelli, *Le istorie fiorentine*, ed. Giovanni Battista Niccolini (Florence: Felice Le Monnier, 1857), 431.

were barred from participation in legislation and public works until thirty.<sup>39</sup> They could experience sexual arousal and desire, but marriage usually would not occur until they were thirty or older. Religious and moral thinkers enjoined them to be chaste and sinless from the pulpit or popular tracts, but the ever-pragmatic lay Florentine attitude said that “the *giovani* should not discuss public affairs, but pursue their sexual needs.”<sup>40</sup>

*Giovani* were a temporarily disenfranchised group within Renaissance Florence. If their father was alive, they were legally under his power, unless they were emancipated.<sup>41</sup> As Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan has pointed out, the *giovane* was “defined by his incomplete socioeconomic integration.”<sup>42</sup> For at least fifteen years of his life, his identity lay in what was forbidden to him. According to the humoral science of the times, puberty rapidly moved the body from a childhood excess of cold humours to an adolescent excess of warm humours.<sup>43</sup> This made them irrational, rebellious, and impulsive by nature. At the same time, their bodies were quickly growing, which placed a childish temperament at the helm of a nearly adult body. Youths, Leon Battista Alberti argued, were too “unstable and lacking [in the] vigour to refrain and stop themselves with reason and good counsel,” and “the maturity

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39. Males were considered legal adults at eighteen in matters of sodomy. Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 51; Rocke, 114.

40. Donato Giannotti, *Opere politiche e letterarie di Donato Giannotti*, ed. F. Polidori (Florence: Felice Le Monnier, 1840), 1:230, quoted in Trexler, *Public Life*, 387. Translation by Trexler.

41. Kuehn, “Women, Marriage, and *Patria Potestas* in Late Medieval Florence,” *The Legal History Review* 49, no. 1 (January 1981): 128.

42. Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, “A Flower of Evil: Young Men in Medieval Italy,” in *A History of Young People in the West*, ed. Jean-Claude Schmitt and Giovanni Levi, trans. Camille Naish (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1997), 1:177.

43. Ilaria Taddei, *Fanciulli e giovani: Crescere a Firenze nel Rinascimento* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2001), 92-93.

to contain themselves in the importunity of their natural appetites.”<sup>44</sup> They could not possibly be entrusted with the political and social independence they coveted. Furthermore, the late age of marriage (and licit sexual outlets) heightened youthful discontent.<sup>45</sup> Kept in dependence and obedience, youths released their frustrations through illicit sex and violent outbursts.<sup>46</sup>

*Gioventù* thus presented a problem to Florentines, especially for those who wished to create a stable, well-ordered city.<sup>47</sup> Youths’ “natural appetites,” combined with boredom, often led them into sin. Licentiousness was the primary vice associated with youth, a product of the same warm humours that caused their unstable and unpredictable nature.<sup>48</sup> According to political theorist Ansaldo Ceba, young men were too caught up in preening and skirt-chasing to be constructive members of a Republic.<sup>49</sup> Religious leaders advised fathers to cool down their sons’ warm humours by guiding them into sobriety and moderation.<sup>50</sup> This would, it was hoped, help them to maintain control over their mutinous bodies. Without firm boundaries guarded at every moment by a watchful father, boys would inevitably fall into sin.

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44. “i giovanili poco fermi e manco robusti a raffrenare e fermare sé stessi con ragione e consiglio, e poco maturi a contenersi nella importunità de’ naturali appetiti.” Leon Battista Alberti, *I libri della famiglia* (Lexington, KY: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2012), 63.

45. Herlihy, “Psychological and Social Roots,” 147.

46. Herlihy, 149-50.

47. Crouzet-Pavan, “A Flower of Evil,” 183.

48. Taddei, *Fanciulli e giovani*, 87.

49. Ansaldo Ceba, “Il cittadino di repubblica,” in *Biblioteca enciclopedica italiana*, vol. 6, *Scrittori politici* (Milan: Fratelli Ubicini, 1839), 428. See Herlihy, “Psychological and Social Roots,” 136.

50. Taddei, *Fanciulli e giovani*, 98-99.

Florentine parents fretted about their teenaged sons, but it was acknowledged that a certain amount of intemperance was inevitable. Alberti advised empathy for this very reason: “if the children slip into some vice, I would think that the occasional error is a thing common to childhood.”<sup>51</sup> This made it even more important that the father “cut off ... in his [young men]” such “dangerous” vices as soon as they appear.<sup>52</sup> If vices were pruned early, they would hopefully not flourish in the hothouse of youth.

Youthful rebellion could function as a statement of independence.<sup>53</sup> Accordingly, fathers sometimes regarded it as a rejection, or even betrayal: “A man wants to have sons. But five times out of six they become his enemies, desiring their father’s death so that they can be free ....”<sup>54</sup> Rather than doing their filial duty, sons became resentful and disobedient. Alberti writes that “first among these vices most common to children” was being “contrarian and obstinate in saying and doing his opinions, never giving ear to others’ good counsel, always having too much faith in himself ....”<sup>55</sup> A child’s impetuous, proud attitude was externalized by “standing haughty, puffed up, full of venom and of hateful and intolerable words, so that he

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51. “e se pure e’ fanciulli sdruciolassino in qualche viziio, penserei che l’errare qualche volta si è cosa comune della fanciullezza.” Alberti, *Della famiglia*, 40. Taddei notes that *fanciulli* can be a rather broad term that covers adolescents and youths as well as children. See Ilaria Taddei, “*Puerizia, adolescenza and giovinezza: Images and Conceptions of Youth in Florentine Society during the Renaissance,*” in *The Premodern Teenager: Youth in Society, 1150-1650*, ed. and trans. Eisenbichler (Toronto: Centre for Renaissance Studies, 2002), 16.

52. “Però a’ padri sta molto debito a buona ora cominciare a rescare e sverglier ne’ suoi tanto e sí pericoloso vizio ....” Alberti, *Della famiglia*, 41.

53. Fulton, “The Boy Stripped Bare,” 32.

54. Franco Sacchetti, *Il trecentonovelle*, ed. V. Pernicone (Florence: Sansoni, 1946), 41, 290, quoted in Trexler, *Public Life*, 389. Translation by Trexler.

55. “e prima di questi vizii communissimi a’ fanciulli .... Suole chi è provano e ostinato in dire e fare l’opinioni sue, mai dare orecchi ad altrui buoni consigli, sempre in sé stesso troppo fidarsi ....” Alberti, *Della famiglia*, 40.

thoughtlessly renders himself hated by all.”<sup>56</sup> Such proud young men could not collaborate with their fellow citizens, and their egos – however swollen – were dangerously fragile.<sup>57</sup> As a result, if anyone upsets a *giovane* in the slightest, he “breaks [out] into anger, overflowing with crazy and furious words ... afterwards he is forced to repent and suffer much pain due to his hardness.”<sup>58</sup> In Republican Florence, where business, politics, and patronage relied so deeply on social networking, a haughty son could do great damage to a family’s reputation and social currency.

These concerns about *giovani* would emerge in Medicean letters as Lorenzo entered his adolescence. They would also appear in anti-Medicean objections to Lorenzo’s youthful ascendancy. In 1470, as Lorenzo began his career, the Milanese ambassador Sagramoro da Rimini would write that, in Florence, “the opinions and desires of a youth prevail ....”<sup>59</sup> Even by 1478, the French diplomat Philippe de Commynes described Lorenzo as “young, and managed by persons of his own years ....”<sup>60</sup> These negative attitudes associated with youth would accompany Lorenzo until his death. Having been forced into mature behaviour before his peers, he would remain, in many

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56. “vedilo stare superbo, gonfiato, pieno di veneno e di parole odiose e incomportabili, onde leggermente da tutti si rende malvoluto.” Alberti, 40.

57. “e sí come el vetro medesimo per ogni minima picchiata si spezza e fracassa ....” Alberti, 40.

58. “sé stessi rompe ad ira, versasi con parole pazze e furiose ... ove dipoi gli è forza pentirsi e soffrire molta pena della durezza sua.” Alberti, 40.

59. “chel parere et volere de uno giovane prevalga ....” Sagramoro da Rimini to Gian Galeazzo Sforza, 5 June, 1470, quoted in Giovanni Soranzo, “Lorenzo il Magnifico alla morte del padre e il suo primo balzo verso la Signoria,” *Archivio storico italiano* 111, no. 1 (1953): 65.

60. Philippe de Commynes, *The Historical Memoirs of Philip de Comines* (London: W. McDowall, 1817), 336.

ways, a permanent semi-*giovane* throughout his life, which was reflected in both his own and others' writings.

### The Transfer of Authority

The transfer of power from father to son was a gradual process which often began long before the former's death. As sons reached adolescence and became *giovani*, they often began increasingly taking on their father's responsibilities and functioning as his stand-in – assuming, of course, that they were being trained to take over the father's business rather than sent out as an apprentice to others. Assuming the father lived long enough, this arrangement provided some relief for him, as he could increasingly hand off the work to his son and spend his twilight years in peace and contemplation. This seems to reflect an ideal about the father-son relationship: sons were a “helping hand” (*utile mano*) in their fathers' daily work (*faccende*).<sup>61</sup>

This arrangement, however, added to the ambiguity of youth. Despite gaining increasing experience and independence in his father's business and affairs, a son was still legally and financially under *patria potestas*.<sup>62</sup> This forced him into a place of dependence even as he learned how to function as an independent adult. He was also legally and socially obliged to obey his father's instructions and wishes. Even as he began to form his own opinions through increased experience in society, he could not act on them without his father's permission. Lorenzo, like his peers, would experience this frustrating

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61. “quanto sia nelle faccende utile mano quella de' figliuoli ....” Alberti, *Della famiglia*, 80.

62. Depending on how long a father lived, a son could remain under *patria potestas* for a long time; Lorenzo mentions his uncle Giovanni remaining under *patria potestas* well into middle age. See William Roscoe, *The Life of Lorenzo de' Medici, Called the Magnificent*, 10th ed. (London: Bell, 1884), 425.

situation. However, his experience would be further strained by the momentous nature of his growing responsibilities, in which his performance could not only affect his family, but Florence itself. He would therefore have to behave with far more grace and maturity than was expected of his age. This is reflected in language which emphasizes Lorenzo's need to act mature, alongside the almost literal weight of the responsibilities facing him.

While Piero's transition into power had been extremely gradual due to Cosimo's long life and relatively good health, Lorenzo's transition was extremely rushed. Piero was sickly and did not expect to live as long as his father, and his younger brother Giovanni's early death meant that he had to place increasing responsibility on his sons' young shoulders. According to a letter from Piero to his sons, the dying Cosimo took comfort in knowing that both boys had "good minds" and told Piero that he "must raise you [both] well, so that you will relieve me from [a] great burden" (*fatica*).<sup>63</sup> This constructs a clear goal for Piero as a father: if he does well in raising his sons, they will relieve him from *fatica*, which carries the very physical connotations of exertion, fatigue, and burden.

Hardship is guaranteed for the next generation. While Cosimo is comforted by his grandsons' cleverness, he is also pained (*si doleva*) that "with [Piero] being ill, he leaves [him] with such bother."<sup>64</sup> Bother (*noia*) links back to burden (*fatica*), both synonymous for something troublesome. Piero, already troubled by his poor health, is now burdened by the full weight

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63. "confortando, essendo voi di buono ingegno, io vi dovessi allevare bene, perchè mi leveresti assai fatica ...." Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici, 26 July, 1464, quoted in Angelo Fabroni, *Magni Cosmi Medici Vita* (Pisa: Alexander Landi, 1788), 2:252.

64. "di due cose si doleva ... l'altra che essendo io mal sano mi lasciava con assai noia." Fabroni, 252.



of responsibility for the Medici line, and in dire need of relief and help. Piero closes the letter to his sons by giving the boys a responsibility of their own:

And take example, you who are youths, [and] in good spirit take up your part of the burdens ... and being youths, be counted as being men, as your status and the present case demands, and above all attend to that which can do you honour and service, because the time has come when it is necessary that you gain experience for yourself ...<sup>65</sup>

“Burdens” (*fatica*) ties back to Piero’s need for relief while also making it clear that the boys’ future duty of helping their father is already at hand. He acknowledges the reality of their ages by calling them youths (*giovani, garzoni*). Indeed, Lorenzo was fifteen, but Giuliano was only eleven. This was, especially in Giuliano’s case, quite young to even be considered *giovani*, but now it was imperative that the boys behave well beyond even that age group. This is a circumstance unique to their positions as Medici heirs. With their grandfather and uncle gone, Lorenzo and Giuliano were now, as Piero’s closest male relatives, responsible for helping to carry his burden.

Though Piero initially encouraged both of his sons to take up their share of familial burdens, Lorenzo would hear these reminders far more frequently, especially as he grew. Piero’s son-in-law, Guglielmo de’ Pazzi, was also an important public representative. When both Lorenzo and Guglielmo were absent, Piero described himself as “a man without hands,” emphasizing the active nature of their help.<sup>66</sup> They could “lift great bothers

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65. “Et voi pigliate exemplo, che siete giovani, [et] con buono animo pigliate la parte vostra delle fatiche ... [et] fate conto d’essere huomini, essendo garzoni, che cosi lo richiede lo stato vostro [et] il caso presente, [et] sopra tutto attendete a quello, che vi può fare onore [et] utile, perchè è venuto il tempo, che bisogna che voi facciate sperientia di voi ....” Fabroni, 252-253.

66. “mancandomi [et] Guglielmo [et] tu, sarei come huom senza mani ....” Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 4 May, 1465, quoted in Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis*, 2:52.

from” Piero’s shoulders.<sup>67</sup> Once again, bother (*noia*) is tied to fatigue (*fatica*), here similarly conceived as something physical.

To take on the burdens of adult Medici, both Lorenzo and Giuliano had to be considered adult Medici. The repeated emphasis on “being” in “being men” (*essere uomini*) emphasizes the active, performative nature of manhood.<sup>68</sup> The use of “be counted” (*fare conto*) further implies a sense of public performance: according to TLIO, synonymous phrases for “be counted” were “declare” (*rendere noto*), “make known” (*far conoscere*), and “demonstrate openly” (*mostrare apertamente*). The related, reflexive phrase, “make yourself counted” (*farsi conto*), means “to manifest one’s own identity” (*manifestare la propria identità*) or “present oneself” (*presentarsi*).<sup>69</sup> These definitions assume both an audience and a high amount of personal agency. It places the responsibility squarely on the performer, who must sway the minds of onlookers with a convincing presentation. It is important to note that this is something that is “made” (*fare*). It does not come naturally but is constructed and crafted over and against biological age.

The theme of maturation appears repeatedly in Piero’s letters to the teenaged Lorenzo, always framed as a public performance that had to be noticed and acknowledged by others. On Lorenzo’s first independent diplomatic journey north in 1465, Piero again advised him to “be counted as being a man and not as a youth” and “put [on] all industry and ingenuity and

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67. “[et] era mestieri che tu e Guglielmo vi trovassi quà, che maresti levato assai noie ....” Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 11 May, 1465, quoted in Fabroni, 53.

68. Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo and Giuliano de’ Medici, 26 July, 1464, quoted in Fabroni, *Magni Cosmi*, 2:252.

69. TLIO, s.v. “conto (1) agg./s.m.,” accessed 15 July, 2017, <http://tlio.ovl.cnr.it/voci/012194.htm>.

attentiveness” to impress Milanese officials.<sup>70</sup> Piero reminds him that “this trip is the touchstone of your works ....”<sup>71</sup> This trip was a test for Lorenzo, and Lorenzo knew this. The only way to pass was to prove his maturity, characterised by hard work, a keen mind, and, above all, responsibility.

In his next letter, Piero uses the exact same words: “be counted as a man and not a youth ....” This time, he advises that this can be achieved through “the words, deeds, and manners” befitting a grown man.<sup>72</sup> Here, the performance of maturity is specified as the choice of individual words (*parole*), to indicate expertise, and deeds (*gesti*), to indicate both actions in general and one’s literal physical gestures.<sup>73</sup> Lorenzo is expected, quite literally, to *act* like an adult, convincingly replicating the physical gestures and mannerisms associated with adulthood. Just like an actor or orator, he must carefully choose every word and every gesture to master the masquerade of adulthood. These “words, deeds, and manners” were, Piero specifies, “regarding this effect ...” (*circa questo effecto*).<sup>74</sup> “Effect” (*effecto*) emphasizes the theatricality of Lorenzo’s actions: the original Latin, *effectus*, indicates a performance.

This is not to say that Lorenzo failed to impress. The young man created a strong impression on the Milanese ambassador, Sagramoro da

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70. “fare conto d’essere huomo et no[n] garzone et metti ogni Industria et Ingegno et sollecitudine ....” Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 4 May, 1465, Mediceo avanti il Principato (hereafter MAP), XXIII, 1, Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Florence, Italy.

71. “[ue]sta gita’ e’ il paragone de facti tuoi ....” MAP, XXIII, 1.

72. “fare conto essere huomo [et] non garzone; le parole e gesti et modi ....” Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 11 May, 1465, quoted in Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis*, 2:52.

73. TLIO, s.v. “gesto s.m.,” accessed 15 July, 2017, <http://tlio.ovl.cnr.it/voci/027011.htm>.

74. Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 11 May, 1465, quoted in Fabroni, *Laruentii Medicis*, 2:52.

Rimini, who reported that Lorenzo “comports himself like an elder.”<sup>75</sup> He would mention this again a few days later, emphasizing that “the Magnificent Lorenzo continues to comport himself in a way that shames the old and the dead.”<sup>76</sup> This praise ties back to the common trope of the *puer-senex*, or “an extraordinary child who, thanks to his exceptional gifts, could act like an adult.”<sup>77</sup> This trope was most commonly applied to infants or small children, especially the Christ-Child. By invoking this trope in reference to Lorenzo, Sagramoro was emphasizing Lorenzo’s youthfulness *and* his maturity, making him both younger *and* older than he was. Lorenzo could not merely be a twenty-one-year old youth: he was younger than an infant and older than the dead.

While he behaved with a dignity well beyond his years among dignitaries, eyewitnesses saw another side of Lorenzo’s behaviour at this crucial moment in his life. Re-counting Piero’s funeral, Marco Parenti describes the procession with close attention to the aesthetics. A man’s funeral reflected his identity, and Piero’s was simple, dignified, and masculine; indeed, no women are mentioned among the attendees, not even Piero’s wife or mother. Significantly, Parenti includes one unusually intimate detail: “Lorenzo, at the return from the [burial], was crying a lot along the

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75. “Et Luy se deporta da veccio.” Sagramoro da Rimini to Gian Galeazzo Sforza, 2 December, 1469, Carteggio Sforzesco, Potenze Esterne (hereafter CSPE), 277, 112, Archivio di Stato di Milano, Milan, Italy.

76. “el M[agnifico] Lorenzo continua li soi deportam[en]ti in modo chel fa vergogna ali Vechii et ali morti ....” Sagramoro da Rimini to Gian Galeazzo Sforza, 6 December, 1469, CSPE, 277, 138.

77. “un bambino straordinario che, grazie alle sue doti eccezionali, poteva agire come un adulto.” Taddei, *Fanciulli e giovani*, 67.

route.”<sup>78</sup> Here, Lorenzo does something quite appropriate to his age: he weeps in public at the death of his father. This, too, serves to define the deceased: he left behind a loving and devastated son, one who was young enough to shed tears in public.

### Youthful Politics

The patterns of early Medicean authority transfer meant that unlike his peers, Lorenzo was expected to participate in Florence’s political life from an extremely young age. Political prestige, after all, was part of the authority he was to inherit. As a child, he would recite orations for Milanese Dukes and French kings to entertain them on their visits. As a young teen, he held an office in the Guelph party, had his name placed in the electoral purses, was a member of the Council of One Hundred, and participated in multiple public works committees – political privileges few boys his age could dream of having.<sup>79</sup>

Lorenzo was engaging in politics as part of his instruction as heir apparent. Just as Florentine sons could represent their fathers in business affairs, Lorenzo’s political involvement at this age amounted to the same thing. He was not yet an independent agent: he was, when abroad, nothing more than a proxy Piero, and was expected to behave like it. Indeed, when Lorenzo was on diplomatic journeys, letters from his father show how closely his behaviour was controlled. As Piero was not there to do so himself, he consistently trusted the adult men present to supervise his son’s performance.

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78. “Lorenzo al tornare dal morto piagneva molto per la via.” Marco Parenti to Filippo Strozzi, 3 December, 1469, in Marco Parenti, *Lettere*, ed. Maria Marrese (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1996), 201.

79. Francis William Kent, “The Young Lorenzo,” 27.

He reminds Lorenzo to “govern [himself] according to the teachings” of men like Piggello, who managed the Medici bank in Milan.<sup>80</sup> “Teachings” (*ammaestramenti*) also carries the indications of administration and demonstrated experience.<sup>81</sup> Lorenzo is not just following Piggello’s advice, he is mimicking Piggello as he would Piero. On a similar trip to Rome, Piero told him to “understand” (*intenderati*) the local political situation from Giovanni Tornabuoni, Lorenzo’s maternal uncle and the manager of the Medici bank in Rome.<sup>82</sup> Piero’s letters also indicate that he kept a close eye on how *well* Lorenzo fulfilled this task. His letter of 22 March makes careful note of Lorenzo’s actions and remarks on them, almost like a debriefing. He praises certain actions – “I greatly praise” (*lodo sommamente*) – but gently pushes him into doing more in other areas.<sup>83</sup>

Not only was Lorenzo’s behaviour under scrutiny, but his emotions were, too. While Lorenzo was in Milan in 1465, Piero encouraged him to “show [himself] a good time,” but hardly a breath later reminded him to “not attend so much to those festivities that you forget yourself.”<sup>84</sup> The next year, when Lorenzo was in Rome during Lent, Francesco Sforza – an important ally to the Medici – suddenly passed away. Accordingly, Piero advises Lorenzo of how to grieve publicly: “you should, on my behalf, mourn

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80. “Costi ti governerai secondo gl’ammaestramenti [et] ricordi di Piggello ....” Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 4 May, 1465, quoted in Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis*, 2:51.

81. TLIO, s.v. “ammaestramento s.m.,” accessed 4 August, 2017, <http://tlio.ovi.cnr.it/voci/002389.htm>.

82. Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 15 March, 1466, quoted in Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis*, 2:49.

83. Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 22 March, 1466, quoted in Fabroni, 51.

84. “datevi buon tempo .... [et] non attende tanto a coteste feste, che voi adimentichiate.” Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 4 May, 1465, quoted in Fabroni, 52.

heartily” with the Milanese ambassador.<sup>85</sup> This act of public mourning was *for* Piero: Lorenzo was to express his father’s emotions and not his own. However, Piero also addresses Lorenzo’s own emotional life: “I counsel you to be thoughtful and not melancholy, which isn’t useful at all ....”<sup>86</sup> At the same time, Lorenzo is to abstain from all outward displays of happiness: “put away the playing of instruments, or songs and dances, or other similar things of joyfulness ....”<sup>87</sup>

It was of utmost importance that Lorenzo did honour to himself and earned it from others. This was not for his own sake, but for his father’s: any honour done to Lorenzo was honour done to Piero.<sup>88</sup> Part of doing honour to himself (and to Piero) involved hosting other men of importance “magnificently and honourably” (*magnificamente [et] honoratamente*).<sup>89</sup> By pulling out all the stops with hospitality, Lorenzo was demonstrating the generosity of his father, who was funding the endeavour. Piero reminds him, in “needing to host dinners or do any other thing to do yourself honour, don’t put off any cost or thing which you need ....”<sup>90</sup> Florentines considered avariciousness to be just as hateful as prodigality.<sup>91</sup> Rather, men ought to use

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85. “[et] parmi che col suo M. Oratore, che costi si truova, te ne debba per mia parte con lui cordialmente dolere ....” Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 15 March, 1466, quoted in Fabroni, 48.

86. “[et] te conforto a pigliarne pensiero [et] non maninconia, la quale non giova niente ....” Fabroni, 48.

87. “Et appresso leverai via sonare d’istrumenti, o canti e balli, o simili altre cose d’allegrezza ....” Fabroni, 48.

88. “stato facto grande honore, che tutto habbiamo a riconoscere [et] da Dio [e]t dagli huomini del mondo ....” Fabroni, 48.

89. Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 4 May, 1465, quoted in Fabroni, 52.

90. “bisognando convitare o fare alcuna altra cosa per farti honore, non perdonare a spesa o cos ache facci di bisogno ....” Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 11 May, 1465, quoted in Fabroni, 52.

91. Alberti, *Della famiglia*, 117-19.

their money, as Alberti suggests, “no less than honesty requires.”<sup>92</sup> Honesty (*onestà*) was, for the late medieval Florentines, “the maintenance of honour.”<sup>93</sup> Maintaining the reputation, and therefore honour, of a prestigious and wealthy family like the Medici required a level of spending that, for most families, might be considered prodigality. However, if they had refused to spend what others knew they could easily afford, they might come off as stingy, selfish, and dishonest. While representing his father abroad, therefore, Lorenzo needed to carefully maintain appearances in ways that might be criticised in youths from less wealthy families. Spending a large amount for the sake of honour created feelings of pride for Lorenzo:

I don't want [the expenses] to grieve me, because as much as many [others] would judge it [better] to have a part of it in the purse, I judge it to be a great light on our State and it seems to me well allocated, and I'm well content with it.<sup>94</sup>

Lorenzo clearly understood just how unusual his position and behaviour was, even as he and his family attempted to act according to general Florentine views of good conduct.

Of course, Lorenzo also occasionally misbehaved. As Piero became increasingly sickly, Lorenzo began openly acting on his own initiative. In the summer of 1469, Piero was asked to be a godfather to Galeazzo Maria Sforza's new child, and Lorenzo decided to go as his representative. Piero had considered this, but was “unwilling” (*mal volentieri*) for the most part,

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92. “né sia meno quanto richiede la onestà.” Alberti, 122.

93. “Onestà é mantenimento d'onore, lo quale onore é premio, in questa vita, della virtù.” Francesco da Buti, quoted in *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, s.v. “ONESTA,” accessed 7 August, 2017, [http://vocabolario.sns.it/html/\\_s\\_index2.html](http://vocabolario.sns.it/html/_s_index2.html).

94. “di che non voglio dolermi, perché quantunque molti giudicassero averne una parte in borsa, io giudico essere gran lume allo Stato nostro e paiommi ben collocati, e ne sono molto ben contento.” Lorenzo de' Medici, quoted in William Roscoe, *The Life of Lorenzo*, 6th ed. (London: T. Cadell, 1825), 1:348.



mainly because he did not want to “make a demonstration” (*fare dimonstrazione*) out of it.<sup>95</sup> He may have intended to send a different representative to still symbolically attend the event, but to avoid creating an explicit spiritual kinship with foreign nobility. Lorenzo, meanwhile, was determined to forge this connection, and his mother likely recognized that spiritual kinship with the Sforza would be useful when the time came for Lorenzo to take the helm.<sup>96</sup> According to Piero, Lucrezia had even gone behind his back to help Lorenzo prepare for the journey.

Apparently deciding that it was too late to reverse out of the decision, Piero very sternly told Lucrezia to remind Lorenzo that “he is not to depart from the order in any way, and not make so many oranges, not being an ambassador ....”<sup>97</sup> Piero seems to be referencing an old proverb – “making an orange out of a prune” – which means making too much of something unimportant.<sup>98</sup> Piero follows this up with a second proverb, saying “I am determined that the goslings will not lead the goose to drink.”<sup>99</sup> The use of both these proverbs indicates that Piero had guessed that Lorenzo wanted to use this opportunity to draw very explicit connections between himself and the Milanese duchy, and that he found it inappropriate based on the boy’s age

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95. Piero il Gottoso to Tornabuoni, 13 July, 1469, MAP, I, 267.

96. For more on the spiritual kinship created by godparents at baptism, see Haas, Ch. 3, “Alle Fonte del Santo Battesimo: The Rituals of Birth,” in *The Renaissance Man*, 63-88.

97. “[et] di a lorenzo ch[e] non esca dello o[r]din[e] in cosa alcuna, [et] non faccia tante melarancie non essendo imbasciadore ....” Piero il Gottoso to Tornabuoni, 13 July, 1469, MAP, I, 267.

98. “Fare d’un prun, un melarancio.” Accademia della Crusca, s.v. “MELARANCIO,” *Lessicografia della Crusca in rete*, accessed 16 December, 2018, <http://www.lessicografia.it/Controller?lemma=MELARANCIO&rewrite=1>.

99. “chio no[n] dete[r]mino ch[e] pacperi menino a bere loch[a].” Piero il Gottoso to Tornabuoni, 13 July, 1469, MAP, I, 267.

and inexperience. He was worried that Lorenzo would make this honour into a public advertisement of friendship with the Sforza. Sagramoro also mentions that Lorenzo had complained that “he could not remedy the many ways of his father, which ... are more apt to make him lose every friend within and without [the city] than to increase them by one.” Lorenzo knew that the legacy his father left would affect his ability to smoothly take the reins. By voicing these criticisms to the Milanese envoy, he was ensuring that his closest ally would have a clear understanding of his positions. Indeed, Sagramoro asserts, “Lorenzo demonstrates that he has certainly thought about his [own] business,” indicating that the young man was already forming his own opinions and making plans for his own future, independent of his father.<sup>100</sup> He was not a passive participant in the grooming process, but an active one. As Crouzet-Pavan states, “*giovani* spoke up whenever they could and invaded the public scene, from which they were normally excluded.”<sup>101</sup> Lorenzo did not have to invade: he had already been purposefully placed there. It is little wonder that he seized the opportunity to make his own voice heard, even before his father had passed.

### Sexual Politics

Like other Florentine youths, Lorenzo sexually matured within a specific cultural context, with its own expectations, behaviours, and mores. Superimposed upon this, however, were his family’s unique expectations, which created a dissonance between Lorenzo’s lived reality and the culture in

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100. “Lorenzo dimostra haver pur pensato al facto suo et se dolse (con me) non potere remediare a molti modi del padre, quali non denega esser più apti a fargli manchare omne di l’amici dentro et de fora che accrescergliene uno ....” Sagramoro da Rimini to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 17 September, 1469, quoted in Soranzo, “Lorenzo il Magnifico,” 44.

101. Crouzet-Pavan, “A Flower of Evil,” 218.

which he grew up. As stated previously, adults expected young men to be sexually active, and viewed this with attitudes that ranged anywhere from acceptance to vigorous disapproval. Different adults in a youth's life could try to influence him in different ways. In Lorenzo's case, his parents seem to have taken a hands-off approach to their growing son's sexual activity, preferring instead to allow Lorenzo's spiritual advisors to influence that part of his life. In one letter of 1467, Gentile Becchi asks Lorenzo "that, in the things of Venus, you would have regard ...."<sup>102</sup> Lorenzo, at eighteen, would have been at the age of sexual maturity which, when paired with childish immaturity, could do considerable damage to Medici reputation. It seems that at the baths, a place already associated with sexual activity, Lorenzo may have been partaking in such activities.<sup>103</sup> Becchi explicitly ties "[paying] a little more attention to [one's] status" to "[having] regard" for one's sexual behaviour via the synonymous verbs *vegliare* (now *vegliare*) and *riguardare*, both of which carry the meaning of watchfulness and vigilance.<sup>104</sup> Because he had been lacking in one, we are led to believe, he was likely lacking in the other.

Other letters from the same period seem to support Becchi's suspicions. Letters from Lorenzo's friends describe a *brigata* that indulged in sensuality. A letter from Braccio Martelli, a young man in Lorenzo's *brigata*, makes it clear that Lorenzo had participated in group mischief. "I beg you that you consider [taking] a Host ... for the purgation of the sins which we have

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102. "Et ch[e] in re Venerea tu havessi riguardo ...." Gentile Becchi to Lorenzo de' Medici, 26 September, 1467, MAP, XX, 339.

103. Roche, *Forbidden Friendships*, 154.

104. "Vorrebbero anchora tornato ch[e] tu fussi ch[e] tu veghiassi umpocho piu lo statuo tuo ...." Becchi to Lorenzo de' Medici, 26 September, 1467, MAP, XX, 339.

done together,” Martelli writes, his combination of plural pronoun, verb, and adverb (*noi habbiamo fatti insieme*) emphasizing Lorenzo’s inclusion in the activity.<sup>105</sup>

Although moralists and preachers paint an image of wealthy young Florentine women being kept in complete seclusion, letters exchanged among Lorenzo’s *brigata* indicate otherwise. Mixed-gender parties and dinners afforded, as these letters show, ample opportunity for couples to slip off into some private place. Flirtatious games were not uncommon in these gatherings, such as “the game of giving a bird a fig to peck,” which played off the double meanings of bird (penis) and fig (vagina).<sup>106</sup> Martelli describes one such party in which Lorenzo’s friends engaged in roleplay for the amusement of other guests. The party also included singing and dancing, activities Martelli describes as being laced with further double-meanings.<sup>107</sup> Additionally, young men might sneak out to meet with girls in secret. Martelli describes how some of Lorenzo’s male friends rode out, “flaming within, to the desired place; in which we had, with all due respect, the grandest pleasures without any comparison” with some female friends.<sup>108</sup>

Among the women was Lucrezia Donati, who inspired many of Lorenzo’s early poems and who was likely one of Lorenzo’s earliest lovers.

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105. “[et] ti priegho ch[e] mene arrochi una parricolla tante quante tu stimi bastare a purghatione de pochari ch[e] noi habbiamo fatti i[n]sieme ....” Braccio Martelli to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 8 March, 1466, MAP, XX, 134.

106. Marta Ajmar-Wollheim, “‘The spirit is ready, but the flesh is tired’: Erotic Objects and Marriage in Early Modern Italy,” in *Erotic Cultures of Renaissance Italy*, ed. Sara F. Matthews-Grieco (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 162.

107. Braccio Martelli to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 27 April, 1465, quoted in del Lungo, *Amori*, 38-39.

108. “capitamo infine, cosi di fuori molli e dentro ardendo, al disiato loco; nel quale avemmo, *honeste tamen*, piaceri grandissimi senza alcuna comparazione ....” Del Lungo, 40.

Lucrezia was a patrician girl and the wife of one of the (frequently absent) members of Lorenzo's *brigata*, Niccolò Ardinghelli. There has, of course, been a great deal of debate as to whether their love was ever consummated or was merely a chivalric conceit; traditionally, because of its potentially scandalous nature, their relationship has been characterised as purely Petrarchan.<sup>109</sup> Lorenzo himself followed medieval tradition: his *Comento*, one of his major youthful poetic works, is an explicit imitation of Dante's *Vita Nuova*, a meditation on the transformative power of chaste love. This relationship model was not uncommon among patrician youths, who were encouraged to form chastely romantic relationships with patrician girls as a socially acceptable outlet for their heated humours. Whether such youths *succeeded* at remaining chaste with their socially approved girlfriends is another question entirely.

However, even as Lorenzo imitated his peers, he experienced a further dimension of sexuality that most of those peers would not encounter for at least another decade: marriage. Generally, marriage was avoided until men reached full adulthood.<sup>110</sup> Patrician marriages usually involved a significant age gap: men were around thirty, and their new wives were in their late teens. Lorenzo was married by twenty to a girl only a year younger than himself. Though most men would not sire children until their thirties, Lorenzo was a father by twenty-one. His sexuality was now directed toward a singular goal: siring more Medici. Rather than using these years to sow his wild oats, he had a new level of expectations and responsibilities applied to his sexual activity.

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109. See del Lungo, 40.; Francis William Kent, "The Love of Women"; Dempsey, *Portrayal of Love*.

110. Fulton, "The Boy Stripped Bare," 31.

As I shall demonstrate in the rest of this chapter – as well as in Chapter Four – these expectations would impact his sexual behaviour until his final years.

### The Loss of Youth

The pressures of Lorenzo's youth, including his family's expectations and his accelerated maturation, are reflected throughout his poetry. Letters among his intimate friends and family similarly describe his nostalgia and regret. Throughout these letters and poems, is an ever-present escapism and quasi-fetishization of the countryside. According to both his own writings and those of his inner circle, Lorenzo would repeatedly voice a desire to give everything up – even as, paradoxically, he became increasingly anxious to conserve his power and authority.

#### Loss and Image

Lorenzo's ambiguous internal relationship with his age and position is apparent from early on. In 1472, when Lorenzo was still a *giovane* at age twenty-four, he would in his *ricordi* demonstrate a keen awareness of his own youth:

The second day after [Piero's] death, although I Lorenzo was very young, that is, 21 years, there came to our house the principal citizens of the City, and of the State, to mourn the situation, and counsel me to take up the care of the City, and of the State, as my Grandfather and my father had done, this sort of issue being contrary to my age, of great weight, and danger, unwillingly accepted, and [accepted] only for the conservation of our friends and sustenance, because in Florence one lives badly without the State ....<sup>111</sup>

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111. "Il secondo di dopo la sua morte quantunque io Lorenzo fussi molto giovane, cioè di anni 21. vennero a noi casa i Principali della Città, e dello Stato, a dolersi del caso, e confortarmi, che pigliassi la cura della Città, e dello Stato, come avevano fatto l'Avolo, e il padre mio, le quali cose per esser contro alla mia età, di gran carico, e pericolo, mal volentieri accettai, e solo per conservazione degli amici e sostanze nostre, perché a Firenze si può mal vivere senza lo Stato ...." Lorenzo de' Medici, quoted in Roscoe, *Life of Lorenzo*, 6th ed., Appendix no. XII, 1:348.

Outside of this, Lorenzo rarely wrote about his father's death or his first days at the helm. One exception is a highly expressive letter of 1477, written in formal humanist Latin, yet still pulsing with emotion, addressed to his friend Poliziano. As shall be explored in chapter four, Lorenzo and Poliziano were close, and the travelling Lorenzo wrote him furiously when Poliziano failed to notify him about a child's illness. Apparently worried about upsetting Lorenzo, Poliziano had instead written to Lorenzo's secretary, Niccolò Michelozzi. Insulted that Poliziano had tried to cushion his feelings, Lorenzo wrote:

Suppose that Our nature truly is [made] in such a manner, so that I'd easily be driven hither and thither by troubles; would not a strengthened soul have already learned to be consistent from experiencing so many things? I have been as greatly tested by the death of my children as often as by their ill health; my father was snatched away by premature death, with me in my twenty-first year – thus I was exposed to fortune's blows, so that I sometimes regretted my own life. Therefore, you should consider how experience brought forth the virtue which nature denied Us.<sup>112</sup>

This letter reveals some interesting clues into how Lorenzo views himself in light of his father's death. In a letter which seems to reflect the writings of Morelli, Lorenzo invokes the loss of his father alongside the sickness and death of his children, suggesting that, in his mind, these deaths were inextricably linked. He believes that Piero's early death would have worked to make him more "constant" (*constare*) in nature – that is, less prone to being controlled by his emotions. All this, however, is presented as

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112. "Si vero eiusmodi nostra natura est, ut facile huc atque illuc perturbationibus agatur, at multarum rerum experientia confirmatus animus sibi constare iam didicit. Ego filiorum non valitudinem tantum, sed fatum quandocumque expertus sum; pater immature morte praereptus, cum annum agerem primum et vigesimum, ita me fortunae ictibus exposuit, ut quandoque me vitae poeniteret meae. Quapropter existimare debes, quam nobis virtutem natura negavit, experientiam attulisse." Lorenzo de' Medici to Poliziano, 31 March, 1477, in Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, 1:344.

hypothetical: it is couched in the accusation that *Poliziano* sees Lorenzo as unstable, not Lorenzo himself.

However, this does not cancel out the very real effects that Lorenzo describes: he was “exposed to fortune’s blows,” from which his father had once protected him. The effect of this was such that he “regretted” (*poeniteret*) his life. It is important to note that his vulnerability and regret is caused not simply by his father’s death, but by the *earliness* of his father’s death. This is triply emphasized: first, by the adjective “premature” (*immature*), which can mean, as in English, immature. Second, by his choice of verb: rather than *raptus*, which also means “snatched away,” Lorenzo chooses *praereptus*, which specifically can be used to mean “to snatch away before the time” or “to carry off prematurely,” with *prae-* accentuating the earliness of this action.<sup>113</sup> Finally, echoing his *ricordi*, Lorenzo reminds *Poliziano* that this happened “with me in my twenty-first year,” once again highlighting how young he was. Thus, Piero’s death is not only premature, but, in the context of his son’s life, quite literally immature.

All this, we must remember, is invoked in anger about seven years after the event. In a letter regarding a child’s illness, Lorenzo brings up the other illnesses and even deaths of children, but immediately leaps from that to the death of his father. Moreover, he dwells on the death of his father instead of his other children. This is surprising, as by this point, Lorenzo and Clarice had certainly lost a pair of twins who had been either born prematurely or stillborn, and possibly a little girl who had survived only a few days.<sup>114</sup>

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113. Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. “prae-ripio,” in the Perseus Digital Library, accessed 15 August, 2017, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0059:entry=praeripio>.

114. “ho inteso come madonna Clarice s’è soncia in 2 fanciulli maschi, di che ho avuto assai dispiacere, però ch’io so dispiace anco a te.” Pulci to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 27



One would expect that, in a letter about a child's illness, Lorenzo would dwell more on those lost children than on a lost father. However, in Lorenzo's estimation, his father's premature death was the foundational testament to his ability to control his emotions. He works backwards through time, recalling the illnesses, deadly and otherwise, of his children (of which Poliziano, as the family's tutor, would be aware), to that original test of his temperament. The possibility that Poliziano might have thought Lorenzo too emotionally unstable merits some consideration as well. Lorenzo doesn't seem to believe this of himself – arguing, after all, that if he hadn't naturally come by this trait, he would have learned it by then. Lorenzo's letter implies that Poliziano thought he would be easily perturbed by a child's illness. Indeed, Lorenzo was upset anyway by this (apparently well-meant) concern over his emotional stability.

Both Bullard and Francis William Kent have written extensively on Lorenzo's tight control of his public image, as well as his preoccupation with its upkeep.<sup>115</sup> Having inherited a position of power in a culture which looked upon youths in suspicion, Lorenzo was sensitive to criticisms that focused on his age or the young men with whom he chose to surround himself. Lorenzo, who at his young age might be accused of having an unstable nature, might therefore have been eager to refute even the unspoken concerns of his closest friends. Ironically, in his eagerness, he seems to have confirmed such estimations rather than disprove them.

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March, 1471, in Pulci, *Morgante e opere minori*, ed. Aulo Greco (Milan: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 2006), 2:1255-57.

115. See Bullard, *Lorenzo il Magnifico*; Francis William Kent, *Lorenzo de' Medici and the Art of Magnificence*.

## Youthful Personae

Lorenzo's youth would show through in other ways. Indeed, one side of his personality remained youthful well past the age at which he should have taken on a more sober and mature comportment. Almost all his early biographers remark on his immaturity. Guicciardini describes Lorenzo's public persona as "very witty and pleasant" (*molto faceto e piacevole*) though in this context, "witty" (*faceto*) carries a sense of facetiousness or flippancy.<sup>116</sup> Valori described a more light-hearted side of Lorenzo that often showed through, as "though by nature he was full of severity, nevertheless he sometimes delighted in that pleasant and comic urbanity." This made it seem as if "two humours, naturally contrary or different ... in him were totally tempered ...."<sup>117</sup> At one point, Lorenzo appeared the stern and controlled leader, and at another, his playful wit made others blush.<sup>118</sup> Machiavelli would echo this sentiment, remarking that "one could see in [Lorenzo] two different persons, conjoined in an almost impossible conjunction." One of these "persons" was "serious" (*grave*), but the other

delighted in facetious and sarcastic men, and in puerile games, more than it would seem to befit such a man, in such a way that many times he was seen among his sons and daughters, mingling among their amusements.<sup>119</sup>

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116. Francesco Guicciardini, *Storie fiorentine dal 1378 al 1509*, ed. Roberto Palmarocchi (Bari: Giuseppe Laterza & Figli, 1931), 77.

117. "E benche per natura fusse pieno di gravita, nondimeno alcuna volta in quella piacevole e comica urbanita si dilettaua. ... Fu di mirabil cosa che duoi umori naturalmente contrarii o diversi ... in lui fussino tanto temperati ...." Niccolò Valori, *Vita di Lorenzo il Magnifico* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1992), 36-37. Likely originally written 1492-1494. See E. B. Fryde, *Humanism and Renaissance Historiography* (London: Hambledon Press, 1983), 124.

118. Valori, *Vita di Lorenzo*, 36.

119. "si dilettaua di uomini faceti e mordaci, e di giuochi puerili, più che a tanto uomo non pareua si conuenisse, in modo che molte volte fu visto, intra i suoi figliuoli e figliuole intra i loro trastulli mescolarsi. Tantoché, a considerare in quello e la vita leggera e la grave, si vedeva in lui essere due persone diverse, quasi con impossibile congiunzione congiunte." Machiavelli, *Istorie fiorentine*, 431.

This information is tinged with disapproval, as Machiavelli makes it clear that he – and possibly others of the time – saw Lorenzo’s playfulness as inappropriate. His double use of “among” (*intra*) stresses just how involved Lorenzo was in these puerile games, creating the image of a man not just playing with his children, but down on their level, fully participating in the childish amusements (*trastulli*).

This reputation for playful behaviour remained a part of Lorenzo’s semi-mythical characterisation for at least another century. Grazzini relates the tale of Lorenzo playing a prank, or *beffa*, on an obnoxious physician named Manente.<sup>120</sup> Lorenzo has Manente carried off into the countryside and spreads the rumour throughout Florence that the doctor is dead. Once Manente finally gets back into Florence, his wife, believing him to be a ghost, refuses to let him into his own house. Though it is likely fictitious, this story reflects – in a magnified and exaggerated way – aspects of Lorenzo’s character which had become embedded in his enduring cultural persona. Lorenzo’s reputation for unashamed and even juvenile playfulness had combined with anecdotes about his use of wit to knock others down a peg or two. Renaissance *beffe* tales rely on a certain level of realism and believability to retain their unique style of relatable, earthy humour. Too preposterous, and the conceit of the story – that is, that the storyteller is relating a factual event – falls apart. Lorenzo’s character apparently made him the appropriate choice for a trickster figure with the power to appropriately humiliate a pretentious, drunken physician. Indeed, Grazzini’s choice of Lorenzo is so enduringly

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120. Antonfrancesco Grazzini, *Le cene*, ed. Carlo Verzone (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1890), 286.

convincing that some later historians have apparently taken the story as truth!<sup>121</sup>

Lorenzo's youthful reputation was not confined to playfulness. Throughout his life, he remained "marvellously wrapped up in the things of Venus ...."<sup>122</sup> Guicciardini writes:

he was libidinous and totally Venereal, and constant in his loves, which endured quite a few years; the sort of thing which, in the judgment of many, weakened the whole body and made him die, as can be said, young.<sup>123</sup>

Much of Guicciardini's criticism seems to be not in the number of Lorenzo's affairs but in the length of time in which he remained involved. Indeed, he seems to imply that Lorenzo's body was weakened because these affairs "endured" (*duravano*) beyond their time. This is confirmed by his use of "quite a few years" (*parecchi anni*) in describing how long these relationships lasted. To illustrate this, he relates a story about Lorenzo's last known mistress, Bartolommea de' Nasi:

he was so ensnared, that one winter when she stayed in her villa [in the country], he would depart from Florence at the fifth or sixth hour of the night, riding out with many companions, and would go to find her, nevertheless journeying at that hour, so that he was [back] in Florence [by dawn].<sup>124</sup>

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121. See Alfred Von Reumont, *Lorenzo de' Medici the Magnificent*, trans. Robert Harrison (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1876), 2:392; Vincent Cronin, *The Florentine Renaissance* (London: Collins, 1967), 242.

122. "ancora che fusse nelle cose veneree maravigliosamente involto ...." Machiavelli, *Istorie fiorentine*, 431.

123. "fu libidinoso e tutto venereo e costante negli amori sua, che duravano parecchi anni; la quale cosa, a giudizio di molti, gli indeboli tanto el corpo, che lo fece morire, si può dire, giovane." Guicciardini, *Storie fiorentine*, 77.

124. "nella quale ... era in modo impaniato, che una vernata che lei stette in villa, partiva di Firenze a cinque o sei ore di notte in sulle poste con più compagni e la andava a trovare, partendosene nondimeno a tale ora, che la mattina innanzi di fusse in Firenze." Guicciardini, 77.

This behaviour is almost the same as the behaviour described by Martelli of riding out late at night to meet some unattended ladies in their country villa. This sort of night-time journey was a game for youths, who had the time and energy to sacrifice sleep. Guicciardini is careful to add details that emphasize how unhealthy this behaviour is for the adult Lorenzo: it is winter, he is riding long distances, and staying out all night. That Lorenzo's behaviour was inappropriate is illustrated in the reactions of some of his companions. They were "grieved" (*dolersi*) by his behaviour, and in response, he sent them on errands abroad, functionally exiling them. The suggestion is that Lorenzo was so sensitive to this (valid) criticism that he had to remove these men from Florence in a way that would communicate his displeasure but not look overtly tyrannical.

Guicciardini concludes this section with a more open opinion:

[It is a] crazy thing to consider that one of such grand reputation and prudence, of the age of forty years, was so taken with a woman ... that it led to him doing things that would be shameful to every boy.<sup>125</sup>

Lorenzo's age, forty years old, is held in stark contrast to boyhood. This grown man's conduct was so embarrassing that even youths, culturally expected to be lustful, would feel humiliated. His actions are made even more scandalous considering his "reputation and prudence," which, the text implies, were otherwise well-maintained.

Lorenzo's vivacious interest in sexuality carries over to his poetry, especially his well-known *canti carneschi*, ribald songs he wrote for public performance during Carnevale. These would normally be presented by groups

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125. "Cosa pazza a considerare che uno di tanta grandezza riputatione e prudenzia, di età di anni quaranta, fussi sì preso di una donna ... che si conducessi a fare cose che sarebbero state disoneste a ogni fanciullo." Guicciardini, 78.

in masks or on floats. They were likely composed between 1481 and 1490, when he was between 32 and 41 years old.<sup>126</sup> This decade also marked Lorenzo's increased interest in allying with youth confraternities and working-class guilds as a means of shoring up popular support for the Medici family.<sup>127</sup> Lorenzo's Carnevale songs, often presented in the guise of tradesmen explaining their craft to women – and always with ribald double-entendres – fit right into the typical model of the occupational song.<sup>128</sup>

Working-class guildsmen were not the only participants in these performances. In fact, working-class participation in ribald Carnevale songs was a fairly new phenomenon.<sup>129</sup> The traditional performers in festive presentations, including Carnevale, were *giovani*. These amusements were dubbed “*cose di fanciulli, di giovani*” and Lorenzo had taken these juvenile pursuits and wedded them to propaganda so that they were now also “*cose ... di gente di bassa mano.*”<sup>130</sup> Festivals worked as a bonding mechanism for an entire age group: even if some youths did not particularly relish them, they still might participate out of an “ordinary desire” to fit in with their peers. Lorenzo himself describes, as a youth, celebrating festivals out of “a certain ordinary desire to do as the other youths [do], [rather] than the great pleasure

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126. Paolo Orvieto, introduction to “Canzone carnascialesche,” in Lorenzo de’ Medici, *Tutte le opere*, 2:753.

127. Trexler, *Public Life*, 412-15.

128. Trexler, 415.

129. Trexler, 414-15.

130. Trexler, 417.

I drew [from it],” indicating that this was a common expectation of young men.<sup>131</sup>

That Lorenzo had decided as an adult to shore up support and favour among the *popolo minuto* was perhaps not so surprising – the Medici, after all, had long courted popular favour. That he decided to do this with youths as well – and via the sexual ribaldry normally associated with *giovani* – is far more innovative and telling. Not only did the young leader surround himself with young men, but he continued throughout his adulthood to embrace the culture of youth to connect with an even wider population. Not only was his ascendancy marked by youthfulness, but his mature policies were, too.

I would suggest that the reason Lorenzo’s regime remained invested in youths was because he was drawn to youthfulness. It was a world he not only understood, but one that he missed. The most famous Carnevale song, the “Canzona di Bacco,” melds a celebration of youth and pleasure with an undercurrent of nostalgia. This song was written for the Carnevale of 1490, alongside its sister song, the “Canzona de’ sette pianeti.”<sup>132</sup> As erotic, and even obscene, as Lorenzo’s earlier Carnevale songs are, “Baccho” is far more similar to the exhortative “Sette pianeti,” which entreats listeners to celebrate youth and beauty rather than dwell on riches or power.<sup>133</sup> Both of these songs are interwoven with “an intensely melancholic language,” a marked departure from his usual jocular Carnevale songs.<sup>134</sup> This melancholic turn is not

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131. “da una certa voglia ordinaria di fare come gli altri giovani, che da grande piacere che ne traessi.” Lorenzo de’ Medici, “Comento de’ miei sonetti,” in *Tutte le opere*, 1:389.

132. Mario Martelli, *Studi laurenziani* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1965), 37-49.

133. Mario Martelli, 45.

134. Mario Martelli, 40.

particularly surprising: regularly ill and in crippling pain, Lorenzo was by 1490 nearing the end of his short life. The most famous lines of “Bacco,” “Whoever wants to be happy, do so, / of tomorrow nothing is certain,” end every stanza, tinging Lorenzo’s light-hearted descriptions of Bacchanals with a warning that seems to come from experience.<sup>135</sup> Both “Bacco” and “Sette pianeti” have almost identical moral lessons attached, condemning the “sinners” of Carnevale: those who eschew joy, pleasure, and beauty.

Among the sinners are the followers of Midas: “And what good is it to have treasure, / if other things cannot please you?” he asks in “Bacco.”<sup>136</sup> “Sette pianeti” expands upon this, adding more to the list of sinners. “The melancholy, miserly, and deceitful ... the impulsive, the impatient ... pompous kings ... the liars and the perverse” are on this list.<sup>137</sup> They all receive these qualities from their ruling planets (Saturn, Mars, Jupiter, and Mercury, respectively), though these planets dispense good qualities as well as evil.<sup>138</sup> The most gracious of the planets, however, is Venus, and the rest of the song is in her honour, for she brings “love” (*amore*), “grace” (*gentilezza*), “beauty,” (*bellezza*), and “sweetness” (*dolcezza*).<sup>139</sup> Revellers are invited to enjoy themselves in her honour: just as followers of Bacchus ought to seize the day and be happy, Venus invites her followers to “leave

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135. “Chi vuol esser lieto, sia, / di doman non c’è certezza.” Lorenzo de’ Medici, “Canzona di Bacco,” in *Tutte le opere*, 2:802, lines 11-12.

136. “E che giova aver tesoro, / s’altri poi non si contenta?” Lorenzo de’ Medici, 803, lines 39-40.

137. “Maninconimi, miseri e sottili ... subiti, impazienti ... pomposi re ... bugiardi e pravi ....” Lorenzo de’ Medici, “Canzona de’ sette pianeti,” in *Tutte le opere*, 2:805, lines 9-13.

138. Orvieto, in *Tutte le opere*, 2:805n9-13.

139. Lorenzo de’ Medici, “Canzona de’ sette pianeti,” 806, lines 16-19.



[behind] every sad thought and vanish [away] all grief” for life is “short” (*brieve*).<sup>140</sup> Just as he says riches cannot bring joy in “Bacco,” Lorenzo reminds the audience that “riches and honours, / for those who are not happy, are sought in vain.”<sup>141</sup>

Both songs are directed specifically at the young: “loving ladies and youths” (*Donne e giovinetti amanti*) and “lovely ladies [and] gracious youths” (*donne vaghe ... giovinetti adorni*).<sup>142</sup> The male youths (*giovinetti*) would very likely be the performers, acting simultaneously as messenger and audience. They are also acting as their own advocates, as any ladies (*donne*) among the listeners would hear the message and hopefully heed the call. As the writer of these songs, Lorenzo is exhorting the *giovinetti*, as a mature man, to enjoy their youth. However, he is also reclaiming his own youth by using their voices as his own. These songs would likely be accompanied by costumed dancing or pantomime, so this writing process is made physical as well as oral. Lorenzo is not only borrowing youthful voices for his own use, but youthful bodies. The Carnevale songs of 1490 thus became a means for Lorenzo to reclaim his youth, lost now to fleeing time, via the bodies and voices of Florence’s *giovinetti*.

Elsewhere, within his Capitoli, or “chaptered” poems in *terza rima*, Lorenzo tells himself, “Of your age, your green spring / you have wasted, and

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140. “lasciare i pensier’ tristi e ‘ van’ dolori.” Lorenzo de’ Medici, 806, line 28.

141. “ricchezze e onori, / per chi non si contenta, invan si chiede.” Lorenzo de’ Medici, 806, lines 31-32.

142 Lorenzo de’ Medici, “Bacco,” 804, line 53; Lorenzo de’ Medici, “Sette pianeti,” 806, line 22.

maybe you'll do so with the rest, / until that final night of winter ...."<sup>143</sup> He here inserts a purposeful ambiguity: though I have translated *verno* to winter (as it can be a shortened version of *inverno*), it can also mean vernal.<sup>144</sup> The last line could thus also be rendered "until that final vernal night ...." His youth has already been wasted and is also yet to be wasted. He is simultaneously mourning its loss, the inevitability of its loss, and the likelihood that the rest of his years – until his winter – will be lost in the same way.

### Lifting Weights

Frequently accompanying these expressions of nostalgia are a desire for escapism. This is present even in Lorenzo's early poetry, especially in his "De Summo Bono." This poem was likely started around 1474, when Lorenzo was only about twenty-five.<sup>145</sup> At this point, he had been the head of his household – and of Florence – for about four years and was still very much a youth. The poem begins with an escapist fantasy. Tired of the "sour civil storm," (*l'aspra civile tempesta*), he "flees" (*fuggito*) to the countryside. An escape from Florence would "lift from my fragile nature / that weight which increases the aggravation and weariness" and "clear from the heart every thought."<sup>146</sup> He goes on to list the sins of Florence: "malicious civilians"

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143. "Dell'età tua la verde primavera / hai consumata, e forse tal fia il resto, / fin che del verno sia l'ultima sera." Lorenzo de' Medici, Capitolo VII, in *Tutte le opere*, 2:1089, lines 31-33.

144. *Treccani*, s.v. "verno1," accessed 26 August, 2017, <http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/verno1/>.

145. Mario Martelli, *Studi laurenziani*, 34.

146. "et per levare da mia fragile natura / quel peso che a salir l'aggrava et lassa." Lorenzo de' Medici, "De sommo bono," in *Tutte le opere*, 2:927, lines 8-9; "e 'l cor d'ogni pensiero si sgombra." Lorenzo de' Medici, line 15.

(*civile malitie*), “hate” (*odio*), “perfidy” (*perfidia*), “ambition” (*ambitione*), “envy” (*invidia*), “avarice” (*avaritia*), and “sloth” (*accidia*). In the city, “the tongue is contrary to [one’s] own heart” (*è la lingua al proprio cuore contraria*), “the heart sighs and outside the mouth smiles” (*l’cor sospiri et fuor la bocca rida*), and “every friendship is measured by its usefulness” (*Con l’utile si misura ogni amicitia*).<sup>147</sup> Lorenzo had first-hand knowledge of all these unhappy truths, complaining: “the love and the faith of friends doesn’t last when I’m absent from [Florence] by more than ten miles.”<sup>148</sup> Even as a young man, the source of his “aggravation and weariness” (*l’aggrava et lassa*) was his position within Florence.<sup>149</sup>

As he grew older, his letters would increasingly show his exhaustion: “I still don’t want this burden .... Lift the entreaties off my back, because I have more letters from [those who] want to be priors than there are days in the year.” He began to fantasize about retirement: “I’ve decided ... to live this time that I have [left] to live as quietly as I can, as those elders [of] ours have done ... though they [were] old and healthy.”<sup>150</sup> The thirty-six-year-old recognises how unusual this dream is by noting that it is usually “old and healthy” (*vecchi et sani*) people who retire instead of (he implies) young and unhealthy men like himself.

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147. Lorenzo de’ Medici, 928-929, lines 48-64.

148. “l’amore et la fede d[e]gl[i] amici no[n] dura quando io sono absente di costi piu ch[e] x migla.” Lorenzo de’ Medici to Michelozzi, 19 September, 1485, Autografi Ginori Conti (hereafter GC), 29, 129, no. 3423081, Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, Florence, Italy.

149. See Lorenzo de’ Medici, Laud III, in *Tutte le Opere*, 2:1042, lines 9-12 and Lorenzo de’ Medici, 1043, lines 43-44 for examples of this weariness in later poems as well.

150. “no[n] voglio ancora q[ue]sto carico .... Levatemi le p[re]gherie da dosso, p[er]ch[e] io ho piu l[ette]re di priori ch[e] vogliono e[sse]r[e], che no[n] sono di nell’anno et io delibero no[n] volere ogni cosa p[er] me: et vivere q[ue]sto tempo ch[e] chi ho a vivere piu q[ui]etamente ch[e] posso, c[he] cosi hanno [facto] cotesti n[ost]ri vecchi et p[er]o sono vecchi et sani.” Lorenzo de’ Medici to Michelozzi, 17 April, 1485, GC, 29, 129, no. 3423064.

Reminiscing on Lorenzo's final days, Poliziano writes that "two months before his death," Lorenzo said "that he had decided to spend the rest of his life" studying philosophy, "far ... from the city and its noise ...."<sup>151</sup> When Poliziano brought up the obvious impediments, Lorenzo, "smiling," told him, "'Well, in that case, I shall pass my responsibilities on to [Piero il Fatuo] and unload this baggage and every burden onto him.'"<sup>152</sup> "Baggage" (*sarcinam*) and "burden" (*onus*), like "weight" (*peso*) and "fatigue" (*fatica*), recall the times Piero il Gottoso had asked Lorenzo and Giuliano to "take up [their] part of the burdens" (*fatiche*) and to be men instead of youths.<sup>153</sup> In the same way, Lorenzo had referred to his mother, after her death, as a relief from his "burdens" (*fatiche*).<sup>154</sup>

In further discussing Piero il Fatuo's capabilities, Poliziano uses similar weight-related vocabulary. He questions whether Piero has "strength" (*virium*) that can be "lean[ed] on" (*incumbere*). Lorenzo calls his son "solid" (*solida*), able to "bear" (*laturum*) these burdens.<sup>155</sup> Of special interest is the choice of *virium* for "strength." Though it is a declension of *vis*, Poliziano seems to be playing on its similarity to the word *vir*, "man." He writes: "[Lorenzo] had detected so much strength in one who was still a young man," in the original Latin placing "young man" (*adulescente*) directly before "so

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151. "procul scilicet ab urbe et strepitu ...." Poliziano to Iacopo Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:242-43. Translation by Butler.

152. "'Atque iam ... vices nostras alumno tuo delegabimus, atque in eum sarcinam hanc et onus omne reclinabimus.'" Poliziano, 242-44. Translation by Butler.

153. "[et] con buono animo pigliate la parte vostra delle fatiche ...." Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici, 26 July, 1464, quoted in Fabroni, *Magni Cosmi*, 2:252.

154. Lorenzo de' Medici to Ercole d'Este, 25 March, 1482, in Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, 4:286-87.

155. Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:243-45. Translation by Butler.

much strength” (*tantum virium*).<sup>156</sup> *Adulescente* is thus directly contrasted with *virium*, and with manhood itself.

This conversation with Lorenzo may have been a later addition of Poliziano’s when he compiled these letters. This collection was made as a gift to Piero il Fatuo and is not without an agenda. The long passage devoted explicitly to praising Piero’s qualities seems a considerable departure from Poliziano’s otherwise chronological narration.<sup>157</sup> If this was a later addition, it does not necessarily indicate that the conversation never took place. Even if this conversation was fabricated – or at least exaggerated – it still contains valuable information about Lorenzo’s state of mind in his later years. Poliziano, one of Lorenzo’s closest lifelong friends – as shall be further explored in Chapter Four – knew his patron on an intimate level. That he echoes Lorenzo’s admitted desire for escape and political retirement suggests that this fantasy was well known to some of the Laurentian *brigata*.

Lorenzo’s escapism reflected not only his ambivalence towards his place in the family’s legacy, but also his son’s place in that legacy. That place was primarily a burden: one he had successfully borne from an early age, but which had exhausted him prematurely. Additionally, it was intrinsically linked to their shared identities as firstborn Medici sons. Finally, whether Lorenzo truly had expressed such faith in his eldest son’s abilities, or if this was an invention of Poliziano’s, it was clear that premature strength was now a necessity for Medici men. As Florence’s leading citizens, they had to lead in maturity, setting them even further apart from other Florentine males.

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156. “Cumque ego rogassem an adhuc in adulescente tantum viriumprehendisset ut eis bona fide incumbere iam possemus ....” Poliziano, 243-44. Translation by Butler.

157. Poliziano, 242-47.

Lorenzo willingly passed on the unique pressure with which he had been raised to his own son, despite - or perhaps because of – its lasting emotional effects.

Throughout his life, Lorenzo's writings, both his letters and his poetry, reflect the lasting effects of his unusual upbringing. He would never forget his deeply Florentine identity: the life pulse of the city and its territory flows throughout his work, which is almost totally written in the Tuscan dialect. However, the very same Medicean identity which bound him so tightly to the city and its territories drove a wedge between himself and his patrician peers. He was no ordinary Tuscan, and not even an ordinary Florentine. His parents, tutors, and entire household had groomed him from his birth to be in an international spotlight. Though other boys and young men would dress and act like adults for special occasions, such as festivals, Lorenzo was expected to adopt a performative adulthood in his everyday life. To be a Medici heir living in the direct, formidable shadow of Cosimo, was to be automatically forced into the role of *puer senex*, whether the *puer* naturally took to the *senex* role or not. As a child, he was already designated a new Cosimo, and therefore had to convincingly replicate the behaviour and wisdom of an elder in a city ruled by elders. The vocabulary in his father's letters – a vocabulary which he inherited – emphasize the knowledge among Medici men that their position was a heavy burden, and yet one which could not be avoided.

This Medicean identity, I would argue, even drove a wedge within himself: it became simultaneously synonymous with youth and with old age. He could not escape the fact of his youthful body, but neither could he escape

the expectation to be a reproduction of Cosimo before he was old enough to grow a beard. Pushed into maturity faster than was normal for his peer group, regret and longing for his lost youth permeate his adult writing. His later poems and letters continuously invoke the quick passage of time and the easy loss of the simple joys and pleasures of youth. His vocabulary is filled with expressions of weariness, and with the desire to escape, to flee, to be left alone.

This, I have argued, led to his characterisation as a man of two personalities: the dignified, well-respected public figure, and the man who played on the floor with his young children or rode through the night to meet a lover. Characterised in European politics as a youthful ruler, he never truly shed this persona – nor, does it seem, did he desire to. Even as an adult, he embraced this youthful characterisation, perhaps due in part to his own nostalgia and sense of loss. As a result, he would weaponize youth for his own propaganda, turning young male voices and bodies into his own. As I shall explore in the following chapter, Lorenzo's upbringing would directly affect not only his adulthood, but his relationship with his younger brother, Giuliano.

## Chapter Three: “Another You”<sup>1</sup>: Brotherhood and Medicean Identity

The Pazzi conspiracy was a significant turning point in Lorenzo de’ Medici’s political life and legacy. On 26 April 1478, rivals from both within and without Florence would attempt a double assassination of Lorenzo and his younger brother, Giuliano, in the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore. The plot was only halfway successful: Giuliano was killed, while Lorenzo, wounded, survived. He would go on to see a meteoric rise in power and influence as he used the conspiracy and its fallout to rebrand himself as the Christlike servant-hero of the Florentine Republic. As his near-contemporary Guicciardini would write, the conspiracy “gave [Lorenzo] great reputation and benefit, such that one could call him most happy ....”<sup>2</sup> Historians, interested in what Lorenzo gained in power and influence, have often glossed over – or entirely forgotten – what he lost. As I shall demonstrate in this chapter, fraternal relationships – then as now – profoundly shaped the lives of the individuals involved, both in how they viewed themselves and how they were viewed by others. Lorenzo did not exist in a vacuum as the Medici heir: from childhood onward, both he and others would define this role in the context of his identity as an elder brother – even after the younger had perished.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the father-child relationship has gained greater attention in recent years as gender historians have begun

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1. “Aderat insup[er] tunc Laurentius frater tuus: alter tu [et] natura [et] voluntate.” Ficino to Giuliano de’ Medici, in Ficino, *Epistolae*, 22r.

2. “gli dette tanta riputazione ed utilità, che quello di si può chiamare per lui felicissimo ....” Guicciardini, *Storie fiorentine*, 37.



exploring the emotional lives of men throughout history. Additionally, feminist historians have become increasingly interested in the study of sisterhood. Unfortunately, the study of brotherhood has not followed suit. As we shall see, the dominant narrative, at least in current premodern historiography, is one of power. Within primogeniture, the subject of most such studies, brotherhood was a struggle for influence and resources, pitting men against one another in patterns of dominance and submission. However, this emphasis on sibling rivalry under primogeniture has obscured the more complex patterns of earlier eras, including the Quattrocento, a period which marked a major shift from fraternal communion to patriarchal dominance.

This, of course, is not to say that fraternal rivalry did not exist in this period. The hegemonic masculinities which emerge within patriarchal societies encourage rivalry between males as they struggle to maintain or gain privilege over one another. However, this rivalry cannot encompass the infinite diversity of emotion that might exist between brothers, nor the impacts those emotions might have upon that relationship or the individuals involved. Analysing fraternal relationships thus requires a variety of sources through which we might examine brothers from multiple angles. This includes not only written material but also visual sources, which have been under-utilised in understanding not only premodern fraternal relationships, but premodern siblings in general. This chapter will thus integrate both visual and written evidence to not only shine light on Lorenzo and Giuliano, but on quattrocento brotherhood in general.

## Historiography

Giuliano di Piero

Despite the amount of information available on the early Medici, especially the Medici men, perhaps the most conspicuously absent in modern research is this fallen younger brother, Giuliano. Giuliano is best known as the primary victim of the conspiracy, which prematurely claimed his life at twenty-five, well before he had the chance to become a fully-formed political or social influence in his own right. As a result, he was turned into a Medicean martyr, a symbol of eternal – yet tragic – youth. He became the spiritual – and thus untouchable – counterpart to the earthly Lorenzo. Though Lorenzo grew older, and his hands grew dirtier with political intrigue, he had after 1478 a shadow which would never lose youth or sanctity.

Even today, this is primarily how Giuliano is remembered; as of now, I know of no studies which explore Giuliano as an individual. Furthermore, though multiple studies exist on Lorenzo's relationships with his mother, lovers, friends, allies, and rivals, there are few which explore his relationships with his siblings. In his sisters' case, this may be understandable, considering that there are (relatively) fewer sources on their lives. However, there is significantly more information on Giuliano's life, and yet he rarely appears in any significant capacity in historical accounts. He plays a minor role in most Laurentian biographies, and then only as a detail. Even most studies on the one major poem written in his honour, Poliziano's unfinished *Stanze per la Giostra*, treat him, at best, as an uninteresting archetype.<sup>3</sup> While there has

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3. See Charles Dempsey, "Portraits and Masks in the Art of Lorenzo de' Medici, Botticelli, and Politian's *Stanze per la Giostra*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 1-42; Arnolfo B. Ferruolo, "Botticelli's Mythologies, Ficino's *De Amore*, Poliziano's *Stanze per la Giostra*: Their Circle of Love," *The Art Bulletin* 37, no. 1 (March 1955): 17-25; Christina Storey, "The Philosopher, the Poet, and the Fragment: Ficino, Poliziano, and

been some academic interest in his older counterpart, his paternal uncle Giovanni, there have been no complementary studies on Giuliano.<sup>4</sup> Usually, he simply plays the role of passive martyr in retellings of the 1478 conspiracy. His and Lorenzo's relationship as siblings, and significantly as brothers, is rarely explored except as a posthumous relationship (that is, Lorenzo's post-1478 relationship to Giuliano-as-martyr), and even then, only briefly.<sup>5</sup>

This creates a significant gap in Laurentian study; if it is almost universally agreed that the Pazzi conspiracy was a (and perhaps *the*) major turning point in Lorenzo's life, then it would follow that it had emotional impact. To state the obvious, one does not simply live through an attempted double murder without having some form of emotional response. Moreover, the conspiracy not only formed a significant change in Lorenzo's political life, but in his identity as well. He lost, we must remember, a lifelong companion. This was someone with whom he had shared a home (and probably, during childhood, a bedroom), a household, a *brigata*, an education, and many intimate moments of both joy and sadness. There were bound to be repercussions from the sudden loss of this kind of companionship. However, it is also important to better understand *what* was lost: what did the relationship between Lorenzo and Giuliano look like? How did it change over

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*Le stanze per la giostra*," *The Modern Language Review* 98, no. 3 (July 2003): 602-19. One departure from this trend is Warman Welliver's study of the *Stanze*, in which he claims that Poliziano's poem actually has nothing to do with the 1475 joust, but rather is a complete work meant as a subtle rebuke of Giuliano's lack of political ambition and which compares him with – who else – Lorenzo. See Welliver, "The Subject and Purpose of Poliziano's *Stanze*," *Italica* 48, no. 1 (Spring 1971): 34-50.

4. For studies on Giovanni di Cosimo de' Medici, see Vittorio Rossi, *L'indole e gli studi di Giovanni di Cosimo de' Medici: Notizie e documenti* (Rome: Tipografia della R. Accademia dei Lincei, 1893); F. Pintor, "Libri di Giovanni e di Pietro di Cosimo," *Italia Medioevale e Umanistica* 3 (1960):199-210; Amanda Lillie, "Giovanni di Cosimo and the Villa Medici at Fiesole," in *Piero de Medici 'il Gottoso' (1416-1469)*, 55-69.

5. For example, see Martines, *April Blood: Florence and the Plot Against the Medici* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Trexler, *Public Life*, 438-44.

time as the boys developed into men? And how, if at all, did it continue, even after death separated them?

### Siblings

Of the many relationships that existed within the premodern household, the sibling relationship has been perhaps the most conspicuously ignored. Current psychology, sociology, and anthropology have much to offer by way of sibling studies, but this field has only barely affected the history of premodern kinship. Aside from a few scattered articles and journals in the twentieth century, siblings have, until very recently, gone largely unnoticed by family and household historians. The majority of these have been very specific studies, often focused on disputes within families. This is likely due, Patricia Crawford suggests, to the modern influence of Freud, who conceived of the sibling relationship as a rivalry.<sup>6</sup> Because so much of early family studies focused on the question of when – and whether – the extended family model transformed into the nuclear family model, the sibling relationship, which seemed to defy both models, fell to the wayside.<sup>7</sup>

The view of sibling relationships – especially fraternal relationships – as inherently rivalrous has led some historians to frame younger sons, or cadets, as put-upon underdogs. According to common premodern literary complaints, Joan Thirsk suggests, cadets of the upper classes faced the unique hardship of being “born a gentleman, expected to play the role of a gentleman, but [without] the wherewithal.” By the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the pattern of favouring the eldest son had fully coalesced into primogeniture, a system in which, after

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6. Patricia Crawford, *Blood, Bodies, and Families in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 209.

7. Crawford, 210.

the death of a patriarch, all siblings were “completely dependent on” the “grace and favour” of the eldest brother.<sup>8</sup> However, excessive focus on primogeniture has overshadowed the less straightforward models of earlier periods.

In late medieval Italy, primogeniture had yet to take shape. Rather, relationships between siblings – particularly between brothers – was primarily embodied by “an arrangement known as *fraterna* or *consorzio*,” in which property was ideally “held collectively by all brothers in a family ...”<sup>9</sup> This pattern of brotherly cooperation in matters of business, patronage, and politics is consistent through many Italian sources, including among the early Medici. As John Paoletti has demonstrated, many of the pre-1440 projects popularly attributed to Cosimo il Vecchio’s patronage were in fact jointly commissioned by Cosimo and his younger brother, Lorenzo di Giovanni di Bicci.<sup>10</sup> The sarcophagus for their parents, for example, credits them both as patrons and “clearly places” both brothers “within a family lineage” as equal heirs to “the status and honour of their father.”<sup>11</sup> This trend continued into the next generation: while Cosimo’s sons Piero and Giovanni “were independently active as patrons,” there is evidence of their occasional cooperation as commissioners.<sup>12</sup> I would point out that this echoes the way

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8. Joan Thirsk, “Younger Sons in the Seventeenth Century,” *History* 54, no. 182 (October 1969): 360.

9. Christopher Kleinhenz, ed., *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopaedia*, s.v. “nobility” (Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge, 2017), 2:773.

10. John Paoletti, “Fraternal Piety and Family Power: The Artistic Patronage of Cosimo and Lorenzo de’ Medici,” in *Cosimo ‘il Vecchio’ de’ Medici 1389-1464*, 195-219.

11. Paoletti, 204.

12. John Paoletti, “Strategies and Structures of Medici Artistic Patronage in the 15th Century,” in *The Early Medici and Their Artists*, ed. Francis Ames-Lewis (London: Birkbeck College, 1995), 26.

Medici men refused to divide their fortune amongst their sons. According to Piero, his father Cosimo “did not want to make any will, because it was never his thought to do so, [even when] Giovanni lived, because he would always see us [together] with good love and in good accord and esteem ....”<sup>13</sup>

This decision was not unusual: a dying *paterfamilias* might stipulate that “his children should ‘dwell and live together, and treat one another as good and loving siblings, since by this togetherness of lodging and living ... their brotherly love and the peace between them will always remain strong.’”<sup>14</sup> Even later in the Renaissance, death “was often accompanied by pressing exhortations to unity and even to cohabitation,” along with “a *fideicommissum*, binding their heirs to undivided property and to the division only of the profits.”<sup>15</sup>

At the same time, the Quattrocento was a period in which the patriarchal family model was reinforcing itself and gaining strength, particularly among the patrician classes, which is especially apparent in the wave of humanist and religious discourse on good family management.<sup>16</sup> As stated in the previous chapter, patriarchal family models mandated that the *paterfamilias* held ultimate authority over the rest of the family group, which included his younger brothers. As the *paterfamilias* gained power, this

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13. “disse non volere fare testamento alcuno, perchè mai non fu suo pensiero di farlo, eziandio vivente Giovanni, perchè sempre ci vide con buono amore & in buono accordo & stima ....” Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo and Giuliano de’ Medici, 26 July, 1464, quoted in Fabroni, *Magni Cosmi*, 2:252.

14. Simona Feci, “Orphaned Siblings and Noble Families in Baroque Rome,” *European Review of History/Revue européenne d’histoire* 17, no. 5 (October 2010): 758.

15. Renata Ago, “Ecclesiastical Careers and the Destiny of Cadets,” *Continuity and Change* 7, no. 3 (December 1992): 279.

16. John M. Najemy, “Giannozzo and His Elders: Alberti’s Critique of Renaissance Patriarchy,” in *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence*, ed. William J. Connell (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 56. See also Herlihy, *Medieval Households*; Romano, *Housecraft and Statecraft*, 4-6.

generated increasing tension between the trends associated with *fraterna* and patriarchy. When a family held sizeable wealth, property, and political influence, having the final arbitration over these resources could translate to a considerable power differential between siblings and their descendants. As Alison Brown has demonstrated, this could lead to a situation in which a family was outwardly united, yet inwardly strained by disagreement and resentment.<sup>17</sup> The bonds once solidified by *fraterna* were now being strained by the growing power of the patriarch. As I shall demonstrate in this chapter, the tensions in the relationship between Lorenzo and Giuliano illustrate wider cultural tensions of the period. The boys were expected to work together as a unit, and yet from an early age Lorenzo had already been designated as the future *paterfamilias*.

As gender history has attained greater prominence among premodern historians, the methodology of gender studies has been increasingly applied to the study of siblings. Unfortunately, there have been few studies on the intersection of brotherly relationships, gender, and emotion. Though gender studies have influenced sibling histories, those histories have primarily centred upon sisters. The essays in Miller and Yavneh's collection, for example, only focus on sibling groups which include sisters, with no essays exclusively on brothers. This could be because, as the editors write, "the emphasis on patriarchal and intergenerational structures has occluded the intragenerational."<sup>18</sup> In response to this occlusion, historians interested in

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17. Alison Brown, "Pierfrancesco de' Medici, 1430-1476: A Radical Alternative to Elder Medicean Supremacy?" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 42 (January 1979): 81.

18. Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh, *Gender and Early Modern Constructions of Childhood* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2006), 2.

both gender and siblings may be hesitant to forefront men in an intragenerational history.

Even so, gender greatly informed the expectations a premodern male might have about what his brothers could bring to the relationship. Reciprocity was “a central feature of the sibling relationship” regardless of gender; siblings were expected to return favour for favour.<sup>19</sup> However, while social and financial expectations for a sister remained fairly stable throughout her life, expectations for brothers were highly unstable. “Boys,” Crawford writes, “were exposed to more contradictory messages” as they developed their identities.<sup>20</sup> This could lead to considerable strain for young men during moments of family conflict: for example, in instances when one son quarrelled with his parents, another son could be faced with the conflicting expectations to intercede on behalf of his brother or to submit to his parents.

Expectations for a brother might change rapidly over his lifetime, perhaps causing a crisis in the relationship. A previously egalitarian relationship might become suddenly imbalanced when a father died and the eldest son began demanding his younger brothers’ obedience and respect.<sup>21</sup> Other brotherly duties could include financing a sibling’s education, assisting a sibling’s children, or general “legal aid.”<sup>22</sup> Many of these cultural expectations might go unspoken, and when those expectations went unmet, it could lead to conflicts that, to the historian reading the source material, seem

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19. Naomi J. Miller and Yavneh, 2.

20. Crawford, *Blood, Bodies, and Families*, 231.

21. Erica Bastress-Dukeheart, “Sibling Conflict within Early Modern German Noble Families,” *Journal of Family History* 33, no. 1 (January 2008): 64.

22. Crawford, *Blood, Bodies, and Families*, 220-22.



to have emerged from nowhere. Furthermore, as Crawford believes, even “Material transactions are always difficult to separate from emotional ones, especially when kin were involved.”<sup>23</sup> Even the most basic forms of brotherly support thus had the potential to be highly charged.

Because the family, including the sibling relationship, was “an idea in process,” it required constant renegotiation as circumstances shifted.<sup>24</sup> These renegotiations can be uncovered, as Susan Broomhall and Jacqueline Van Gent suggest, via emotions history. By studying “how a range of family members, not just the dominant men of the family, could use the language of emotions,” historians might gain a more nuanced understanding of sibling relationships in particular and family relationships as a whole.<sup>25</sup> Rather than relying on a single structural model, analysing sibling groups as emotional communities would presumably permit historians to both keep an eye out for wider trends while also allowing for the considerable variety of forms from family to family.

Perhaps the most useful study for my current purposes is the 2011 monograph by Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker Than Water*.<sup>26</sup> Though it is a survey of siblings in 19<sup>th</sup> century England, this study sets a valuable example for future sibling histories. Davidoff pulls from a variety of sources and methodologies, especially the emotions history, gender history, and linguistic analysis to examine the evolution of sibling relationships over the course of a

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23. Crawford, 222.

24. Susan Broomhall and Jacqueline Van Gent, “Corresponding Affections: Emotional Exchange among Siblings in the Nassau Family,” *Journal of Family History* 34, no. 2 (April 2009): 146.

25. Broomhall and Van Gent, 145.

26. Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker than Water: Siblings and Their Relations, 1780-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

lifetime, from birth to death. Indeed, the death of a brother or sister did not end the sibling relationship: as Davidoff demonstrates, survivors continued to use the dead as a reference point for understanding themselves, their lives, and their roles in the family and society. This is especially relevant to the relationship between Lorenzo and Giuliano, which was changed – but not ended – by Giuliano’s violent assassination.

Some of the best sources for this are the letters exchanged between family members. Emotional expressions, both formulaic and spontaneous, in letters between siblings “may offer new ways of conceptualizing power in the early modern family.”<sup>27</sup> Emotions varied within the household according to a sibling’s power and influence, and in turn helped to shape what that power and influence looked like.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, emotional expressions reflect how a sibling viewed *themselves* in relation to other household members.<sup>29</sup> A close analysis of the language of “reciprocity, negotiation and cooperation” in letters between siblings can reveal the harmonious and mutually beneficial aspects of these relationships which have been obscured by modern assumptions about premodern intragenerational conflict.<sup>30</sup>

While letters are probably the most accessible sources for analysing sibling relationships and sibling emotions, when it comes to high-profile sibling relationships, such as that of Lorenzo and Giuliano, some sources provide even more explicit information about how society – or different

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27. Broomhall and Van Gent, “Corresponding Affections,” 146.

28. Broomhall and Van Gent, 155.

29. Broomhall and Van Gent, 158.

30. Giulia Calvi and Carolina Blutarch-Jean, “Sibling Relations in Family History: Conflicts, Cooperation and Gender Roles in the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries. An Introduction,” *European Review of History/Revue européenne d’histoire* 17, no. 5 (October 2010): 702.

branches of society – viewed that specific relationship. Though sibling historians such as Davidoff have expanded their sources to include a variety of written material, including poems and fictional accounts, they seem to have neglected visual material. Similarly, though family portraiture (including sketches, paintings, engravings, and sculptures) has long been used in studies of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century household, few art historians have turned their gaze toward earlier centuries, and fewer still to specific depictions of siblings.<sup>31</sup> In the following pages, I will explore the Medici brothers' relationship by analysing the ways in which they were portrayed in three different pieces: Gozzoli's *Journey of the Magi* (c.1459-1461), Botticelli's *Adoration of the Magi* (c.1475), and Bertoldo di Giovanni's medal commemorating the Pazzi conspiracy (1478).

### **The Young Magi**

Early letters indicate that Lorenzo and Giuliano, close in age, were raised together and were rarely far apart. In 1458, for example, their mother Lucrezia reports that “Lorenzo learns in verse” from his tutor, and then he “teaches [them] to Giuliano.”<sup>32</sup> This study technique – teaching to learn – was popular among tutored or home-schooled children.<sup>33</sup> These lessons must have been successful; the next year, the boys would each perform a recitation, “the one in prose, the other in verse,” for the visiting Galeazzo Maria Sforza, who reported that it was “almost incredible for the age of these little children, who

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31. For examples of studies on Renaissance family portraiture, see Matthew Knox Averett, ed., *The Early Modern Child in Art and History* (London: Routledge, 2015); Angela Cox, “The Representation of Children in Elizabethan and Jacobean Portraits: 1560-1630” (master’s thesis, Birkbeck College, University of London, 2017).

32. “Lorenzo im-para i[n] ve[r]si ... e ... i[n]sengna a giuliano.” Tornabuoni to Piero il Gottoso, 28 February, 1458, MAP, XVII, 147.

33. Davidoff, *Thicker than Water*, 119.

are both at the most tender age ....”<sup>34</sup> When Lorenzo went on a trip to Pistoia without his younger brother, his letters home suggest that he knew that Giuliano was missing him and yearning to join in on the fun.<sup>35</sup>

It appears that Piero il Gottoso hoped his sons would follow the well-tested model of previous Medici generations: that is, a complementary division of labour, the elder brother taking charge of the family’s political position as the younger bolstered family honour via the cultivation of property and patronage. This complementary relationship seems to have characterised the partnership between Piero himself and his younger brother, Giovanni. As their Cosimo il Vecchio withdrew into the background in his old age, Piero stepped forward to handle political matters. Giovanni, meanwhile, was more interested in villa agriculture and the arts. Piero was quiet and introverted, and his chronic illnesses often kept him at home, but Giovanni was vibrant and outgoing. He gave the Medici household a friendly, charismatic, and creative exterior, while Piero managed the less glamorous political and financial matters behind the scenes. This seems to have suited both men quite well, and apparently their relationship was healthy and amiable. This relationship may have been made easier by the enduring presence of their unusually long-lived father, who remained the highest authority in the household and provided an enduring source of guidance and leadership. Because Piero was not ultimately in authority over Giovanni, there was less

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34. “Pur anche ne la decta capella da la quale non si poteva muovere, ritrovay con duy suoy abiatoci picoli, da li quali factomi dire doe oratione l’una in prosa l’altra in verso in modo certo digno et quasi incredibile a la età di quilli puti che sono in età tenerissima tuti doe ....” Galeazzo Maria Sforza to Francesco Sforza, 17 April, 1459, quoted in Rochon, *La jeunesse*, 100n9.

35. Lorenzo de’ Medici, Braccio Martelli, Sigismondo della Stufa, and Francesco Cantansanti to Piero il Gottoso, 24 July, 1463, in Lorenzo, *Lettere*, 1:7-8.

likelihood of resentment. It appears that, at first, Piero intended for his sons to have the same sort of complementary partnership.

### *The Journey of the Magi*

That the boys were intended to be a unit is reflected in what is perhaps the only depiction of them as children. Between 1459 and 1461, Benozzo Gozzoli painted his *Journey of the Magi*, the fresco cycle unfolding along the walls of the Medici Palace chapel (Figure 1). Medici men had a history of identifying with the Magi. They participated in the guild named for the Magi and often led processional celebrations in their commemoration, and Lorenzo himself was baptised on Epiphany. Upon Lorenzo's death in 1492, those making an inventory of his properties found multiple devotional depictions of the Magi.<sup>36</sup> This is not the first time members of the Medici family were depicted alongside the Magi, but Gozzoli's chapel cycle is the first to make the association so explicit.<sup>37</sup> On the western wall, the eldest magus, to whom I will refer as Melchior, leads the procession towards the Christ-child, and he is followed by the adult magus, to whom I will refer as Balthasar, on the south wall. Finally, at the end of the procession on the eastern wall, there is the youthful magus, to whom I will refer as Caspar.

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36. Stapleford, *Lorenzo de' Medici at Home*, 71, 93, 140.

37. As Volker Reinhardt has noted, a younger Cosimo appears in the retinue of the Magi in the *Adoration* by Fra Angelico and Benozzo Gozzoli in San Marco. See Reinhardt, "Tyranny or Golden Age? Florence in Botticelli's Day," in *Botticelli: Likeness, Myth, Devotion*, ed. Andreas Schumacher and Cristina Acidini Lucinat (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2009/2010), 114.



Figure 1. Benozzo Gozzoli, *Procession of the Magi*, 1459-1461, Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, Florence, Italy, [www.travelingintuscany.com](http://www.travelingintuscany.com)

In popular history and tourist material, Caspar (Figure 2) is often mistakenly identified as a portrait of Lorenzo due to a persistent rumour started, according to Ernst Gombrich, in a nineteenth-century tourist guidebook.<sup>38</sup> As many others have pointed out, however, this identification makes very little sense.<sup>39</sup> On a literal level, Caspar looks nothing like Lorenzo: he is far too old and too fair, and his face is an idealised type, not a true portrait.<sup>40</sup> Metaphorically, interpreting Caspar as Lorenzo has slightly more validity: Caspar is portrayed against a laurel bush. The laurel bush is no doubt a reference to the eldest boy's name; indeed, he would later adopt it as his personal device. However, as Miles Unger has pointed out, elevating the ten-year-old as the family's *only* metaphorical future would have been premature in 1459.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, as Cardini points out, the evidence that Caspar's outfit is based on Lorenzo's ceremonial clothing for Epiphany is scant, and there is no reliable documentation suggesting "that Benozzo followed any models faithfully, or that he had decided ... to reproduce" the costume exactly.<sup>42</sup>

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38. Gombrich, "The Early Medici as Patrons of Art," 49. This misidentification is still widespread today, to the point that a PBS website on the Medici repeats the claim. I myself have found prints of Caspar mistakenly labelled "Lorenzo de' Medici" in the gift shop at the Palazzo Medici Riccardi as recently as 2017. See PBS, "Benozzo Gozzoli," *Medici: Godfathers of the Renaissance*, accessed 14 June, 2019, <https://www.pbs.org/empires/medici/renaissance/gozzoli.html>.

39. See Gombrich, "The Early Medici," 49; Hatfield, "Cosimo de' Medici and the Chapel of His Palace," 238; Karla Langedijk, *The Portraits of the Medici: 15th-18th Centuries*, trans. Patricia Wardle et al. (Florence: Studio per Edizione Scelte, 1981), 1:26; Acidini Lucinat, "The East Wall," in *The Chapel of the Magi: Benozzo Gozzoli's Frescoes in the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, Florence*, ed. Acidini Lucinat (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994), 43; Miles J. Unger, *Magnifico: The Brilliant Life and Violent Times of Lorenzo de' Medici* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008), 41.

40. Gombrich, "The Early Medici," 49.

41. Unger, *Magnifico*, 41.

42. Franco Cardini, *The Chapel of the Magi in Palazzo Medici* (Florence: Mandragora, 2001), 35.



Figure 2. Gozzoli (detail), Caspar, Wikimedia Commons.

Furthermore, focusing our interpretation of Caspar on Lorenzo is too limiting, and we miss out on the richness of the frescoes as a work relating to an entire household. Caspar is in fact surrounded by Medicean devices: his white horse is bedecked in the Medici colours and the *palle*, and he rides beneath an orange tree, a device of Medici patriarch Giovanni di Bicci.<sup>43</sup> If Caspar is meant to symbolise Lorenzo, then it is within the wider context of a proud lineage.

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43. Francis Ames-Lewis, "Early Medicean Devices," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 42 (January 1979): 128-29.



I would further suggest that Caspar in fact represents *all* Cosimo's grandsons: Lorenzo, Giuliano, and Cosimino, who would probably still have been alive when the mural was planned.<sup>44</sup> He embodies the full generation, under Lorenzo's leadership, tracing the steps of their forefathers (as signified by the laurel growing beneath an orange tree). In turn, Balthasar represents the generation of Medici under Piero's leadership. Finally, Melchior represents the generation of Medici under Cosimo's leadership. These three generations of Magi, I would argue, were thus the three full generations of Medici living within the Palace at the time of its construction, and those who would consistently use this chapel.

At the same time, the Magi act as the illustration of every man's life, from the dawn of youth on the east wall until the sunset of old age on the west wall, after which one ascends, via death, to Christ and the resurrection, represented by the altar.<sup>45</sup> A symbol of youthful hope, just beginning his journey along the path of his forebears, it would make sense that Caspar was meant to be a figure with whom Lorenzo, Giuliano, and Cosimino could all identify.

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44. Cosimo di Giovanni de' Medici, more often called Cosimino ("Little Cosimo"), was the only son of Giovanni and his wife Ginevra. Cosimino died young, likely shortly after Gozzoli began his painting.

45. Acidini Lucinat points out the alignment of the walls (and ages of man) with the four cardinal directions and the movements of the heavens. See Acidini Lucinat, "The Procession of the Magi," in *Chapel of the Magi*, 40.

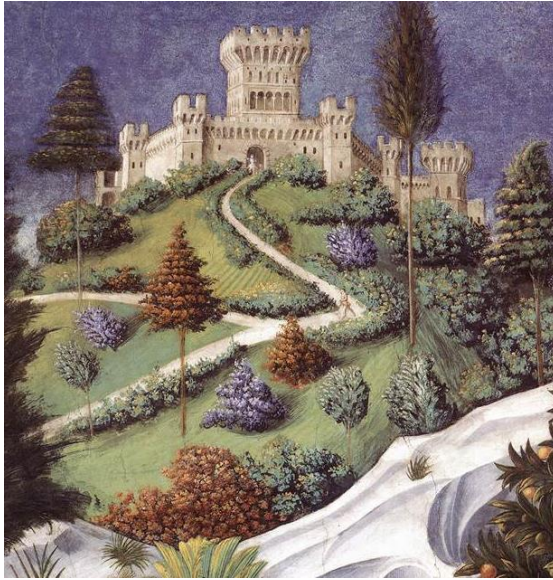


Figure 3. Gozzoli (detail), Cafaggiolo, Wikimedia Commons.

This interpretation, I believe, is borne out by the company following Caspar. The entire procession descends from Cafaggiolo, the birthplace of this branch of the family (Figure 3). In the left foreground of the eastern wall, Medici men form a group that echoes the procession ahead. Cosimo and Piero ride at the front, though Piero somewhat precedes his father (Figure 4).<sup>46</sup> This may be a visual nod to the fact that Piero was the commissioner of the frescoes, and the one consulting most closely with Gozzoli as he painted.<sup>47</sup> Piero's white horse matches those of Balthasar and Caspar, and all three have harnesses in the Medicean colours of red and gold. While Caspar's harness is more subtly decorated with only the Medicean *palle*, Piero's harness is fully festooned with *palle*, diamond rings (his personal device), and his motto

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46. It is unclear who first made this identification, but as Langedijk has proven, this interpretation of the figures is borne out by contemporary portraiture and understandings of decorum. See Langedijk, *Portraits of the Medici*, 1:24-25.

47. See Benozzo Gozzoli to Piero il Gottoso, 10 July, 11 September, and 25 September, 1459, in Giovanni Gaye, ed., *Carteggio inedito d'artisti dei secoli XIV, XV, XVI* (Florence: Giuseppe Molini, 1839), 1:191-93; Roberto Martelli to Piero il Gottoso, 13 July, 1459, in Andreas Grote, "A Hitherto Unpublished Letter on Benozzo Gozzoli's Frescoes in the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 27 (January 1964): 321.

*SEMPER*, which was itself derived from a ceremony of the local Compagnia dei Magi fraternity, to whom the Medici men belonged.<sup>48</sup>



Figure 4. Gozzoli (detail), Piero, Cosimo, and Giovanni, Wikimedia Commons

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48. Langedijk, *Portraits of the Medici*, 1:26.



Figure 5. Gozzoli (detail), Balthasar, Wikimedia Commons.

Cosimo echoes Melchior from across the room by his choice of mount: both elderly patriarchs sit upon mules (as befits their advanced age), though Melchior's is a brilliant dappled white to match the mounts of his fellow Magi (Figure 6).<sup>49</sup> Seen between Cosimo and Piero is another man with dark hair (Figure 4). We only see a small glimpse of his clothing, but they are blue with gold brocade, to match the livery of Balthasar's footmen (Figure 5).<sup>50</sup> There has been some dispute over the identity of this figure: Langedijk originally identified this profile as that of Giovanni di Cosimo, owing to its resemblance to the bust by Mino da Fiesole, though the figure in

49. Many thanks to Clare Coope for pointing out that Melchior and Cosimo ride similar mounts. See also Acidini Lucinat, "Procession," 40.

50. Langedijk has spotted the *palle* within Giovanni's brocade. See Langedijk, *Portraits of the Medici*, 1:25.

the fresco is older and less idealised. Hatfield argues that this cannot be the case, because the figure in the fresco does not appear to be riding in the first rank alongside his peers.<sup>51</sup> However, I believe that this is only a trick of perspective, amplified by Piero's slightly advanced position. This mysterious third figure is in fact also at the head of the procession, at the same level as Cosimo. I believe him to be Giovanni, and the brothers are thus presented in a unit with their father (though under the leadership of commissioner Piero). This makes more visual and thematic sense than it would if Giovanni were one of the visually separated horsemen on the far left of the fresco (Figure 1) as Hatfield suggests.



Figure 6. Gozzoli (detail), Melchior, Wikimedia Commons.

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51. Langedijk, *Portraits of the Medici*, 1:25; Hatfield, "Cosimo de' Medici," 235.

Further back in the procession, there are lifelike portraits of three young boys (Figure 7). The boy on the left, with a sharp forward gaze and bent nose, is the then-ten-year-old Lorenzo. Just behind him is another boy, who peers out at the viewer with large eyes and a furrowed brow. Further to the right is a third boy with peaceful features, looking downward. Lucinat and Cardini believe that the boy on the far right is Giuliano, but do not pay any attention to the boy in the middle.<sup>52</sup> However, I would suggest that the boy in the middle, just behind Lorenzo, is Giuliano, and the boy further to the right is Giovanni's son, Cosimino. The two boys on the left have intensely lifelike features, as is to be expected from a painter who probably saw these boys regularly while he worked in their home. The boy on the right, meanwhile, has smoother, less defined features, and avoids the gaze of the viewer. Cosimino died around 1459 and may have already passed away or been ill in bed when he was added to the fresco. This may be why his features are so smooth and undefined, and his gaze downturned.



Figure 7. Gozzoli (detail), Lorenzo (left), Giuliano (centre left), and Cosimino (far right), Wikimedia Commons.

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52. Acidini Lucinat, "The Medici and Citizens in the Procession," in *The Chapel of the Magi*, 366-67; Cardini, *Chapel of the Magi*, 44.

The boys are dressed simply, but their positions are significant. Lorenzo and Giuliano are closely grouped, and almost directly behind Piero and Cosimo according to the order of the procession. Cosimino, meanwhile, is visually separated from them, and directly behind his father Giovanni. Though separate, he is on the same eye level as his cousins. The three boys thus form a group, though, like Piero, Lorenzo is given predominance. Just as Cosimo, Piero, and Giovanni echo Melchior and Balthasar, this next triad is meant to hint at the coming Caspar. They are still buried in a crowd and have not yet emerged: their time has not yet come, just as Caspar has only just barely begun his journey. Together, they are the youthful magus, though Lorenzo most closely embodies this magus (as Gozzoli hints with the laurel bush). What is most important to take away from this, however, is that these boys together are the newest generation of those who have emerged from that idealised Cafaggiolo. Lorenzo is not emerging alone: Giuliano is hot on his heels, and Cosimino accompanies them. Lorenzo, though prepared throughout his childhood for taking the helm, was not viewed by his contemporaries as approaching that helm *alone* – neither was he depicted that way. However, changing family circumstances would slowly bring Lorenzo more and more into the forefront.

### Men, Not Youths

Soon after Gozzoli's fresco was finished, a series of deaths occurred in the Palazzo Medici. As stated above, Cosimino, Giovanni's sole child and heir, likely died during the fresco's composition or shortly afterward. Giovanni himself would soon follow in 1463. In the summer of 1464, the long-lived Cosimo's health began to decline rapidly, and Piero sent his sons

away to Cafaggiolo. This was the first time *both* boys headed a Medicean *brigata*, though they were in the company of their tutor and spiritual advisor, Gentile Becchi.<sup>53</sup> In the final days of their formidable grandfather, this trip was an educational experience for the boys as a team. With Giovanni and Cosimino dead, and with a sickly father, they were being moved into position as the future leaders of the household. Placing them together as the head of a *brigata*, even as the *brigata* moved with familiar people through familiar territory, would give them experience in leadership and would help prepare them mentally for the changes that would occur over the next few months. Once Cosimo was dead and they were the heirs apparent, more focus would be placed on their abilities, maturity, and experience than ever before.

Not only did travelling together test the boys' experience, but it also tested their fraternal cooperation. Lorenzo would have to learn how to take charge and direction of the household, his brother included, while also giving Giuliano opportunities to exercise his independence. Giuliano was also obliged to defer to his older brother's judgment. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Cosimo apparently praised the capabilities of both boys and hoped that they would prove good assistants to their father, united, as ever, in love and agreement.<sup>54</sup> Knowing that this was one of their grandfather's final wishes would remind the brothers to stay united as they stepped forward into the limelight.

Despite the sad recent events and new burden of responsibility, there are still hints of childhood adventures. Early autumn that year brought heavy

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53. Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici to Piero il Gottoso, 7 June, 1464, in Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, 1:9-10. This letter is in Becchi's hand.

54. Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici, 26 July, 1464, quoted in Fabroni, *Magni Cosmi*, 2:252.



rain, and Lorenzo describes the way the whole *brigata* had to “flee to the top of the big tower for fear” of the flooding.<sup>55</sup> This may have been quite frightening for boys of eleven and fifteen, but Lorenzo adds, in a characteristically wry tone, “we would’ve given the cupola [of the cathedral] or the bell tower of the [Palazzo della Signoria] a run for their money....”<sup>56</sup> His description evokes images of two adolescent boys racing at top speed up the stairs, quite possibly with their tutors and servants struggling to keep up.

As Lorenzo grew, it appears that his father began giving him increasing influence over his siblings’ futures. At the same time, Lorenzo began taking a more active role as Piero’s political representative. While Lorenzo was abroad on Piero’s behalf in 1465, Piero relayed to him that Lorenzo’s older sister Nannina had recovered from a recent illness, adding: “we will reason about her wedding on your return from Naples.”<sup>57</sup> At seventeen, Nannina was a year older than Lorenzo. Despite this, a sixteen-year-old boy was being brought into decisions about his older sister’s wedding.

During this same period, Piero brings Lorenzo into a discussion about Giuliano’s place in the public eye. A week after the letter about Nannina, Piero writes:

The issue has been raised with our Giuliano, by Baccio Benci and others, of holding a tournament, but doing it differently than is the

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55. “fuggire in cima alla torre grande per paura ....” Lorenzo de’ Medici to Piero il Gottoso, 23 September, 1464, in Lorenzo de’ Medici, *Lettere*, 1:13.

56. “Haremo dato della cupola o del campanile di Signori buona cosa ....” Lorenzo de’ Medici, 13. My translation of this obscure idiom, “Haremo dato ... buona cosa” is from Francis William Kent, “Lorenzo de’ Medici at the Duomo,” in *Princely Citizen*, 132. This interpretation seems, based on the context, the most accurate.

57. “La Nannina guarì: intorno alle nozze sua ragionammo alla tornata tua da Napoli.” Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 4 May, 1465, quoted in Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis*, 2:52.

custom. The Signoria wants it to happen. I'm not content with it; I will see if I can get myself out of it; I don't want such a bother ....<sup>58</sup>

As with Nannina's wedding, Piero brought Lorenzo into the discussion. Piero may have considered a tournament to be premature. It would function as a public display of Medicean male prowess and maturity. Giuliano, only twelve, would have been too young, especially since Lorenzo had not gone through this rite of passage. However, even though Piero dislikes the idea, he is still inviting Lorenzo to give his opinion on the matter. Being involved – whether directly or from abroad – in these very public celebrations was, apparently, part of what it meant to “be counted as a man and not a youth” within the domestic sphere.<sup>59</sup> Lorenzo was being brought into the mechanics of Medicean public relations – which took form in making decisions about his siblings' lives.

Piero found other ways to display the growing prowess of his sons in the period of unrest following Cosimo's death. On 27 August, 1466, according to chronicler Filippo Rinuccini, Piero withdrew to his villa at Careggi and flooded the Medici palace and the surrounding neighbourhood with armed men. The next day, the Signoria attempted to mediate and sent for both Piero and the leader of the anti-Mediceans, Luca Pitti. While Pitti apparently showed up unarmed and alone, Piero sent both his sons in his place.<sup>60</sup> This political move was layered with several meanings. Most

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58. “Essi levato su Giuliano nostro messo al punto da Baccio Benci [et] da altri, [et] vorrebbero armeggiare, ma farla altrimenti che non se usato. La Signoria vuole che faccino. Io non me ne contento; vedrò di sgabellarmene se potrò; non vorrei tante noje ....” Piero il Gottoso to Lorenzo de' Medici, 11 May, 1465, quoted in Fabroni, 53.

59. “fare conto essere huomo [et] non garzone ....” Fabroni, 52. See Chapter Two of this thesis for an analysis of this phrase.

60. Filippo Rinuccini, *Ricordi storici di Filippo di Cino Rinuccini dal 1282 al 1460*, ed. G. Aiazzi (Florence: Stamperia Piatti, 1840), c-ci.

importantly for our purposes, it sent the message that these two youths together were a fitting substitute for their adult father. Lorenzo did not represent his father alone before the Signoria, but in a paired set with his younger brother. It was simultaneously an insult and a show of faith: Piero did not trust Pitti or the Signoria enough to come alone and unarmed to the palace, but at the same time he was willing to offer up his sons as semi-hostages. What seems to have upset Rinuccini so much, however, are the dynastic implications. By sending his underage sons to represent himself in an official political capacity, he was suggesting that they were fit for political action based on bloodline rather than experience and maturity.

Though Lorenzo had seniority, Giuliano actively participated in his older brother's life. In 1468, the engagement between Lorenzo and his future bride Clarice was finalised. Clarice's uncle, the Cardinal Latino Orsini, would write to Piero saying, "we would have much enjoyment in seeing our nephew Lorenzo, or at least his brother" at Christmas that year.<sup>61</sup> It appears that neither brother visited, but it is noteworthy that Giuliano was considered a fitting stand-in for his older brother, even in the context of engagement celebrations. Perhaps by getting to know the younger brother, the Orsini family hoped that they would also get to know something about the future son-in-law they had never met.

In February of 1469, the Medici hosted a tournament to celebrate the engagement. Lorenzo, though a youth, was on the cusp of a major rite of passage that, for many young men, would not come for at least another

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61. "haveremo recreatione molta de vedere overo nostro nepote Lorenzo, overo saltem lo fratello, in questa pasqua, cioè è la Natività." Latino Orsini to Piero il Gottoso, 26 November, 1468, in Cesare Guasti, ed., *Tre Lettere di Lucrezia Tornabuoni a Piero de' Medici ed altre lettere di vari concernenti al matrimonio di Lorenzo il Magnifico con Clarice Orsini* (Florence: Felice Le Monnier, 1859), 12.

decade. This ritual of maturity lent additional proof of Lorenzo's claim to manhood as he entered it unusually early.<sup>62</sup> Giuliano also participated in the tournament in support of Lorenzo. His prowess would add to the magnificence of the spectacle, thus giving more glory and honour to his brother. Pulci, in his poem commemorating the tournament, devotes a stanza to Giuliano, portraying him in Milanese steel:

Then followed his brother Giuliano,  
Upon a destrier all in steel covered,  
Milan has never made nor will make again  
Such rich harnesses ....<sup>63</sup>

The unique Milanese armaments add splendour to Giuliano's appearance while, at the same time, marking him as unmistakably Medicean. He is not only identified first as Lorenzo's "brother" (*fratel*), but as one who has been gifted with prizes from the Medici family's greatest ally. His entrance into the joust is a political statement: he, like Lorenzo, is backed by a powerful northern dynasty.

Pulci finishes his *Giostra* with another nod to Giuliano and a hint for the future:

There are for Giuliano raised certain trumpet-calls  
That kindle, like the Carnival horn,  
His great heart to the waiting joust,  
The ultimate glory of our Florence.<sup>64</sup>

These lines create a deliberate expectation that Giuliano will soon follow in Lorenzo's footsteps. Though he participated in Lorenzo's joust, he

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62. Francis William Kent, "The Young Lorenzo," 37.

63. "Poi seguitava el suo fratel Giuliano / Sopra un destrier tutto dacciaio coperto / Che mai piu fe ne rifara Milano / Si ricche barde ...." Pulci, "La Giostra," b2r, in the *Biblioteca Europea di informazione e cultura*, accessed 13 September, 2019, [http://digitale.beic.it/BEIC:RD01:39bei\\_digitool2450521](http://digitale.beic.it/BEIC:RD01:39bei_digitool2450521).

64. "Digli che sono per Giulian certi squilli / Che destan chome Carnasciale il corno / Il suo cor magno allaspettata giostra / Ultima gloria di Fiorenza nostra." Pulci, c4v.

was not the star; that was a rite of passage for the future. Though he was the younger brother, the same expectations – that is, bringing glory to his family and to Florence through a magnificent display of skill – were already lying upon him. Like in Gozzoli’s frescoes, Lorenzo is not described on his own: his younger brother is hot on his heels.

A few months later, Giuliano, accompanied by Becchi and nine youths, travelled to Rome as Lorenzo’s representative to fetch Clarice Orsini for the wedding. While on the journey, Giuliano would send news to both Lorenzo and Piero. The letters contain the same basic information but are different tonally. The letter to Piero mainly regards travel plans and business, and he uses the formal *voi*. His language is dry and straightforward. Meanwhile, when he writes to Lorenzo, his language is playful, and he uses the familiar *tu*. He adds dramatics to his account, as if to make his journey sound more tiresome than it was. Using colourful repetitions of words for emphasis, he humorously describes going all over Siena “three by three and two by two” to visit “all the families of note, one by one, in a row, in order,” a most exhausting task.<sup>65</sup> This was not an unusual form of humour: comical exaggeration, especially of suffering, flows through letters between friends and equals. As we shall see, this sense of equality would become strained after their father’s death.

### **Giuliano, Interrupted**

By Piero’s death in 1469, Lorenzo – not yet twenty-one – was already learning how to manage the lives of everyone in his household as the new *paterfamilias*. This included the sixteen-year-old Giuliano. Unlike Piero and

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65. “a tre a tre [et] a due a due a tutto i familgi di noto a uno a uno alla fila co[n] ordine.” Giuliano de’ Medici to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 29 April, 1469, MAP, XXIII, 246.

Giovanni, Lorenzo and Giuliano had no father to whom they could turn as the ultimate authority; there was only Lorenzo to hold this burden of responsibility. There was no higher power to mediate any disagreement between the brothers. Rather than a complementary balance of interests and activities that had apparently existed between their father and uncle, the relationship between Lorenzo and Giuliano would be defined, after their father's death, by a power imbalance more characteristic of patriarchy than *fraterna*. This would cause some strain as their relationship's parameters shifted. This could cause considerable emotional friction among brothers who, until then, had been on more equal standing.

Now that Lorenzo was *paterfamilias*, Giuliano appears to have started regularly acting as Lorenzo's agent in Tuscan territories, writing daily briefs to Lorenzo in much the same way Lorenzo had once written them to Piero.<sup>66</sup> By 1472, he was eager to spread his wings a little further. This led to one of the few recorded quarrels between the brothers, which is exemplary of the relationship at that point, reveals the expectations that each had for the other: Giuliano wanted Lorenzo's support, and Lorenzo wanted Giuliano's respect. When presented with a chance to visit Venice, Giuliano was eager to go. Lorenzo, however, was hesitant to send Giuliano on such an errand.<sup>67</sup> Both brothers' reactions to this disagreement would further reveal the strategies a younger brother might use to try and get his way, and the strategies an older

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66. Giuliano de' Medici to Lorenzo de' Medici, 29 March, 1471, MAP, XXVII, 258; 1 June, 1471, MAP, XXI, 225; 4 June, 1471, MAP, XXVII, 352; 2 August, 1471, MAP, XXV, 92.

67. Rochon believes that Lorenzo's hesitation came from a desire to appease his Milanese allies. See Rochon, *La jeunesse*, 27-28.

brother might use to regain control. Some of the best sources for the argument are the letters of the Milanese ambassador to Florence, Sagramoro da Rimini.

Sagramoro first mentions Giuliano's idea for the trip to Venice in February of that year.<sup>68</sup> Unfortunately for Giuliano, two months later Sagramoro reveals that this idea did not go over so well with Lorenzo.<sup>69</sup> Despite Giuliano's great anticipation for the trip, Lorenzo initially denied him permission to go. Sagramoro describes this conflict as a butting of heads between two wilful brothers and portrays Giuliano as caught between his familial obligations and his own fiery ambition. Lorenzo is depicted as attempting to reassert his dominance, which only aggravates the situation:

I don't doubt that Signore Giuliano's appetite for going to Venice causes some resentment between Lorenzo and him, inasmuch as [Lorenzo] continues to interpose himself between [Giuliano's] feet [in order] to remove this volition from his head, or at least to delay it.

However, Giuliano was not totally without recourse in this situation. It seems that in the time leading up to the anticipated date of departure, Giuliano had "already publicized ... his wanting to go ...." This suggests that when Sagramoro reported Giuliano's plans to the Milanese two months earlier, it was just one piece of Giuliano's larger rumour campaign. It is likely that he intentionally spread this information not just to Sagramoro, but also

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68. "Juliano de' Medici m'ha ditto volere andare a Venexa questa quaresima et starvi uno mese al più per vederla et per spasso." Sagramoro da Rimini to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 2 February, 1472, quoted in Rochon, 56n134.

69. "Dubito che tanto appetito del S[ignore] Giuliano de volere andare a Venetia non causi qualche sdegnò fra Lorenzo et Luy, imperoché continue se gli è interposto tra i piedi inanzi per levargli tal volontà del capo, *vel saltem* per differirlo. Et havendo già pubblicato Giuliano de volere andare, ymo statuito che heri fosse la partita, fo necessità a Lorenzo e a la madre parlargli in modo che mutasse sententia. El perché lui cum parole non consuete alla sua natura sdegnò et montò a cavallo ed andossene in Musello, fino a dire chel conosceva molto bene che dicto Lorenzo non voleva chel fosse conosciuto al mondo, né chel avesse reputatione alchuna. Rresponsegli Lorenzo molto costumatamente, pur l'andò in Musello, come ho ditto. Ma quello che ci è di male è che tal scoruzo è trapellato in più persone ... Lorenzo n'ha despiacere assay, et credo gli converrà infine lassarlo seguire questo suo appetito ...." Sagramoro da Rimini to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 9 April, 1472, quoted in Rochon, 57n135.

to other politicians in Florence. By spreading the news of his intentions among their political peers, Giuliano was putting Lorenzo into a potentially embarrassing position. If he refused to give Giuliano his permission, he risked being perceived as unfair or stingy. This sort of behaviour was not entirely unusual for younger brothers: younger sons were known to sometimes deliberately put their *paterfamilias* into compromising situations that would force him to choose between public embarrassment or giving the youth what he wanted.<sup>70</sup> For an early modern younger sibling, who often had little legal or social recourse, this behaviour may have been a last-ditch effort to gain some measure of personal autonomy.

Because he resorted to publicising his journey and thus opening Lorenzo up to potential ridicule, “it was necessary for Lorenzo and the mother [Lucrezia] to talk with [Giuliano] in a way that would change his opinion.” During this conversation, Giuliano, “with words not usual to his nature, scorned” Lorenzo and Lucrezia. Sagramoro goes on to specify that these words included some fiery accusations against his elder brother. Giuliano “said that he understood very well that . . . Lorenzo did not want that he should be recognised in the world, nor that he should have any reputation at all.” Even second-hand, this is a revealing statement. The ambiguous motivation behind Giuliano’s desire to go to Venice is at last made explicit: the seventeen-year-old was eager to become a “recognised” (*conosciuto*) figure in the public sphere, and to earn himself a “reputation” (*reputazione*). He was, in other words, ready to make his debut as a public figure. As I demonstrated

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70. Ago, “Ecclesiastical Careers,” 272.



in Chapter Two, this same desire had motivated much of Lorenzo's youthful disobedience.

Giuliano's next decision was dramatic: after "scorning" his brother and mother, he "mounted a horse to head off to the Mugello," where he stayed at Cafaggiolo. This must have been quite a public demonstration, as Sagramoro remarks that "what is truly bad is that such a tiff is leaked among many people," indicating how widely the news had spread. Meanwhile, Sagramoro seems sympathetic to Lorenzo. He reports that "Lorenzo responded to [Giuliano] very courteously," despite the latter's scornful accusations. After Giuliano's departure, Lorenzo "has great regret at" the situation (*n'ha despiacere assay*). It is possible that Lorenzo's *despiacere* was at least partly caused by the widespread rumours. However, Sagramoro continues, "I believe he will finally agree to free [Giuliano] to follow this appetite of his ...." An undated letter from Ficino suggests that, for Giuliano, running away was intentionally geared toward making those at home feel sorry:

you went away suddenly to the Mugello .... Maybe you thought of staying some days in the villa, so that your return would be more desirable to us ....<sup>71</sup>

The details of this letter indicate that it may be regarding this dispute: Ficino references a day of religious contrition, which would fit into the Lenten period. This was followed by an abrupt departure for the Mugello, which also fits the narrative. It is quite possible, of course, that this letter refers to an entirely different incident. If that is the case, then it demonstrates that this behaviour was not entirely unusual for Giuliano. Of course, Ficino does not

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71. "in mugellanos montes te subito contulisti .... Fortisan statuisti dies aliquot ruisticari: ut ad nos desiderator redeas ...." Ficino to Giuliano de' Medici, in Ficino, *Epistolae*, XXIIIr.

use this term, but he makes it clear that he believes that Giuliano intends to effect change with his behaviour – and that Ficino does not approve. “But, oh astute Medic,” he writes, playing on the meaning of Medici (doctors), “this medicine cannot benefit either you nor me.”<sup>72</sup> Ficino chides “Doctor” Giuliano for trying to “cure” those at home by making them miss him. Whether this was Giuliano’s intention in 1472, both Sagramoro’s remarks and Ficino’s letter suggest that running away may have been culturally understood to be emotionally manipulative behaviour.

However, a brief letter from Giuliano to his mother, written from Cafaggiolo, suggests that the young man had a very different view of events. He insists: “I would think that, me never having told any lie to either you or Lorenzo, you would’ve believed me more than others ....” He furthermore claims that he left because of the way Lucrezia and Lorenzo spoke to him: “I’ve come [to Cafaggiolo] to not be asked a million times about something I don’t know how to answer, as I told you in person, and not having lied ....”<sup>73</sup> Since he repeats this denial twice over, it is reasonable to think that Lucrezia and Lorenzo had accused Giuliano of lying, or perhaps that they had doubted him. Unfortunately, this is only one side of a conversation. There is no indication of what Lucrezia and Lorenzo thought Giuliano’s lie was, or why they doubted him. In any case, what Sagramoro and Ficino saw as manipulation Giuliano saw as a justified response to being treated like a liar.

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72. “Sed nihil aut tibi aut mihi o astute medices isthac opus est medicina.” Ficino, XXIIIr. This is not the only time Ficino would make this pun when dispensing advice to the Medici: see his introductory letter to Lorenzo in Ficino, *De vita libri tres*, ed. Andreas Leenius (Basel: Iohannes Bebelius, 1529).

73. “Io creder[r]ei ch[e] no[n] mi havendo io mai detto bugia alc[una] ne a voi ne a l[orenzo] credessi piu a me ch[e] a altri Io sono venuto q[ui] p[er] no[n] ess[ere] domandato mille volte di cosa ch[e] io no[n] sappia rispondere come a bocca vi dissi et no[n] havendo bux[iato] ....” Giuliano de’ Medici to Tornabuoni, 7 April, 1472, MAP, XXIV, 134.

Whether intentional or not, this flight to the Mugello did effect a change. Lorenzo, regretting the quarrel, sent Gentile Becchi to Cafaggiolo to remonstrate with the “indignant” (*sdegnato*) Giuliano on his behalf. Becchi, who had at turns acted as tutor, chaperone, and spiritual counsellor to both young men from their early childhood, knew the family intimately enough to be a reliable intermediary in this situation. Sagramoro puts this in interesting terms: to counsel Giuliano, Becchi would “remind him of what befits a good brother.” Successful resolution depended not on a compromise, but on Giuliano resuming his appropriate role in the family hierarchy. According to Sagramoro, Becchi succeeded and reported that “Giuliano has agreed not to go [to Venice] right now.” He lingered a little longer in Cafaggiolo, “more out of shame than anything else ....”<sup>74</sup>

Nevertheless, Giuliano eventually got what he wanted: Giuliano’s next preserved letter reveals that by the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, he was on his way to Venice.<sup>75</sup> It seems that, after an appropriate show of shame on Giuliano’s part, Lorenzo compromised with him and allowed him to leave – if later than originally planned. Though he felt sorry, Lorenzo had appealed to the spiritual authority he carried as *paterfamilias* to make Giuliano feel contrition and shame through his use of the ecclesiastics Ficino and Becchi as mediators. It was too much for the stubborn teenager to resist. He came home – and was rewarded for doing so. Allowing the remorseful Giuliano to go to Venice thus

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74. “mandogli Lorenzo uno M. Gentile fino in Musello dove epso era, e sdegnato, como avisay, per recordargli quello che a bon fratello se convene. Reporta el dicto, come el s’è acordato a non andare hora; starassi lassuso qualche di, più per vergogna che per altro, imperhoché havea facto spese assay per andare honorevole, et erassi licentiatto da molti.” Sagramoro da Rimini to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, April, 1472, quoted in Rochon, *La jeunesse*, 57n135.

75. Giuliano de’ Medici to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 23 April, 1472, MAP, XXIV, 205.

enforced Lorenzo's status: it sent the message that dutiful submission, not wilful independence, would earn Giuliano what he desired. This conflict of wills had ended in an emotional chess-match in which each brother attempted to make the other feel sorrier. However, Giuliano lacked the emotional resources that his older sibling possessed. Lorenzo, as sorry as he may have felt for what happened, could enlist the spiritual world in the form of Becchi (and perhaps Ficino), as his ally. The growing power difference between elder and younger brother manifested not only socially or legally, but emotionally.

#### "The Least Content Youth"

Giuliano's identity remained a point of contention. Letters left from this period reveal that, as Giuliano grew, Lorenzo considered several different options without coming to any resolution. Between 1471 and 1478, he entertained the possibilities of a marital union with families from Milan or Venice.<sup>76</sup> While earthly marriage was one possibility, a heavenly marriage to the Church was another. Lorenzo first broached the idea of a Florentine cardinal in 1470.<sup>77</sup> Following the ambitions of his grandfather, he seemed to have specifically wanted this Florentine cardinal to be a Medici. This would have given the Medici spiritual as well as earthly authority, not to mention the political influence, wealth, and prestige which came with having a cardinal in the family. Unfortunately for Lorenzo's ambitions, in 1471 Pope Paul II passed away, and Sixtus IV, who was far less favourable to the Medici, ascended to the Papal throne.

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76. See Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, 1:399-400.

77. See Lorenzo de' Medici, 398.

When an opening came for the archbishopric in Pisa – an important Florentine territory – Sixtus appointed Francesco Salviati, who was not only Sixtus’s relative, but a member of a rival Florentine family.<sup>78</sup> Lorenzo took this as a personal insult, writing, “it seems to me an explicit injustice and wrong is done to me....”<sup>79</sup> It is not presented as an injury to Florence, or the Medici in general, but to Lorenzo in specific. Lorenzo does not say whether he sees this as a definite threat to his plans for Giuliano, for whom an archbishopric would be a short step to a cardinalate. Nevertheless, it is *Lorenzo* being insulted, *Lorenzo*’s plans being upended. As *paterfamilias*, he now considered himself both the face of the family and the sum of the family. Any insult against his family members was an insult against him. Giuliano could not even claim his own insults.

Despite this, Giuliano’s position was not without certain benefits. Elder sons were often obliged to cut short their education when they took on the busy role of *paterfamilias*.<sup>80</sup> Lorenzo is somewhat of an exception to this, as he managed to set aside time to pursue his intellectual passions, but, as he would later complain, he still could not dedicate as much time to study as he preferred. Giuliano, on the other hand, was allowed – and encouraged – to continue his education. When Poliziano first joined the Medici household in the early 1470’s, he began by tutoring Giuliano in Latin. To this day, there still exists in the Medici archives a little notebook full of Giuliano’s Latin work. Furthermore, now that Lorenzo had given up his charismatic role as

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78. Martines, *April Blood*, 99.

79. “et a mio parere mi è facta una expressa ingiustitia et torto ....” Lorenzo de’ Medici to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 14 December, 1474, in Lorenzo de’ Medici, *Lettere*, 2:58.

80. Ago, “Ecclesiastical Careers,” 274.

“Prince of Youth” to become a responsible statesman, Giuliano stepped into the role, symbolising the youthful exuberance of the Medici household.

Like Lorenzo before him, Giuliano participated in a joust held in his honour, went to parties and dances, and flirted. His joust, which occurred in 1475, was just as splendid – if not more so – as Lorenzo’s had been. Giuliano, too, wore custom-made armour and carried his unique banner, which was painted by Botticelli himself.<sup>81</sup> The banner depicted Athena and was adorned with olive branches, and his shield bore the head of Medusa, which also put him beneath the protection of the goddess.<sup>82</sup> Lorenzo marched in the company of *popolani* that followed Giuliano’s horse, and by doing so ““commended [Giuliano] to the *popolo* by his presence.””<sup>83</sup> Giuliano, twenty-two at the time, was essentially making his debut as a *giovane*, with his brother – rather than his father – presenting him to the world of virile adulthood. However, when Lorenzo made his debut, he was both being prepared to enter his future career and celebrating his engagement. Giuliano had neither a bride nor a career awaiting him.

Even so, he was deeply unhappy. After his death, family friend Piero Vespucci would write to Lucrezia that “Many times he told me, in the presence of Niccolò Martelli, that he was the least content youth, not only in Florence, but in Italy.”<sup>84</sup> It is interesting that Vespucci lists another source – Niccolò Martelli – which could corroborate this claim. It further indicates that

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81. Rochon, *La jeunesse*, 259.

82. R. M. Ruggieri, “Letterati poeti e pittori intorno alla giostra di Giuliano de’ Medici,” *Rinascimento* 10 (1959): 168-69.

83. Filippo Corsini, quoted in Trexler, *Public Life*, 440. Translation by Trexler.

84. “piu volte mi disse alla presenza di nicholo martelli era el peggior chontento giovane nonche di firenze ma ditalia ....” Piero Vespucci to Tornabuoni, 12 January, 1480, MAP, LXXXVIII, 247.

not only did Giuliano say this many times, but he said it to more than one person.

### *The Adoration of the Magi*

The shift in Lorenzo and Giuliano's relationship, and the way it was perceived by the outside world, is reflected in an important new artistic variation on the Epiphany. Around 1475, Sandro Botticelli painted *The Adoration of the Magi* (Figure 8), a thematic sequel to Gozzoli's frescoes. Hatfield has written what is perhaps the definitive analysis of this painting, but I hope to expand a bit on Hatfield's analysis in the context of the developing fraternal relationship between Lorenzo and Giuliano.<sup>85</sup> Rather than being in a palace chapel, the *Adoration* was painted for a private tomb-chapel in Santa Maria Novella. This chapel was little more than an altar (*altare*) next to the main door of the church, and therefore, unlike the glimmering chapel in the Medici palace, visible to the public.<sup>86</sup> Anyone who wanted to could view this painting, no matter their wealth or importance. Furthermore, the patron who commissioned this work was not one of the Medici household or family. He was not even a member of their inner circle. The patron, Guasparre dal Lama, was a middling sort who spent a few years (c.1469-c.1476) working as an exchange broker, likely with ties (or ambitions thereof) to the powerful Medici bank.<sup>87</sup> Named for the youngest Magus, Caspar, Guasparre likely saw the Magi as his spiritual patrons and the Medici as his earthly ones.<sup>88</sup>

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86. Rab Hatfield, *Botticelli's Uffizi "Adoration": A Study in Pictorial Content* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 20.

87. Hatfield, 14-17; Sharon Fermor, "Botticelli and the Medici," in *The Early Medici and Their Artists*, 171.

88. Hatfield, *Botticelli's Uffizi "Adoration"*, 87.

The identities of the various figures in the *Adoration* has been the subject of much discussion. In the 1530s and 40s, the author of the *Anonimo Magliabechiano* stated that these are portraits of real persons, and in 1550 Vasari would attempt to identify them as members of the Medicean circle.<sup>89</sup> Since then, various scholars have tried their own hand at identification, though few have ever strayed far from the assumption that the painting depicts the Medici and their circle.<sup>90</sup> As Hatfield demonstrates, the hints that these are portraits are too conspicuous: the arrangement of figures deliberately forces the Magi's faces into view, and unlike traditional representations of the Magi as bearded easterners in oriental clothing, these men are groomed and dressed more or less like contemporary Italians.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, it is already quite clear that at least some of the figures are portraits. The blond young man on the far right is likely Botticelli, and the older man in light blue who gazes outward at the audience and gestures to himself is probably Guasparre himself.<sup>92</sup>

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89. Hatfield, 68. See Carl Frey, ed., *Il codice magliabechiano* (Berlin: G. Grottesche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1892), 104-105; Giorgio Vasari, "Vita di Sandro Botticelli pittor fiorentino," in *Le vite de più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori*, accessed 17 December, 2018, [https://it.wikisource.org/wiki/Le\\_vite\\_de%27\\_pi%C3%B9\\_eccellenti\\_pittori\\_scultori\\_e\\_architettori\\_\(1568\)/Sandro\\_Botticello](https://it.wikisource.org/wiki/Le_vite_de%27_pi%C3%B9_eccellenti_pittori_scultori_e_architettori_(1568)/Sandro_Botticello).

90. See Herbert Horne, *Alessandro Filipepi, Commonly Called Sandro Botticelli, Painter of Florence* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1908), 42.

91. Hatfield, *Botticelli's Uffizi "Adoration,"* 71.

92. Hatfield, 98. Jacques Mesnil was the first to identify Guasparre. See Mesnil, "Quelques documents sur Botticelli," *Rivista d'arte* 1 (1903): 80-98.





Figure 8. Sandro Botticelli, *The Adoration of the Magi*, ca. 1475, Uffizi Galleries, Florence, Italy, Wikimedia Commons.

Various interpretations exist for the Medicean figures, but most scholars identify the three Magi as highly idealised posthumous portraits of Cosimo (Melchior), Piero (Balthasar), and Giovanni (Caspar).<sup>93</sup> It may also be tempting to identify Caspar as a portrait of Lorenzo or Giuliano. However, this is unlikely. Cosimo and Piero, dead (and thus “beyond reproach”) at the time of the painting, could (somewhat) safely be portrayed as holy figures, but it would have been inappropriate to portray Lorenzo or Giuliano as *living* holy figures.<sup>94</sup> This would have been politically impudent, not to mention flirting with blasphemy. I am more inclined to agree with Hatfield that Caspar is likely only a type, a sort of artistic stock figure, and not a portrait of anyone at all. Botticelli would make frequent use of types throughout his artistic career, and the youthful Caspar, with his delicate and angelic features, resembles other such youthful types throughout Botticelli’s art.<sup>95</sup> As Guasparre’s spiritual patron, Caspar may be a blank figure onto which both Guasparre and other audience members can write themselves.

Where, then, are Lorenzo and Giuliano? While these identifications are the source of even more contention than those of the Magi, I must again agree with Hatfield that the young man in a dark tunic standing behind Caspar must be Lorenzo.<sup>96</sup> Though this portrait is quite flattering, one can still make

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93. See Fermor, “Botticelli and the Medici,” 170; Ronald Lightbrown, *Sandro Botticelli: Life and Work* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1989), 66; Antonio Paolucci, “Botticelli and the Medici: A Privileged Relationship.” In *Botticelli: From Lorenzo the Magnificent to Savonarola*, ed. Doriana Comerlati (Milan: Skira Editore, 2003), 69.

94. Hatfield, *Botticelli’s Uffizi “Adoration”*, 95-96. Paolucci notes that portraying even dead men as holy figures was potentially “reckless.” See Paolucci, “Botticelli and the Medici,” 70-71.

95. Hatfield, *Botticelli’s Uffizi “Adoration”*, 83.

96. Hatfield, 76. For other interpretations of both figures, see, Lightbrown, *Sandro Botticelli*, 68; Fermor, “Botticelli and the Medici,” 171; Paolucci, “Botticelli and the Medici,” 69; Hermann Ulmann, *Sandro Botticelli* (Munich: Verlagsantalt für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 1893), 58-60. See also Emile Gebhart and Victoria Charles, *Botticelli* (New York: Parkstone Press International, 2010), 149; Frank Zöllner, *Botticelli* (Munich: Prestel), 42.

out the bent nose, furrowed brow, downturned mouth, and strong chin which characterise his portraits. Hatfield also convincingly identifies as the youth on the left holding a sword as Giuliano. His “casual haircut,” stylish clothes, sword, and debonair pose would be appropriate for Giuliano, who at only about twenty-two was Florence’s new prince of youth, taking the role over from his older brother.<sup>97</sup> More importantly, I would add, this youthful portrait closely resembles others depicting Giuliano, including the figures in posthumous portraits by Botticelli and on the reverse side of the medal by Bertoldo di Giovanni (Figures 9, 10). These have the same tousled hair, sharp nose, and large eyes as the youthful figure with the sword.

Nearly draped over him, with one hand on Giuliano’s shoulder and another lovingly cupping his elbow, is another young man in a jaunty blue cap and wildly curling hair. He watches the scene in interest and seems to be commenting on it, which – in a touch of Botticelli’s characteristically subtle humour – distracts the man to his left. This character has traditionally been identified as Poliziano, who at this point would have joined the Medici household as a tutor, first for Giuliano and then for Lorenzo’s children.<sup>98</sup> Despite being Giuliano’s tutor, Poliziano was a year younger, and the two young men in Botticelli’s painting certainly look to be of a similar age. The casually familiar display of physical intimacy between the two men, which may seem otherwise unusual in a formal religious painting, may reflect the very real bond between them. The close friendship between Lorenzo and Poliziano, which I shall discuss in chapter four, is far more well-known than

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97. Hatfield, *Botticelli’s Uffizi “Adoration,”* 75-76.

98. See Ulmann, *Sandro Botticelli*, 60; Gebhart and Charles, *Botticelli*, 149.

the friendship between Giuliano and Poliziano. If this is indeed Poliziano, Botticelli's portrayal of them together here may testify to another close bond.

If Hatfield is correct that Caspar is meant to be a stand-in for future Medici and their followers alike, then the man standing right behind him – Lorenzo – will implicitly be taking his place in the future, kneeling beside Balthasar/Piero.<sup>99</sup> The direct line of succession thus passes visually from grandfather to father to son, and on to the son's (hopeful) clients, including Guasparre and Botticelli. Still living, neither Lorenzo nor his followers can step fully into Caspar's shoes, so they wait in solemn hope. By turning and looking out toward us, both Guasparre and Botticelli invite us to join them in this path.<sup>100</sup> We viewers, like Caspar, wait our turn to approach Christ.

However, Hatfield neglects to analyse the deeper dynastic implications of this visual chain: Giuliano is excluded. He does not stand in either beside or behind Lorenzo. Instead, he is separated by a large, open gap. Though his pose and clothing make him seem a dynamic figure, he is a passive onlooker. While Lorenzo prepares himself internally to take his turn as a Magi, head bowed and hands clasped in prayer, Giuliano simply stands guard and watches. This is emphasized by the figure behind him (who for the sake of brevity I will call Poliziano). Poliziano makes a remark and places his hand on Giuliano's shoulder as if to get his attention. He is commenting on the scene, something one does from outside rather than from within. Giuliano, bound up so closely with Poliziano, is listening to him and joining him in the

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99. See Hatfield, *Botticelli's Uffizi "Adoration"*, 87.

100. According to Baxandall, this was a common device used to mediate the relationship between the painting and the viewer. See Baxandall, *Painting & Experience*, 75-76.

observation. He, like us, stands aside to watch the other Medici take an active role.

This painting may not have portrayed a reality, but I believe it portrayed a perception. In this perception, Giuliano was not a participant; he instead stood aside, a figurehead of youthful vitality, watching his elder brother prepare for glory. Most importantly, the brothers are no longer a unit. Now, a large spatial gap separates them where they stand in the foreground. They stand in similar positions, upright with hands clasped in front of them, but they do not mirror each other in position. Giuliano's body is turned towards the audience; an observer with whom to identify. Lorenzo's body, meanwhile, is turned towards the central action of the piece as a participant. While Lorenzo faces his destiny, Giuliano holds and is held by his: Poliziano, the educator, embraces him from behind. A horse mouths at his arm, and his hands clutch a sword in an almost phallic pose. While Lorenzo builds the family internally by following directly in the steps of his forefathers and, in turn, creating the new generation, Giuliano's destiny lies in his education and his new position as the Prince of Youth, represented by Poliziano and the steed, both of whom paw at Giuliano for his attention. The sword, meanwhile, takes the place of the *paterfamilias'* reproductive organ.

We return, once more, to Ficino. During one of Giuliano's absences from Florence, Ficino wrote the young man to say that he missed him. He was comforted, however, by the presence of Lorenzo, Giuliano's mirror image that remained in Florence.

And as in the mirror I see myself outside of myself, so ... do I frequently observe you inside my heart. Added to the above is your

brother Lorenzo: another you in nature and in will. And so, with him, I discern my Giuliano both inside and outside.<sup>101</sup>

Like the figures in Botticelli's painting, whose poses mirror one another on either side of the Nativity, the brothers mirror one another outside (in nature) and inside (in will). It is quite likely that Ficino meant this statement to be comforting, or to remind Giuliano of his closeness to his brother. Regardless of Ficino's intentions, his statement contains some interesting implications about how Giuliano was viewed by others. What is most noticeable is that he and Lorenzo are not exactly individuals: they are one person copied twice over. However, if they were identical, then Lorenzo, the elder, was the original. If they were mirror images, then Giuliano, the younger, was the reflection, bound to do nothing more than replicate the motions of the person gazing into the mirror. In the political scene, this proved to be true: just as Lorenzo had functioned as his father's representative, so Giuliano became Lorenzo's representative. His decisions as both patron and political figure ultimately were dictated by Lorenzo's "nature" and Lorenzo's "will," and not his own.

### **Public Death, Public Mourning**

The Pazzi conspiracy, which culminated on the bloody Sunday of 26 April, 1478, would claim Giuliano's life. Even so, I will not be ending this chapter on that date, but rather continuing through the rest of Lorenzo's lifetime. As I have stated above, death does not end a sibling relationship; survivors continue to define themselves (and be defined) in relation to the

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101. "Atq[ue] vt me extra me in speculo no[n] nu[m]q[uam] ita te saepissime intra me in meo corde speculor. Aderat insup[er] tunc Laurentius frater tuus : alter tu [et] natura [et] voluntate. Itaq[ue] cum Iulianum hunc meum p[er]spicue [et] intus [et] extra p[er]spicerem : eum illinc abesse cogitare no[n] poteram." Ficino to Giuliano de' Medici, in Ficino, *Epistolae*, XXIIr.

dead.<sup>102</sup> The dead sibling sometimes becomes so conspicuously absent that the absence itself becomes a presence. This, as I shall demonstrate, would be the case for Lorenzo. The loss of Giuliano, and the traumatic circumstances in which this loss occurred, became a turning point in Lorenzo's public identity.

The Pazzi conspiracy was likely not the first – and by no means the last – attempt on Lorenzo's life, but it was the only one which came so close to success and had such a deeply personal impact. Historians, including eyewitnesses such as Poliziano, have written in-depth accounts of the Pazzi conspiracy from almost the moment it occurred, and for this reason I will give only a brief account of events here.<sup>103</sup> In short, in the spring of 1478, a group of conspirators – led by men of the rival Pazzi family and backed by none other than Pope Sixtus IV – resolved to assassinate both Lorenzo and Giuliano, thereby decapitating the elder Cafaggiolo Medici line and ending its monopoly on local politics. Slaying Lorenzo alone would not have sufficed, for Giuliano would have taken his brother's place.

After several failed opportunities, the conspirators finally settled upon slaying both men during mass at the Duomo on 26 April. When the Host was raised during the consecration, the assassins attacked. Lorenzo, who stood on the south side of the choir, escaped with only a flesh wound and took shelter in the sacristy with the help of friends. Giuliano, on the north side of the choir and surrounded on both sides by conspirators, was not so lucky: he died on

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102. Davidoff, *Thicker than Water*, 311.

103. Though both accounts have clear biases, see Martines, *April Blood*, 111-37 for a thorough modern reconstruction of the events, as well as the eyewitness account by Poliziano, *Conjuratōnis Pactianae anni MCCCLXXVIII Commentarium*, ed. Ioannis Adimari (Naples: Praesidibus adprobantibus, 1769).

the cold marble floor from multiple stab wounds including, as later exhumations have shown, massive head trauma.<sup>104</sup> Eventually, Lorenzo was safely escorted by allies back to his palace, where the enraged populace rallied to the Medicean cause. The insurrection was brutally put down and the conspirators were incarcerated, torn to pieces in the *piazze*, or publicly hung from the windows and battlements of the Palazzo della Signoria. A few days later, on 30 April, Giuliano was laid to rest in San Lorenzo alongside his father, uncle, and grandfather.<sup>105</sup>

There are few indications of Lorenzo's emotional state immediately following the attack. Outside of two letters to nearby allies, written on the 26<sup>th</sup> and the 29<sup>th</sup>, Lorenzo apparently fell into an uncharacteristic silence for several days.<sup>106</sup> In the *Protocolli del carteggio di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, we see two blank pages across which his secretary wrote: "Here and on the following page must be recorded the letters written about the tumult, when Giuliano de' Medici was killed ...."<sup>107</sup> Those pages were never filled in, suggesting a highly unusual gap in Lorenzo's regular flow of correspondence. As it is, this traumatic incident in Lorenzo's life was one of the few that was followed by silence, not words. Hook notes that on 1 and 2 May, Lorenzo caught up by writing so many letters that the secretary lost count.<sup>108</sup> It is

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104. See Marco Ferri, *I medici riesumano i Medici: Cronaca di una straordinaria avventura alla scoperta dei segreti della grande dinastia fiorentina* (Florence: Nuova Cesat, 2005), 29. See also Donatella Lippi, *Illacrimate sepolture: Curiosità e ricerca scientifica nella storia delle riesumazioni dei Medici* (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2006), 15-16; Lippi, 131.

105. Luca Landucci, *Diario fiorentino dal 1450 al 1516*, ed. Iodoco del Badia (Florence: G. C. Sansoni), 20.

106. Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, 3:3-6; Lorenzo de' Medici, 7-8.

107. Del Piazzo, *Protocolli*, 48, quoted in Judith Hook, *Lorenzo de' Medici: An Historical Biography* (London: Hamilton, 1984), 103. Translation by Hook.

108. Hook, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, 104.



plausible that Lorenzo put aside his voluminous correspondence to take time to mourn and prepare for Giuliano's funeral.

One of the most valuable reports of Lorenzo's emotional state during and after the conspiracy comes from Poliziano's *Coniurationis*. The first descriptions of this kind occur in the tense moments in which Lorenzo and his friends – Poliziano among them – waited within the Duomo's sacristy for help to arrive. According to Poliziano, Lorenzo was "enraged" (*indignabundus*), "constantly demanding: 'Is Giuliano well?'"<sup>109</sup> No one there could answer, as none had seen what had happened – or, if they had, none were willing to answer. When allies gathered outside and told Lorenzo it was safe to exit, the first question was regarding Giuliano's safety. There was no response. As Poliziano reveals, the men outside knew what had happened, but refrained from saying anything. Lorenzo's friend Sigismondo della Stufa – also inside the sacristy – climbed up into the organ chamber above and looked out an opening. He saw that the men outside were friendly, but his eyes also landed upon Giuliano's mangled body a few meters away. He shouted down to Lorenzo that it was safe to exit, but likewise said nothing about Giuliano. The bronze doors opened, and Lorenzo's friends and allies "crowded Lorenzo within an armed group" and "led him home via a side-route, so that he would not come upon Giuliano's dead body."<sup>110</sup>

Poliziano's account, embellished though it may be, shows a consistent concern by Lorenzo's friends to protect him from the emotional shock of what had happened to his brother. More fundamentally, it reflects the expectation

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109. "rogitare continenter: Ecquid Julianus valeat." Poliziano, *Coniurationis Pactianae*, 20.

110. "illi frequentes Laurentium in armatorum globum adciunt. Domum per dispendia, ne in Juliani cadaver incideret, perducunt." Poliziano, 21-22.

that seeing Giuliano's bloody corpse would almost certainly cause Lorenzo unnecessary – and potentially overwhelming – pain. Poliziano instead uses his own reaction to demonstrate how the pain of seeing Giuliano's body could be devastating to his loved ones: upon seeing the gory corpse, Poliziano began “reeling from such vast grief, barely in possession of my spirits,” and had to be held up by friends and helped back to the Palazzo Medici.<sup>111</sup>

Meanwhile, Poliziano claims that Lorenzo was “impeded neither by his wound, nor fear, nor grief – the greatest of which being the murder of his brother ....”<sup>112</sup> We must remember that this document was written for the purposes of Medicean propaganda: the conspirators are all described as scheming cowards, while Lorenzo and Giuliano are portrayed as tragic heroes. Poliziano does not deny Lorenzo's grief, but rather portrays him as valiantly rising above it to do his duty. This was a common thread in humanist discourses on grief: a dutiful, honourable man knew that putting aside one's personal emotions for “the needs of country, friends, and family” was “manly,” heroic behaviour.<sup>113</sup> Because the protagonist Lorenzo must conquer his grief, Poliziano cannot portray him as “reeling” from its immensity; those emotions are instead transferred to Poliziano himself, who as narrator (and vehicle for the reader) is permitted to stagger beneath them.

Lorenzo's inner emotional state is harder to reconstruct. Though he announced that he wanted no violent reprisals against the conspirators, he

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111. “Ibi titubans, & prae doloris magnitudine, vix satis animi compos ....” Poliziano, 22.

112. “Ipse Laurentius non vulnere, non metu, non dolore, quem ex fratris nece maximum coeperat, impediri ....” Poliziano, 31.

113. Margaret L. King, *Death of the Child*, 142. See Chapter Five of this thesis for more on Quattrocento Florentine grief.

made no real effort to back this up when pro-Medicean mobs turned vicious.<sup>114</sup> Meanwhile, his public behaviour shifted: he went out among the people far less frequently, and then always accompanied by a group of armed men.<sup>115</sup> He would begin frequently slipping into self-pity and despair, tempted to see himself as the perpetual victim of bitter fortune and undeserved hatred. As the resulting war with Rome and Naples bore down on Florence, Lorenzo fretted over his “infinite troubles,” remarking that “it is wonderous that I have not lost this little sense [I have].”<sup>116</sup> His light, congenial side became more and more obscured by bouts of gloom and even anger. Valori relates the information he had gleaned on Lorenzo’s mood in the winter of 1479-1480, while the latter was in Naples negotiating a peace treaty:

[Lorenzo] was like two persons ...: by day, he bore himself with grace and total confidence, happy and secure; then by night he would lament miserably on his fortune, and no less on that of [Florence] ....<sup>117</sup>

Paranoia – or “suspicion” (*sospetto*) – would characterise Lorenzo for the rest of his life, and once he returned home, his new retinue of bristling bodyguards separated him even further from his fellow Florentines.<sup>118</sup>

Even as he withdrew into the safety of an armed entourage, Lorenzo used his new identity as victim-survivor to extend his public persona. Medicean mourning became public mourning, and, fittingly, artistic

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114. Harold Acton, *The Pazzi Conspiracy: The Plot Against the Medici* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 71.

115. Giovanni Cambi, *Istorie di Giovanni Cambi, Cittadino fiorentino*, ed. Fr. Ildefonso di San Luigi (Florence: G. Cambiagi, 1785), 2:66-67.

116. “habbiatemi compassione delle infinite brighe che ho, che è maraviglia che io non habbi perduto questo mio poco senno.” Lorenzo de’ Medici to Girolamo Morelli, in Lorenzo de’ Medici, *Lettere*, 3:233.

117. “di lui che, sì come di due persone ...: el dì, con grazia e somma confidenza, lieto e sicuro si mostrava; la notte poi si lamentava miserabilmente della sua fortuna, e non meno di quella della città ...” Valori, *Vita di Lorenzo*, 67.

118. Guicciardini, *Storie fiorentine*, 78.

depictions of the brothers shifted yet again. During his lifetime, Lorenzo would only be depicted alongside his brother in one final piece. This was the 1478 commemorative bronze medal by medalist Bertoldo di Giovanni, himself a longtime member of the Medici household.<sup>119</sup> Medals such as these were generally made for display and handling, and there was usually more than one produced.<sup>120</sup> This was certainly the case here: “several were produced,” likely as gifts “to loyal followers of the Medici.”<sup>121</sup>

On the obverse is a bust of Lorenzo above the cathedral choir where the attack took place, facing to the right, out into the nave and the congregation (Figure 9). He is identified by his name, “LAVRENTIVS MEDICES,” which arcs along the upper edge of the medal. Within the choir, priests stand before the altar consecrating the host. In the foreground, on what in real life would be the south side of the choir, two figures with swords attack a third caped figure (likely Lorenzo) from behind as he turns to look back in surprise. To the left, onlookers flee in panic, and to the right, other figures engage in a struggle. In the center of the medal, within the empty space of the choir, are the words “public safety” (*SALVS PVBLICA*).

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119. Gombrich, “The Early Medici,” 56.

120. Luke Syson, “Holes and Loops: The Display and collection of Medals in Renaissance Italy,” in “Approaches to Renaissance Consumption,” ed. Marta Ajmar-Wollenheim, special issue, *Journal of Design History* 15, no. 4 (January 2002): 229

121. Zöllner, *Botticelli*, 63.



Figure 9. Bertoldo di Giovanni, medal (obverse), 1478, British Museum, 1896, 1106.1, London, United Kingdom, [www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org).

On the reverse side, meanwhile, a bust of Giuliano, also identified by his name (“IVLIANVS MEDICES”), faces left, toward the altar (Figure 10). His bust is above a mirror image of the choir from the obverse, clearly meant to be depicting the same moment in time as the priests consecrate the host. In the foreground, on the left, two men flank a third caped figure (likely Giuliano), stabbing him with their knives. On the right, a caped figure lies face-down on the ground as others stand over him, stabbing. This may illustrate, from left to right, Giuliano being attacked as he stood and then being set upon as he stumbled forward and fell.<sup>122</sup>

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122. The medal’s depiction of events reflects other contemporary testimonies of the attack, including those of eyewitnesses. See the anonymous 16th century record of the Pazzi conspiracy, MAP, CXLVI, 60r; Landucci, *Diario fiorentino*, 17-18; Poliziano, *Conjuratōnis Pactianae*, 17-20; Rinuccini, *Ricordi storici*, 227; Lorenzo Strozzi, *Vita di Filippo Strozzi il Vecchio*, ed. Giuseppe Bini and Pietro Bigazzi (Florence: Casa di Correzione, 1851), 521.



Figure 10. Bertoldo di Giovanni, medal (reverse), [www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org).

In the same empty space where on the obverse it is written “public safety,” the reverse has the words “public grief” (*LVCTVS PVBLICVS*). The mirror image is thus completed: the busts, the choir, and the position of the priests all perfectly mirror each other, one showing the events happening simultaneously on the northern and southern sides of the choir. Syson writes that “if the medal was pierced,” then that piercing could “be interpreted as the fulcrum around which the medal might be turned ... spinning the medal around on its own axis.”<sup>123</sup> As the medal turns on its axis, then, we as the audience rotate around the choir, viewing multiple events unfolding in this one moment in time. The choir, and the sacred activity within the choir,

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123. Syson, “Holes and Loops,” 231.

becomes this axis, and the attack is made into a theological event. The moment of transubstantiation during each Mass unites the temporal realm with the eternal sanctifying act of the crucifixion. The attack, happening around the locus of transubstantiation and within the same shared moment, has thus also become united with the crucifixion of Christ. The suffering of Giuliano and Lorenzo is now not only *Christ-like*, it is *fused* with the crucifixion: a temporal, political event made eternal.

Not only is it now eternal, but like the crucifixion, it is sanctifying. Not only does *salus* mean “safety,” but it can also mean “health,” and sometimes “salvation” or “deliverance.”<sup>124</sup> While Giuliano’s death is thus a public grief, Lorenzo’s health and safety is the public’s health and safety. Lorenzo, like Christ, suffers only to rise in renewed strength, embodying Florence’s salvation. Not only do these mottos have theological significance, but they offer a competing narrative to that laid out by the Pope, the Pazzi, and other anti-Mediceans. The anti-Mediceans, despite certainly being plutocrats themselves, argued that their attempted coup was justified because Lorenzo was a tyrant and against the people. During the fray, Iacopo de’ Pazzi had even ridden into the Piazza della Signoria crying “people and liberty!” (*popolo e libertà*). On the contrary, the medal argues: the grief and the salvation of the Medici are the grief and salvation of the republic. If we are to believe the contemporary historian Giovanni Cambi, Lorenzo himself adopted this perspective when speaking of his own situation: “the aforesaid Lorenzo began to say: That for the salvation of the state he had given up a brother ....”<sup>125</sup>

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124. Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. “salus,” accessed 18 March, 2018.

125. “et chominciò detto Lorenzo addire: Che per salvatione dello stato avea messo un fratello ....” Cambi, *Istorie*, 2:66.

Once again, the relationship between the two brothers had shifted, and the shift was expressed spatially. In childhood, when Lorenzo was two generations away from power, Giuliano was intimately sharing his brother's visual space. In the press of the crowd in Gozzoli's frescoes, one could even say that Giuliano was crowding in on Lorenzo, their faces so close to one another that they could be attached at the hip (Figure 7). By 1475, in the early years of Lorenzo's ascent, they were separated by a large empty space in the foreground of Botticelli's *Annunciation* (Figure 8). This empty space, with a brother on each side, acted as a frame for the middle ground depicting Cosimo and Piero at the feet of the Madonna. They were connected by this shared lineage, framing the past via their presence, but they were also separated by it. One son – the one on the viewer's right hand – was chosen. The other was not. Now that Giuliano had passed, they were not only separated by empty space, they were even separated by existing on different planes. They had become, quite literally, two sides of the same coin: the brother on the obverse looks toward the nave and, by implication, those of us who are alive. Mirroring him, the brother on the reverse faces away from the congregation, toward the altar and toward eternity. Once again, Lorenzo is shadowed by his brother, but this time that shadow exists in another realm. The brother who once followed fast on his heels is now doing so as a ghost, haunting him from beyond.

Bertoldo's medal is not the only artistic piece which directly commemorated the tragedy. Wax *ex-votos* depicting Lorenzo were "ordered by the friends and relatives of Lorenzo ... rendering thanks to God for his



salvation ...”<sup>126</sup> An *ex-voto*, or votive offering, is a gift – often a piece of art, whether painted or sculpted – which is usually hung in a church or shrine housing a miraculous image or relic, in front of which the donor has previously worshipped. Often, the *ex-voto* is a means of fulfilling a known debt: an ill or otherwise afflicted person will beg a saint for help and promise an *ex-voto* in compensation if they are healed.<sup>127</sup> The *ex-voto* might take the form of the afflicted body part, such as an arm or a foot. Sometimes it might represent the entire person, usually in miniature due to the cost and scale.<sup>128</sup> Wax was the ideal, since its soft appearance and coloring made it look like flesh, and, like flesh, it degraded over time. As a result, unfortunately, no wax *ex-votos* from this period survive.

Naturally, the larger the *ex-voto*, the more expensive, and few could afford to make full-scale *ex-votos* of their entire bodies, especially since the wax was often decorated with paint, metal foil, or even cloth. The Medici, however, were wealthy enough to have at least three full-scale *ex-votos* made of Lorenzo “with head, hands and feet of wax” made by an “Orsino the wax-worker,” said to be one of the best of his time.<sup>129</sup> Vasari writes that Orsino’s

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126. “... fu ordinato dagli amici e parenti di Lorenzo, che si facesse, rendendo della sua salvezza grazie a Dio, in molti luoghi l’immagine di lui.” Vasari, “Andrea Verrocchio,” in *Vite*, accessed 17 December, 2018, [https://it.wikisource.org/wiki/Le\\_vite\\_de%27\\_pi%C3%B9\\_eccellenti\\_pittori\\_scultori\\_e\\_architettori\\_\(1568\)/Andrea\\_Verrocchio](https://it.wikisource.org/wiki/Le_vite_de%27_pi%C3%B9_eccellenti_pittori_scultori_e_architettori_(1568)/Andrea_Verrocchio). These figures were placed at Chiarito, Santissima Annunziata, and the Santa Maria degli Angeli. Aby Warburg identifies the latter church as the Basilica in Assisi. See Warburg, “The Art of Portraiture and the Florentine Bourgeoisie: Domenico Ghirlandaio in Santa Trinita: The Portraits of Lorenzo de’ Medici and His Household,” in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the Renaissance*, ed. Kurt W. Forster (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999), 190.

127. Christopher S. Wood, “The Votive Scenario,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 59/60 (Spring/Autumn 2011): 208.

128. Georges Didi-Huberman and Gerald Moore, “Ex-Voto: Image, Organ, Time,” *L’Esprit Créateur* 47, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 13.

129. Langedijk, *Portraits of the Medici*, 1:28.

wax-work was made “from life” (*dal vivo*) and so realistic that it seemed “very much alive” (*vivissimi*).<sup>130</sup> However, Maniura warns that since Vasari was writing well after the fact, this was more likely a rhetorical trope than a real description; “life-like” was a popular rhetorical compliment.<sup>131</sup> The *ex-votos* of Lorenzo had probably long since degraded and broken down by Vasari’s time.<sup>132</sup> Yet if his other descriptions are to be believed, there were details which would have clearly identified the *ex-votos* as Lorenzo.

Perhaps the most distinctive was the *ex-voto* placed “in the church of the nuns of Chiarito in S[an] Gallo street, in front of the Crucifix which does miracles.”<sup>133</sup> This *ex-voto* was dressed in “that outfit which Lorenzo had worn at the time, when wounded in the throat and bandaged, he [appeared] at the windows of his house, to be seen by the people ....”<sup>134</sup> The presence of those clothes in front of the crucifix thus directly connected his survival to the miraculous capabilities of that crucifix, tying the two together both spiritually and by visual proximity. All those who went to pray at the crucifix afterwards would be reminded of Lorenzo’s survival – and of Giuliano’s death. Another, in Santissima Annunziata, was dressed in the red *lucco* worn by Florentine citizens, emphasizing Lorenzo’s ties to the Florentine populace – another

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130. Vasari, “Andrea Verrocchio.”

131. Robert Maniura, “Ex-Votos, Art and Pious Performance,” in “Mal’Occhio: Looking Awry at the Renaissance,” ed. Patricia Rubin and Maria Loh, special issue, *Oxford Art Journal* 32, no. 3 (2009): 418.

132. It is also possible that they were deliberately destroyed. See Langedijk, *Portraits of the Medici*, 1:28.

133. “una delle quali è nella chiesa delle monache di Chiarito in via di S. Gallo, dinanzi al Crucifisso che fa miracoli.” Vasari, “Andrea Verrocchio.” Il Chiarito is now known as the Conservatorio delle Mantellate.

134. “E questa figura è con quell’abito a punto che aveva Lorenzo, quando ferito nella gola e fasciato, si fece alle finestre di casa sua, per esser veduto dal popolo, che là era corso per vedere se fusse vivo, come desiderava, o se pur morto, per farne vendetta.” Vasari.

visual counterargument against the conspirators' claim that the Medici were tyrants. Santissima Annunziata was a common place for Florentines to leave *ex-votos* due to the legends of miraculous frescoes within the church; in fact, Warburg writes, "By the beginning of the sixteenth-century there were so many of these *voti* that ... the walls had to be reinforced with chains."<sup>135</sup> Vasari gives few details about the third figure, except to say that it was "placed before that Madonna," presumably referring to another miraculous image or figure.<sup>136</sup>

That these figures were placed at some of the most popular miraculous sites in or near Florence at the time suggests that there may not have been one specific holy site to which the Mediceans attributed Lorenzo's safety. Unsure of which miracle-worker to whom they should attribute his survival, they thanked them all. The life-sized figures placed at these popular sites further ensured that the many people who visited would see his image and recall both his peril and his triumph. This should not be considered entirely propaganda; it is likely that Lorenzo, or his friends and family, had visited these churches and prayed there before. The dual purpose of post-1478 Laurentian portraiture does not preclude pious sincerity.

The bodies of the conspirators were memorialised in a way that mirrors the *ex-voto*, but which damns instead of blesses the subject. Botticelli was probably personally chosen by Lorenzo to paint them, hanging from

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135. Warburg, "Art of Portraiture," 190. Miraculous imagery gained a surge of religious adherents in the Renaissance and became popular locations at which worshippers would leave *ex-votos*. See Abigail Brundin, Deborah Howard, and Mary Laven, *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 251-60.

136. "La terza fu mandata a S. Maria degl'Angeli d'Ascesi, e posta dinanzi a quella Madonna." Vasari, "Andrea Verrocchio."

nooses, on the walls of the Bargello.<sup>137</sup> This was an established custom for traitors, but here it took on a personal twist.<sup>138</sup> Lorenzo himself composed the epitaphs for some conspirators. Beneath the painting of Bernardo Bandini, one of the men who killed Giuliano, he wrote:

I am Bernardo Bandini, a new Judas,  
A homicidal traitor in the church I was,  
A rebel awaiting a crueller death.<sup>139</sup>

Calling Bandini “a new Judas” no doubt was a play on his “crueller death”: like Judas, he was hung by the neck. If Bandini was Judas, Giuliano – and the Medici as a family – were Christ.

Giuliano, the slain victim, was meanwhile now painted as a solitary figure, again by Botticelli (Figure 11). He no longer joined the paintings of Medicean men and their associates, including idealised paintings of Medici men as the Magi. When Botticelli painted his 1475 *Adorazione*, for example, it not only included but centred at least two Medici men who had already passed away: Cosimo and Piero. This would not be the case for Giuliano during the Quattrocento or even the early Cinquecento, though later admirers of the early Medici would place him back alongside Lorenzo in their artwork.<sup>140</sup> This was, I believe, a political choice: Giuliano’s conspicuous

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137. Paolucci, “Botticelli and the Medici,” 74; Horne, *Sandro Botticelli*, 63. Unfortunately, these frescoes have long since been painted over.

138. Horne, *Sandro Botticelli*, 63.

139. “Son Bernardo Bandinj un nuovo Giuda, / Traditore micidiale in chiesa io fuj, / Ribello per aspettare morte piu cruda.” Horne, 64.

140. See, for example, Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale, *Botticelli’s Studio: The First Visit of Simonetta Presented by Giulio and Lorenzo de’ Medici*, 1922. Giuliano is here mistakenly named Giulio. In recent years, a renewed cultural interest in premodern Europe has also led to portrayals of the brothers together in contemporary visual media, including multiple television programs and the award-winning video game *Assassin’s Creed II*.

visual absence would provide a regular reminder of the tragic betrayal which had prematurely torn him from the world.

There are several copies of the posthumous portrait of Giuliano. However, as Andreas Schumacher argues, the original work was probably also the largest and the most detailed. This copy uses conspicuous classical imagery for death and bereavement. The half-open window (or door) signifies a passage from this world into the next. The turtledove, according to ancient wisdom, signifies “intense loyalty and inconsolable grief.”<sup>141</sup> This was often used specifically for lovers mourning their dead beloved, but once again I would like to draw attention to the implicit use of duality here: the lone turtledove, a pair-bird, is only half of a full set. One is incomplete without the other. Giuliano’s posthumous portrait is thus conspicuously marked with an imagery of absence and of lacking, as if to remind the viewer of the pair that had been forever halved. Finally, Schumacher believes that the broken, withered bough” upon which the turtledove rests “is a pointer to the violent manner” of Giuliano’s death.<sup>142</sup> However, I believe that this branch was not only a reminder of violence, but also points, yet again, to a significant loss: a healthy young branch of Medici had been abruptly chopped from the family tree, withering and dying without any known fruit.<sup>143</sup>

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141. Andreas Schumacher, “Sandro Botticelli (1444/45/-1510): Portrait of Giuliano de’ Medici,” in *Botticelli: Likeness, Myth, Devotion*, 164.

142. Schumacher, 166.

143. It is unclear how many people knew immediately of Giulio’s existence, and it is almost certain that the infant’s legitimacy was open to question. In any case, the portrait may have been commissioned and completed well before Giulio was even born.



Figure 11. Botticelli, Giuliano de' Medici, ca. 1478, National Gallery, Washington, D. C., United States, Wikimedia Commons.

And yet amid the sorrow of that spring there came a ray of joy as the dead branch indeed produced unexpected fruit. Giuliano had slept with a certain Fioretta Gorini, and about a month after he was murdered, she gave birth.<sup>144</sup> The child, named Giulio for its father, was taken into the Medici household and raised alongside Lorenzo's children. He would go on to become a cardinal and, eventually, Pope Clement VII. If Sebastiano del Piombo's portrait of the young Cardinal is at all accurate, he was the spitting image of his late father. Sons were already considered a living representative of their fathers in Florentine culture; Giulio was not only that, but a living portrait. Lorenzo "remade" Giuliano as well; when his next (and last) son was born the following year, he named the child for its lost uncle. His brother was thus memorialised in flesh as well as art.

By focusing exclusively on one period and one form of premodern fraternal relationship – that is, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century primogeniture – historians have neglected the diverse, complex, and occasionally conflicting forms of fraternity which existed earlier in European history. In Quattrocento Florence, the strengthening of the patriarchal family model – in which a *paterfamilias* ruled over his household – engendered new tensions between male relatives. This was especially true among patrician families, in which the control of property, goods, and political influence could have a significant impact on the lives of those involved. At the same time, the older ideal of *fraterna*, in which brothers held all things in common, remained influential in Florentine life.

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144. Registri battesimali, Registro 4, 158/268, 25 May, 1478, Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore di Firenze, accessed 17 December, 2018, [http://archivio.operaduomo.fi.it/battesimi/visualizza\\_carta.asp?id=4&p=157](http://archivio.operaduomo.fi.it/battesimi/visualizza_carta.asp?id=4&p=157). See also Grazia Pernis and Scheider Adams, *Lucrezia Tornabuoni*, 114.

These contradictions muddied the waters of the fraternal relationship, leading to both confusion and disagreement in what eldest and cadet brothers owed to one another. As I have demonstrated, this identity crisis is illustrated in the relationship between Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici. The boys had been raised in an ethos of fraternal cooperation, following the examples of their father and uncle, and of their grandfather and great-uncle before them. However, by the time they reached adolescence, family circumstances had changed so that it became clear that Lorenzo was being granted privileges which Giuliano lacked. As they aged, their difference in status became more and more pronounced, both to themselves and to onlookers.

Piero passed when both young men were – in the Florentine view – a fragile, temperamental age. Lorenzo was barely into his early twenties, and Giuliano was still a teenager. The two had to learn to cooperate without the pacifying influence of a higher authority. Giuliano could try different tactics to get what he wanted, as he did in 1472, but only Lorenzo had the decisive power of a *paterfamilias*. Additionally, unlike Piero and Giovanni, Lorenzo and Giuliano had remarkably similar personalities: both were ambitious, stubborn, and hot-headed.

Despite the difference in privilege, both Lorenzo and Giuliano were, in part, defined by the existence of the other. They were consistently presented, both in written and visual material, as a pair: the identity of one was contingent upon the existence of the other. While this was especially obvious for Giuliano, who was obliged to submit to the will of his elder brother, it was also true for Lorenzo. Giuliano was his right hand, his shadow, his other self. As Lorenzo took on increased responsibility both at home and



in Italian politics, Giuliano became, in a sense, the youth he prematurely had to leave behind.

Rather than severing it, Giuliano's death would only change the nature of this interconnected identity. Lorenzo became more than an elder brother, laden with responsibility: he was now elder brother to a martyr, and halfway a martyr himself. The new residence of his other self in the afterlife imbued him with an aura of holiness, but also loneliness. He became a man severed from himself, a man lacking his own shadow. While his own feelings on this are unclear, he publicly embraced the identity of one who had experienced a profound loss.

Guicciardini would later write that, in the end, Giuliano's death had been a boon for Lorenzo:

This tumult was of great danger to Lorenzo, [who could have] lost the State and his life, but it gave him great reputation and benefit, such that one can call him most happy: Giuliano his brother died, with whom he would have had to divide his things, and put the state in contest ....<sup>145</sup>

This must be taken with salt, for Guicciardini was highly critical of Lorenzo and viewed him as a tyrant. If one does view Lorenzo as a tyrant (as does, for example, Martines), then it is easy to believe that even if Lorenzo did not want (or expect) the assassination to happen, it still benefitted him.<sup>146</sup> Guicciardini, after all, goes so far to call him "most happy" (*felicissimo*) due to this turn of fortune. As I have demonstrated, however, post-conspiracy imagery fails to reflect this happiness. Instead, it speaks only to an immense

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145. "Questo tumult fu di pericolo assai a Lorenzo di perdere e lo stato e la vita, ma gli dette tanta riputazione ed utilità, che quello di si può chiamare per lui felicissimo: morigli Giuliano suo fratello, col quale avrebbe avuta a dividere la roba, e lo stato messo in contesa ...." Guicciardini, *Storie fiorentine*, 37.

146. See Martines, *April Blood*, 225.

absence which became, in a sense, a person itself. Just as Medicean propaganda would ceaselessly remind the public of what had been lost, Lorenzo, too, would apparently remind himself: at the time of Lorenzo's death in 1492, a "round mosaic panel" depicting Giuliano hung in his bedroom alongside those depicting martyred religious figures.<sup>147</sup> In death, the brothers once again became a unit: like their father and uncle, their bodies "were laid" together "in that great chest of porphyry" in the Old Sacristy of San Lorenzo.<sup>148</sup> Today, their relatively humble tomb in the Cappelle Medicee is marked LORENZO IL MAGNIFICO & GIULIANO DEI MEDICI. In death, as in childhood, Giuliano once again follows closely on Lorenzo's heels.

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147. Stapleford, *Lorenzo de' Medici at Home*, 87.

148. "si messero in quel cassone grande di porfido ...." Francesco Rondinelli, quoted in Lippi, *Illacrimate sepolture*, 15.

## Chapter Four: The Patron, the Wife, and the Poet\*

In the spring of 1479, Lorenzo's wife, Clarice Orsini, evicted her husband's close friend, poet-humanist Angelo Poliziano, from the villa of Cafaggiolo. Lorenzo had sent his wife and children to Cafaggiolo for their safety during the tumult following the Pazzi conspiracy of 1478. Poliziano, then the children's tutor, had accompanied them. Historians have generally framed this dispute as the inevitable result of irreconcilable differences between a stubborn humanist tutor and a devoutly Catholic mother, but this neglects other potential household dynamics.<sup>1</sup> A close, careful reading of the letters exchanged between Lorenzo, Poliziano, and Clarice in this period, alongside poems composed by Lorenzo and Poliziano, provides an alternative reading of these events. My work will demonstrate that this was not an ideological dispute, but rather a rivalry between the sacred, licit bond of marriage, and the illicit – but not uncommon – eroticised bond between two male friends.

The language used by both Poliziano and Clarice in their contemporary letters (and, in Poliziano's case, poetry) suggests that those involved sexualized this conflict. Though Lorenzo's heteroerotic ties have been well-explored, the presence of homoeroticism in his relationships has gone largely ignored since the brief analysis by Dale Kent in *Friendship, Love, and Trust in Renaissance*

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\* A modified version of this chapter was published as "Love and Marriage: Emotion and Sexuality in the Early Medici Family," in *Carte Italiane* 12, no. 1 (2019): 17-34.

1. See Maguire, *Private Life*, 92-94; Yvonne Maguire, *The Women of the Medici* (London: Routledge & Sons, 1927), 164-65; Grazia Pernis and Adams, *Lucrezia Tornabuoni*, 88-90; Tomas, *Medici Women*, 24-25.

*Florence*.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, while other historians have touched upon Poliziano's alleged sodomy and his homoerotic poetry, none have explored the presence of homoeroticism in his relationship with his patron.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, I propose a novel interpretation of the source material surrounding the Poliziano-Clarice conflict which explores its erotic elements and integrates them into the wider context of Quattrocento Florentine male sociability. This analysis will not only shed new light on Lorenzo and his household, but also on the intersection of homoeroticism and patronage in the Renaissance family.

### **Poliziano and Clarice**

Both Poliziano and Clarice entered the Medici family during the same transitional period: Lorenzo officially celebrated his marriage to Clarice in June of 1469, and between 1470 and 1473, he welcomed the precocious young scholar into his home.<sup>4</sup> Between the entrance of these two members, there had been a significant exit: in December 1469, Lorenzo's father, Piero, had passed away. Becoming the new *paterfamilias* brought the power to personally appoint new household members, so it is no surprise that the poetry-loving Lorenzo soon invited in the ambitious young poet-scholar, who quickly became one of Lorenzo's most trusted companions. Most studies on the relationship between Poliziano and Lorenzo have focused on the intellectual and artistic exchanges between the two men and treat the intensity of their friendship as more of a

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2. Dale Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust*, 172-78. For Lorenzo's heterosexual relationships, see Francis William Kent, "Love of Women," 41-66; Dempsey, *Portrayal of Love*.

3. See Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, 317n11; del Lungo, *Florentia: Uomini e cose del Quattrocento* (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1897), 255-57.

4. Paolo Orvieto, *Poliziano e l'ambiente mediceo* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2009), 54.

footnote, but I believe this is putting the cart quite in front of the horse. The vibrancy of their intellectual exchange was founded upon an *amicizia* which deeply impacted the lives of both men. The young Poliziano joined his patron in all aspects of daily life, increasingly working not only as a poet and librarian, but as one of Lorenzo's personal scribes, especially during periods of travel.<sup>5</sup> Lorenzo also began entrusting Poliziano with the education of his family members: first his younger brother Giuliano, and then his own sons.

Around 1477, Lorenzo began leaving Poliziano behind with his family when he travelled, likely because he did not want to interrupt Poliziano's valued tutoring work. The letters exchanged during these separations demonstrate a continued sense of intimacy even when expressing disappointment or anger, as we have seen in his furious letter of 31 March.<sup>6</sup> The rare openness Lorenzo shows seems to indicate that he saw Poliziano as a close confidant, yet this freedom of emotional expression was not two-sided. That Poliziano felt it inappropriate to express strong emotions to his employer is made clear in one apologetic letter, in which he writes: "I greatly desire that [Your Magnificence] not be troubled by one of my [letters] I wrote this morning, dictated out of passion ...."<sup>7</sup> Poliziano's apology for an over-emotional letter reflects the expectations regarding correspondence between a *paterfamilias* and his subordinates: while a

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5. See Lorenzo's letter in Poliziano's hand to Ficino, 19-20 March, 1474, in Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, 1:510-14. See also Poliziano's letters to Clarice on Lorenzo's behalf, 1 December, 1475, 8 April, 1476, and 19 April, 1476, in Poliziano, *Prose volgari*, 45-49.

6. See Chapter Two.

7. "Desidero assai che la M.V. non si sia turbata d'una mia li scrissi stamani, dettatami dalla passione ...." Poliziano to Lorenzo de' Medici, 24 August, 1478, in Poliziano, *Prose volgari*, 57.

*paterfamilias* might vent his frustrations, others had to mask their feelings by carefully choosing their words.

If Poliziano was chosen *by* Lorenzo, Clarice was chosen *for* him, as he writes in his *Ricordi*: “I Lorenzo took for my wife Clarice ... or rather she was given to me.”<sup>8</sup> Lorenzo’s early letters to Clarice were infrequent, and they were short and to the point, giving the impression of a young man uncertain of how to relate to his new wife.<sup>9</sup> In fact, his letters to her throughout their marriage are remarkably truncated compared to those to his parents, his children, and other relatives. Overall, their correspondence suggests a relationship based more on obligation than mutual passion.

Traditionally, historians have portrayed Clarice as somewhat of a non-entity, apparently not believing her to have been a terribly active figure in the Medici household outside of her role as the mother to Lorenzo’s children.<sup>10</sup> She is quite frequently relegated to the background, especially since it is so widely believed that Lorenzo cared very little for her. It is, indeed, quite easy to lose sight of the quiet, introverted Clarice in the twin shadows of her dynamic husband and his widely influential mother. However, recent works on Medici women have been far more understanding of this seldom-studied figure. Tomas, for example, has drawn considerable attention to Clarice’s adept participation in the vast network of Florentine patronage, which included both acting as an intercessor

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8. “Io Lorenzo tolsi per moglie la Clarice ... ovvero mi fu data.” Lorenzo de’ Medici, quoted in Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis*, 2:40.

9. See the letters from Lorenzo to Clarice, 22 July, 1469 and 24 July, 1469, in Lorenzo de’ Medici, *Lettere*, 1:41-43.

10. See Maguire, *Women of the Medici*, 172.

between favour-seekers and Lorenzo and being a patron in her own right.<sup>11</sup> As time went on, she also increasingly took on the role of Lorenzo's representative when she travelled abroad, which she apparently did quite well.<sup>12</sup> Though it was not a love match – and indeed, few upper-class marriages were at the time – she and Lorenzo apparently complemented one another well in their talents and abilities. That said, Clarice's influence in the early Medicean household and its wider circles is still neglected in historical study.

## Historiography

### Household Conflict

Early household historians who embraced the cyclical theory of household growth and formation saw the biggest potential for household conflict emanating from the legal and cultural issues surrounding age, authority, and inheritance.<sup>13</sup> In the early 1970s, for instance, Goldthwaite believed that the Quattrocento's apparent movement from the multi-generational towards the nuclear household stemmed from the desire to pre-emptively avoid conflict by “[dividing] a patrimony among brothers so each could have his own [individual] estate.”<sup>14</sup>

Outside of the simplistic view of the Renaissance household, however, this ignores the fact that household conflict was not limited only to kin. Because

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11. Tomas, *Medici Women*, 52-62.

12. Tomas, 31.

13. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber and Michel Demonet, “‘A uno pane e uno vino’: The Rural Tuscan Family at the Beginning of the Fifteenth Century,” in *Women, Family, and Ritual*, 56.

14. Goldthwaite, “The Florentine Palace,” 998-99.

of their constant proximity, non-kin household members could possibly become entangled in conflicts – or even cause them – with kin members. However, the hierarchies of the premodern household could make it difficult for subordinate members – many of them non-kin – to navigate conflict. “Generally,” Caroline Sherman finds, “the more senior the position within the household, the more liberty the person had to express discontent.” Often, subordinates “were permitted to display ‘childish’ emotions only,” reflecting their status as dependants. However, she is quick to point out that this “does not mean that they did not experience” complex negative emotions.<sup>15</sup> This, in turn, could lead to more conflict as resentment or jealousy took hold.

A wide variety of non-kin household members, such as priests, clerks, tutors, doctors, librarians, and artists, existed within a liminal space that was above servanthood but generally still subordinate. I say generally because, while these members were employees of the family, they could still hold authority over certain family members: a priest might hold authority over the *paterfamilias* and his kin as their confessor and spiritual counsellor, and the tutor held authority over the household children (though the extent of this authority, as we shall see, could vary). Still, any power this liminal group might hold within the household was situationally based, making their positions in the household precarious. This, as I shall demonstrate, was true even for Poliziano, who appeared otherwise confident in the protection that his close friendship with *paterfamilias* Lorenzo afforded him.

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15. Sherman, “Resentment and Rebellion,” 153-69.



There are only a few other historians who have examined the ways in which non-servile subordinates might either come into conflict with or ally themselves with kin members of a household. Such is the case for Dale Kent's study of Cosimo's secretary, Alessio Pelli. As a member of the Medici household, Alessio acted as "an affectionate friend and advisor to Cosimo's sons," Piero and Giovanni, and often wrote them fatherly letters of advice or admonition.<sup>16</sup> Alessio sometimes took an intermediary role: "When in the mid-1440s Giovanni made a trip to Aquila without asking Cosimo's permission," Alessio, still in Florence, saw how hurt Giovanni's parents were.<sup>17</sup> Seeking to rectify the situation, he wrote several times to the young man, admonishing him for his thoughtlessness and pressuring him to come home and make amends. Alessio was no objective bystander in this situation, either: he describes in detail Cosimo and Contessina's "great anguish" and "anxiety," insisting that he had "never seen [Cosimo] so grieved ...."<sup>18</sup> The repeated emphasis on his employer's pain, not to mention several attempts to evoke guilt in Giovanni by mentioning Cosimo's ailing health, suggests that Alessio, rather than being a dispassionate intermediary, was furious and hurt on Cosimo's behalf.

As I have already shown in Chapter Three, Lorenzo's household functioned much the same way years later: when Giuliano had a falling-out with Lorenzo, Gentile Becchi – and possibly Marsilio Ficino – stepped in as intermediaries to try and bring reconciliation. Both men were imbued with not

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16. Dale Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust*, 116.

17. Dale Kent, 117.

18. Dale Kent, 117-18.

only religious authority but were also trusted figures who had known and taught Lorenzo and Giuliano for many years. In this chapter, we will see that household members involved in a conflict could themselves reach out to other household parties in the hope that those parties might mediate or possibly even take a side. The most valuable mediator to whom one might appeal was generally the *paterfamilias* himself, but as I shall show, other influential household members might receive appeals for mediation as well.

Tarbin points out that while friendship kept the wheels of household mechanics well-oiled, if those friendships got *too* friendly it could be perceived as favouritism.<sup>19</sup> This, like the master who was unable to discipline his subordinates, was an embarrassment to the whole household; even “perceived favouritism” could stir up bitterness and harm the reputations of all involved.<sup>20</sup> As we shall see in this chapter, when Clarice felt humiliated by her husband’s apparent favouritism towards Poliziano, she reacted with a righteous fury barely concealed in her terse letters to Lorenzo. Poliziano, on the other hand, felt the need to approach his employer far more indirectly and submissively, despite their long-standing friendship and emotional intimacy. This seems to contradict the stereotypical images of the cowed Renaissance wife who had little influence over the homosocial camaraderie between Florentine men.<sup>21</sup>

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19. Tarbin, ““Good Friendship,”” 140-41.

20. Tarbin, 145.

21. A sociological term, ‘homosocial’ generally refers to the proclivity towards same-sex relationships, particularly male same-sex relationships, outside of a romantic or sexual nature; that is, men who prefer to socialize almost exclusively with other men. This does not rule out the possibility of the homoerotic.

## Homoeroticism and Male Friendship

Eroticism further complicated household relationships. Most recent works on the subject focus on illicit heterosexual master-servant interactions and their effects on the familial emotional community.<sup>22</sup> However, this research leaves a significant gap in an important facet of Renaissance Florentine culture: queerness. Legally and theologically classed as sodomy, it was not considered an identity, but “a set of behaviours” deemed inimical to social order.<sup>23</sup> The degree to which it was tolerated varied across time and place, but it was almost always fully enmeshed with premodern male sociability. This was especially true of the highly homosocial networks that made up Florentine society. As entangled as the public and private were in Quattrocento Florence, it is reasonable to assume that homoeroticism was also, to at least some extent, woven into household relationships. This, I believe, was especially true of the intense bond apparent between Lorenzo and Poliziano, which displayed several of the most distinctive characteristics of homoerotic *amicizia*. To fully understand the emotions surrounding their relationship, therefore, it is important to take this aspect of male sexuality into account.

Most Florentine evidence on sodomy comes from the records of the *Ufficiali di notte*, the administrative body in charge of prosecuting such behaviour. These records reflect both the widespread nature of sodomy and its

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22. For Italy, see Romano, *Housecraft and Statecraft*. More generally, see also Tovi Bibring, “Love Thy Chambermaid: Emotional and Physical Violence against the Servant in *Les Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*,” Marko Lamberg, “Suspicion, Rivalry and Care: Mistresses and Maidservants in Early Modern Stockholm,” and Tarbin, ““Good Friendship,”” all in *Emotions in the Household*, 53-68, 170-84, and 135-52, respectively.

23. Jody Greene, “‘You Must Eat Men’: The Sodomitic Economy of Renaissance Patronage,” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1 (1994): 166.

quasi-pederastic attributes.<sup>24</sup> In his seminal study of Florentine sodomy, Roche uses quantitative evidence from the *Ufficiali* records to claim that it was characterized by a “rigid adherence” to a pattern of active “youths” (*giovane*, aged roughly eighteen to thirty) pursuing passive boys (aged roughly thirteen to eighteen).<sup>25</sup> Because sodomy was associated with the overheated humours of youth, it was expected that most men would lose interest in it as maturity cooled their blood. Those who did not were harshly punished compared to the relative lenience shown to boys and youths.<sup>26</sup>

Dependence upon the *Ufficiali* records has certain shortcomings. First, these records reflect only *reported* incidents. There is no way to survey the demographics of the unreported. Secondly, in lawmaker’s efforts to codify the boundaries of unacceptable behaviour, they inevitably distort a far more ambiguous social reality. Finally, legal records generally reflect concrete actions, not emotions. We have no means of measuring unrequited loves or nonsexual romances, much less the little charged moments, what-ifs, and almosts that so often find their way into friendships.

Alan Bray correctly observes that defining premodern queerness within legal or theological parameters limits our perspective: quite simply, most queer premoderns often did not view their behaviour as legally “counting” as sodomy.<sup>27</sup>

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24. Roche, *Forbidden Friendships*, 150; James M. Saslow, “Homosexuality in the Renaissance: Behavior, Identity, and Artistic Expression,” in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Duberman (New York: Meridian, 1989), 91.

25. Roche, *Forbidden Friendships*, 12.

26. Roche, 51-52, 230.

27. Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men’s Press, 1982), 68.

Bray's suggestion that premodern queerness was broader than sodomy has had considerable influence. Giovanni Dall'Orto specifically suggests "looking for testimonies of *homoeroticism*" rather than testimonies of sodomy, as "many sodomites made every possible effort to avoid self-labelling as such" even as they embraced and defended the homoerotic.<sup>28</sup> This group of not-quite-sodomites included prominent figures such as Ficino, the Medicean philosopher who exerted great influence on the young Lorenzo and Poliziano, and who used Plato to sanctify male love.<sup>29</sup>

Building on Bray's work, Jonathan Goldberg proposes reading texts for "the ways in which normative bonds that structured society also allowed for sexual relations."<sup>30</sup> These "normative bonds" were the homosocial networks that held up much of Renaissance Europe. Premodern queerness has remained easily disguised from modern readers precisely because it fit so seamlessly into everyday relationships and behaviours. As several historians have demonstrated, the passionate language sometimes used between male friends could be intentionally fused with homoerotic significance, flirting with the often-hazy boundaries between friendship and romance.<sup>31</sup>

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28. Giovanni dall'Orto, "'Socratic Love' as a Disguise for Same-Sex Love in the Italian Renaissance," in *The Pursuit of Sodomy: Male Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe*, ed. Kent Gerard and Gert Hekma (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1989), 34-35. Emphasis mine.

29. Armando Maggi, "On Kissing and Sighing: Renaissance Homoerotic Love from Ficino's *De Amore* and *Sopra Lo Amore* to Cesare Trevisani's *L'impresa* (1569)," *Journal of Homosexuality* 49, no. 3-4 (December 2005): 324.

30. Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 23.

31. See Steve Patterson, "The Bankruptcy of Homoerotic Amity in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 9-32; Bray, "Homosexuality and the Signs of Male Friendship in Elizabethan England," *History Workshop* 29 (1990): 1-19; Bradley J. Irish, "Friendship and Frustration: Counter-Affect in the Letters of

While friendship provided the most fertile soil for homoeroticism, it could also flourish in other relationships between men, especially that of patron and client. The charged language of patronage, often infused with a vocabulary of love and dependence, meant that patrons and employees were constantly treading a line between patronage and eroticism.<sup>32</sup> Given that patronage relationships so often developed into friendships, this made the boundaries between patronage, friendship, and sodomy all the more ambiguous. As Dale Kent has noted, these lines could be especially blurred for Lorenzo, who more often than not played a dual role of patron and friend.<sup>33</sup> In the following pages, my “emotional excavation” (to borrow Bradley Irish’s term) of Lorenzo’s relationship with Poliziano relies on a subtle reading of a variety of source material, notably letters and poetry.<sup>34</sup> These sources, like the relationships themselves, reveal the complexity and ambiguity that existed beneath the surface of legal distinctions. Their analysis requires a careful deconstruction of linguistic choices, implicit assumptions, cultural encoding, and the unsaid.

Even as premodern male sociability embraced the homoerotic, it was exclusive: the “conjoined heart” of perfect friendship required that both participants be alike; that is, they must both be men.<sup>35</sup> Women were thus barred from the kind of pure *amicizia* that could exist between two men, just as they

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Philip Sidney and Hubert Languet,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 57, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 412-32.

32. Greene, ““You Must Eat Men,”” 177.

33. Dale Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust*, 175.

34. Irish, “Friendship and Frustration,” 412.

35. Patterson, “Homoerotic Amity,” 22-23.

were barred from much of the public, civic life that revolved around homosocial ties. According to Ficino, men were best suited for other men, “since they are more like men than women are ....”<sup>36</sup> This similarity not only made men ideal friends, but ideal lovers. Wives were hardly sheltered from the knowledge of their own exclusion, or of the homoerotic potential of their husbands’ friendships. It was not unheard of for marriages to break down because husbands had neglected their wives to pursue males, or even for women to be driven from their marital homes.<sup>37</sup> As we shall see, there even existed a common cultural assumption that women and youths were natural rivals for the love of men. Clarice was no doubt aware of these norms and views, and of the specifically “Florentine” sin that permeated her husband’s *patria*.<sup>38</sup> The mere suggestion of homoeroticism thus presented her with a possible source of worry. As I shall argue in the following section, her continued anger at Poliziano likely stemmed from the way she viewed his friendship with her husband.

### **Bedroom Politics**

Other than a letter of 6 April, 1479, which mentions a disagreement over teaching, there is no definitive written statement about what caused Clarice to drive Poliziano from his position.<sup>39</sup> In the years since, their argument has been reduced to a symbolic struggle between pious ignorance and humanist

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36. Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, trans. S. Jayne (Woodstock, CN: Spring Publications, 1985), quoted in Maggi, “Kissing and Sighing,” 321-22.

37. Roche, *Forbidden Friendships*, 130-31.

38. According to Pope Gregory XI, the two sins which most characterised the Florentines were usury and sodomy. See Roche, 3.

39. Poliziano to Lorenzo de' Medici, 6 April, 1479, quoted in Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis*, 2:187.

enlightenment under the assumption that Clarice took issue with her sons being taught Latin from classical literature.<sup>40</sup> Though Clarice has been treated more gently of late, the narrative of an overly traditional wife at odds with humanism has generally gone unchallenged. More recently, Natalie Tomas has also defined the conflict as ideological, though certainly “made worse by Poliziano’s rather difficult temperament.”<sup>41</sup> However, contextualising the letter of 6 April among other contemporary letters suggests that pedagogical disagreements were a symptom, rather than a root cause, of Clarice’s hostility towards Poliziano.

Over the year following the Pazzi conspiracy, letters from both parties tell a story of rising strain. Clarice’s correspondence expresses a constant sense of yearning for Lorenzo. Far from home, recently pregnant, and shaken from the recent events, her worries for her husband’s safety are clear.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, Poliziano had been removed from his enviable position at Lorenzo’s side. He makes it diplomatically clear that he is unsatisfied with his situation: “I wait with desire for news ... that I am to return to serve you: for with you I wanted and believed I would stay.”<sup>43</sup> This same letter also hints at growing interpersonal problems: “We govern ourselves as well as we can; but to me go all the blows.”<sup>44</sup>

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40. See Maguire, *Private Life*, 75.

41. Tomas, *Medici Women*, 24.

42. See Clarice Orsini to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 20 August, 1478, MAP, XXXI, 188; 23 August, 1478, MAP, XXXI, 204.

43. “Io aspetto con desiderio novelle [...] per tornare a servire Voi: chè con Voi volevo e credevomi stare ....” Poliziano to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 24 August, 1478, in Poliziano, *Prose volgari*, 58.

44. “Governiamoci il meglio possiamo; ma a me toccano tutte le botte.” Poliziano, 58.



Clarice openly articulated her feelings and desires, directly telling Lorenzo that she could not feel “content” (*contenta*) without news from him.<sup>45</sup> In contrast, Poliziano approaches his feelings indirectly, quoting Virgil: “*te propter Libyaë*” in reference to the humiliating “blows” (*botte*) he was receiving in the household.<sup>46</sup> This reference to Queen Dido is noteworthy in its erotic context, and Lorenzo would have been well aware of her story: Dido thought of her lover Aeneas as her husband and sacrificed everything for him, but he abandoned her, leaving her furious, heartbroken, and suicidal.<sup>47</sup> By specifically choosing these words, Poliziano implicitly casts himself as Dido and Lorenzo as Aeneas, inviting the comparison of his and Lorenzo’s relationship to a marriage while simultaneously reminding the reader that such a marriage is illicit and imbalanced. Poliziano, like Dido, can make no claim or demands on Lorenzo. As we shall see later, the erotic subtext was probably not incidental.

After a long winter, the tension in the lonely mountain villa rose to a boil.

On 6 May 1479, Poliziano wrote:

My Magnificent Lord, I am here at Careggi, having left Cafaggiuolo at the commandment of Madonna Clarice. The reason and way of my departure, I desire, rather I beg the grace, to be able to tell You personally; for it is a long story. I believe, when You’ve heard me, You will agree that I don’t have all the blame. In effect, out of respect and to not come to Florence outside your orders, I am here, and expect that Your Magnificence will tell me what to do; because I am Yours, even if the world should come between us: and if I have little fortune in serving You, it is not because I have never served You with as much faith as I have.<sup>48</sup>

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45. “... adviso, come voi state: che no[n] posso stare | contenta senza ....” Clarice Orsini to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 20 August, 1478, MAP, XXXI, 188.

46. Poliziano to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 24 August, 1478, in Poliziano, *Prose volgari*, 58.

47. Virgil, *The Aeneid* 4.398-99.

48. “Magnifice mi Domine, Io sono qui a Careggi, partito di Cafaggiuolo per comandamento di madonna Clarice. La cagione et il modo di questa mia partita, desiderrei [...]

Soon after, Lorenzo wrote a short message to Clarice, informing her that Poliziano would be resuming his duties. Lorenzo seems primarily interested in placating his wife: “I assure you,” (*confortoti*), he says, that Poliziano will only be staying “a little while” (*poco di tempo*). He reminds her of their son Piero il Fatuo’s “very hard work” (*assai fatica*) in his studies: “I know that you are aware of the fruit that is borne by our Piero.”<sup>49</sup> By appealing to the shared knowledge of their son’s capabilities and effort, not to mention the leadership role they hoped the boy would eventually take, Lorenzo was probably trying to motivate her to endure Poliziano’s company for a little while longer. Even if she couldn’t do it for love of Piero, he writes, then he asks that she “be glad to do it ... at least for my [love], by which you would do me the greatest pleasure ....”<sup>50</sup> Loving him, Lorenzo implies, means tolerating his favorites.

Lorenzo’s language in this letter is intimate: he uses the familiar *tu* instead of *voi*, and opens the letter calling her by name with no title. He addresses the letter to “my dearest wife Clarice Orsini de’ Medici,” emphasizing both her value to him and her status as a member of the Medici family. She is the wife of one Medici and the mother of others, and as such she has the responsibility to see to her eldest son’s best educational interests. Importantly, Lorenzo addressed this

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di potervela dire a bocca; perche e cosa pur lunga. Credo, quando m’avete udito, vi accorderete che io non abbi tutto il torto. In effetto, per migliore rispetto e per non venire a Firenze praeter iussa tua, io sono qui, et aspetto che V.M. mi dica quello abbi a fare; perche sono vostro, se il mondo ci si impuntassi: e se io ho poca ventura in servirvi, non e pero che sempre non vi abbi servito con quanta fede ho avuta.” Poliziano to Lorenzo, 6 May, 1479, in Poliziano, *Prose volgari*, 70.

49. “so che tu conosci el fructo che ne trahe Piero nostro.” Lorenzo de’ Medici to Clarice Orsini, May 1479, in Lorenzo de’ Medici, *Lettere*, 4:80.

50. “Sia contenta farlo, se non per amore suo, almanco per mio, che me ne farai grandissimo piacere ....” Lorenzo de’ Medici, 80.

letter from “halfway” (*a meza via*), indicating that he was possibly on his way to Cafaggiolo.<sup>51</sup> Though Lorenzo wanted Poliziano to return to Cafaggiolo, this does not mean that he was necessarily taking Poliziano’s side – rather, it seems as if he was attempting to make peace within the *brigata*, and that he perhaps wanted to hear both sides of the story in person. As Henk Nellen points out, letters were seen as a second-best option to spoken conversation; it is likely that both Poliziano and Lorenzo saw the situation as too delicate to discuss through the written word, which could be misinterpreted or even read by prying eyes.<sup>52</sup> By trying to find a middle ground and showing consideration to the needs of both parties, Lorenzo was attempting to make peace without giving the impression that he was favouring one individual more than another.

Clarice, it seems, was unconvinced; Poliziano did not return to Cafaggiolo. However, neither did Lorenzo bring him back to his side in Florence. Instead, Poliziano was moved to the Medici villa in Fiesole. Unfortunately, this change of scenery did not end the dispute. Poliziano was miserable, lonely, and anxious about what lay in store for his career. Apparently not wanting to test Lorenzo’s patience further, he reached out to Lucrezia Tornabuoni in the hope that she would intercede on his behalf. Lucrezia and the orphaned Poliziano apparently had a close, quasi-familial relationship, and he knew the influence she had over her son. He begs her pardon for asking for her help, especially since the

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51. “Uxori mee carissime Claricie Ursine de Medicis.” Lorenzo de’ Medici, 80.

52. Henk J. M. Nellen, “In Strict Confidence: Grotius’ Correspondence with His Socinian Friends,” in *Self-Presentation and Social Identification: The Rhetoric and Pragmatics of Letter Writing in Early Modern Times*, ed. Toon Van Houdt et al. (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2002), 228.

ongoing war with Rome and Naples means that “this is not the time to ask for anything,” but admits that he is “still missing the hopes [he] built on Piero ....”<sup>53</sup> He ends the letter by making clear his request: “Speak a word to Lorenzo, if You would, or show him this letter ... he’s had compassion for my needs, and has it within his soul to conquer my evil fortune ....”<sup>54</sup> Despite knowing of Lorenzo’s “*compassion*” (*compassione*) for him, Poliziano is still hesitant to approach Lorenzo directly, which is understandable: Lorenzo was already showing a surprising amount of generosity to someone who had offended his wife. As we shall see, Poliziano would continue to feel alienated from his friend and patron over the course of the next year.

Meanwhile, others attempted to mediate with Clarice. Niccolò Michelozzi went to her to try and smooth things over: “Ser Niccolò, desiring that [I] make peace with [Poliziano], has solicited me so much [about it],” she complains.<sup>55</sup> Clarice and Niccolò were close friends, and this would not be the last time he acted as an intermediary.<sup>56</sup> Mediation, it seems, was one of the duties involved in being a personal secretary in this period.<sup>57</sup> In this case, it seems that Clarice was insulted that Niccolò was asking her to reconcile with Poliziano, as

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53. “Io conosco che questo non e tempo da chiedere nulla .... mi mancano ancora le speranze che io edificavo sopra a Piero ....” Poliziano to Tornabuoni, 25 May, 1479, in Poliziano, *Prose volgari*, 71.

54. “Toccatene una parola a Lorenzo, se vi pare, o gli mostrate questo capitolo ... ha auto compassione ai miei bisogni, et hassi messo nell’animo di vincer la mia mala fortuna ....” Poliziano, 72.

55. “Ser Niccolò per voler fare pace con lui, me habbia tanto sollecitata.” Clarice Orsini to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 28 May, 1479, quoted in Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis*, 2:288.

56. See Clarice Orsini to Michelozzi, 7 September, 1479, GC 29, 38 bis, no. 3420569.

57. In fact, even Niccolò’s brother Bernardo was dragged into mediation in this conflict. See Lorenzo de’ Medici to Clarice Orsini, 5 June, 1479, in Lorenzo de’ Medici, *Lettere*, 4:94.

“solicit” (*sollecitare*) could also mean to bother or pester someone. It may have seemed, from her perspective, that her trusted friend was taking Poliziano’s side.

Indeed, Clarice was infuriated by Poliziano’s behaviour in Fiesole: Messer [Angelo] can say that he will stay in your house to spite me, and even so you have put him in your room at Fiesole ... this cannot be believed.”<sup>58</sup> Clarice’s anger reveals an interesting point of tension: according to her, Poliziano was bragging that he was not only staying in Lorenzo’s villa, but in Lorenzo’s own bedroom. This was, moreover, because Lorenzo *himself* “placed” (*facto mettere*) him there. By adding *facto*, Clarice emphasizes Lorenzo’s agency and thereby his responsibility for Poliziano’s audacious behaviour. By allowing Poliziano to sleep in his bedroom, Lorenzo was permitting him to claim a kind of symbolic authority.

The bed was the locus of the *camera*, and in addition to the connotations of authority, it had a distinctly sexual symbolism.<sup>59</sup> It acted as a euphemism both for conjugal relations and for adultery, and Clarice may have seen Poliziano and Lorenzo’s interactions in this light.<sup>60</sup> Friends often shared beds in this period, and the erotic potential of these arrangements was not lost on contemporaries. Rocke mentions at least two instances in which bed-sharing among a group of friends ended in sex.<sup>61</sup> Poliziano himself recounts how a man sharing galley quarters

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58. “Messer Agnolo possa dire che starà in casa vostra a mio dispetto; & anche l’habbiate facto mettere in camera vostra a Fiesole ... non che lo possa credere.” Clarice Orsini to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 28 May, 1479, quoted in Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis*, 2:288.

59. See Brenda Preyer, “The Florentine *Casa*,” in *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Flora Dennis (London: V&A, 2006), 34-49.

60. *Treccani*, s.v. “lètto2,” accessed 27 November, 2018, <http://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/letto2/>.

61. Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, 304n43.

with youths began “fondling” (*manomettendo*) his bunkmate before being humorously rebuffed.<sup>62</sup> Often, Florentines framed queer relationships in terms of sleeping together or sharing beds, and more tolerant families might even accommodate their sons’ lovers, providing them with their own bed to share.<sup>63</sup>

Queer relationships were often associated with financial support, often with the dominant partner being said “to keep” (*tenersi*) his lover “like a wife” (or “woman”), implying that the passive partner was usurping the “natural” place of women.<sup>64</sup> When a husband openly flaunted his affairs, he openly shamed his wife. Clarice’s letter invokes this fear of public shame. She writes that Poliziano was saying these things “to spite me,” (*a mio dispetto*).<sup>65</sup> *Dispetto* here is heavily honour-coded: it is not simply associated with personal contempt, but also with disparagement and shame.<sup>66</sup> This implies that there is at least a danger of publicity. Her embarrassment is doubled by Poliziano’s claim that all this was instigated by Lorenzo himself. Though he did not sleep in the villa’s bedroom with Poliziano, his behaviour mirrored other homoerotic dalliances: while his wife was away, he was maintaining a dependent in his own bedroom, just outside the city.

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62. Poliziano, *Dette piacevoli*, ed. Tiziano Zanato (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1983), 85, no. 242.

63. Roche, *Forbidden Friendships*, 167, 176, 179.

64. Roche, 167. See also Poliziano, *Dette piacevoli*, 113, no. 404.

65. Clarice Orsini to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 28 May, 1479, quoted in Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis*, 2:288.

66. *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, s.v. “Dispetto.” accessed 29 January, 2017, [http://vocabolario.sns.it/html/\\_s\\_index2.html](http://vocabolario.sns.it/html/_s_index2.html).

## Poetic Homoeroticism

As stated above, homoerotic behaviour was woven into both male socialisation and male sociability in Florence. In fact, Roche estimates “that many, if not most, Florentine males engaged in homosexual activity at some point in their lives.”<sup>67</sup> Lorenzo was likely no exception: from childhood, he was enmeshed in the same emotional communities as the boys, youths, and men who eagerly participated in homoeroticism. His teacher and mentor, Ficino, openly lived with the poet Giovanni Cavalcanti, to whom he wrote passionate love letters. Braccio Martelli, one of Lorenzo’s neighbours and close boyhood friends, would later be accused of hosting sodomitical trysts on his property.<sup>68</sup> Another of the youthful Lorenzo’s close companions, Pulci, was also accused of sodomizing boys by multiple parties, including Matteo Franco, who wrote: “You canonized yourself to Sodom / When you made a great feast of boys.”<sup>69</sup>

Poliziano, too, was deeply engaged in homoerotic culture. He was influenced by many of the same men who surrounded his patron, and as a scholar and later a clergyman, he was deeply involved in professional cultures that were especially associated with sodomy in the Florentine popular consciousness. This a stereotype went at least as far back as Dante, who characterised sodomites as “those who were all clerks, / And great scholars, and of great fame, / fouling the

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67. Roche, *Forbidden Friendships*, 150.

68. Roche, 198.

69. “Canonizzato a Sodoma tu stessi / Quando facesti il gran convito a’ pivi.” Franco to Pulci, Sonnet XLII, in Filippo de Rossi, ed., *Sonetti di Matteo Franco e di Luigi Pulci* (1759), 42, lines 10-11.

world with one shared sin.”<sup>70</sup> Later works directed at Poliziano by one of his rivals, in fact, would openly accuse him of preying on boys in much the same way as the accusations against Pulci.<sup>71</sup>

As I shall demonstrate below, the poetry of both Poliziano and Lorenzo is laced with references to multiple forms of homoeroticism. These works are noteworthy precisely because they treat homoerotic behaviour as rather unremarkable, which to me seems to indicate participation in a literary community – and perhaps also an emotional community – in which homoeroticism was normalised. Even more importantly, the poetry of both men reflects a social circle which embraced and even encouraged various levels of erotization in male relationships. In Poliziano’s case, this included the erotization of his dependence upon his patron.

#### Phallic Games

Though Lorenzo’s letters contain few references to his sexual interests, his poetry is quite another story. It is brimming with not only romantic works addressed to (mostly unnamed) ladies, but explicitly erotic poems that involve various combinations of both sexes. One youthful poem, the “Uccellazione di starne,” which depicts his real-life group of friends having a humorous and fanciful hunting adventure, has often been praised for its richly descriptive

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70. “In somma sappi, che tutti fur cherchi, / E letterati grandi, e di gran fama, / D’ un medesimo peccato al mondo lerci.” Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, Canto XV, lines 106-108.

71. Andrea Dazzi, “Ad Iacobum” and “Ad Ang[elum] Politianum,” *Saggi di storia gay*, ed. Giovanni dall’Orto, accessed 29 January, 2017, <http://www.giovannidallorto.com/biografie/poliziano/dazzi.html>.



language, realism, and characterisation.<sup>72</sup> Unfortunately, it has been largely overlooked as a source for the young Lorenzo's views and experiences of male sexuality.<sup>73</sup> Birds were – and are – a popular Italian metaphor for the phallus; falconry thus easily developed into a metaphor for sexual conquest.<sup>74</sup> Partridges (*starne*) could symbolise women, particularly sex workers, though in the male diminutive it could also be used to refer to catamites.<sup>75</sup> Birds (*uccelli*) could, moreover, indicate either adolescent boys or the anus itself.<sup>76</sup> In this light, the details of Lorenzo's "Uccellagione" take on a clear double-entendre, including the moment one sorry hunter falls upon his hawk and cannot get it to stand up straight again.<sup>77</sup> This poem illustrates the role sexual activity played in building camaraderie within all-male *brigade*. Lorenzo's attention is not on the prey's gender, but on the boisterous, aggressive, and often humorous behaviour of other men in sexual situations. This especially comes into play when, instead of

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72. For an analysis of the literal contents of the poem, see Sturm, *Lorenzo de' Medici*, 35-48.

73. Both Guglielmo Gorni and Federica Signoriello have briefly discussed the more burlesque elements of the poem. See Gorni, "Su Lorenzo poeta, parodie, dilette e noie della caccia," in *Lorenzo il Magnifico e il suo mondo: Convegno internazionale di studi (Firenze, 9-13 giugno 1992)*, ed. Garfagnini (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1994), 205-23; Signoriello, "Ritratti fiorentini fra starne, sparvieri e altri animali nell'*Uccellagione di starne* di Lorenzo de' Medici," *Rivista di studi italiani* 35, no. 3 (December 2017): 12-32. My thanks to Stefano Jossa for bringing the latter study to my attention.

74. See the list of examples cited in Jean Toscan, "La carnaval du langage: Le lexique erotique des poetes de *l'Equivoque* de Burchiello a Marino (XVe-XVIIe siecles)," (PhD diss., University of Paris, 1978), 4:1762.

75. Toscan, 1:605. See also Allen J. Grieco, "From Roosters to Cocks: Italian Renaissance Fowl and Sexuality," in *Erotic Cultures of Renaissance Italy*, 99-100.

76. See the list of examples cited in Toscan, "La carnaval," 4:1762.

77. Lorenzo de' Medici, "Uccellagione di starne," in *Tutte le opere*, 2:658, stanza 9, lines 1-4. *Far l'erta* literally means "make the rise," referring to the way in which a hawk stands upright on a hawker's fist.

chasing a partridge, one man's hawk attacks another. This causes a great deal of embarrassment between the two men, one of whom shouts:

“I think that your haughty hawk attacked  
another hawk for sure; and, by my faith,  
you play very rude and strange games;  
I'm crazy to associate with little boys [like you]!”<sup>78</sup>

This suggests that one of the young men had approached another, and thereby insulted him. This sort of behaviour is immature and juvenile, better suited to “little boys” (*fanciulli*) than the growing youths who are eager to prove their manhood. Other hawks are described with equal humour: one is ridiculously small, and yet another makes its prey bleed because it is too inexperienced (*soro*).<sup>79</sup> The poem's resolution comes not when all the hunters have been successful, but when, despite heated competition and misunderstandings, they make peace amongst themselves. They feast together, a common activity for male *brigade*, and then all go off to have an afternoon rest, their friendships mended and even strengthened. When night falls, the adventures will begin anew with cave exploration, likely a metaphor for female anatomy.<sup>80</sup>

The partridge hunt reflects the collective nature of Florentine male sexuality in which Lorenzo participated as a young man. Sex was a group activity: young men went looking for conquests together, compared experiences, and bragged about their accomplishments. This was an important aspect of male

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78. “Credo che ‘l tuo sparvier massiccio scorga / a sparvier certo; e, per la fede mia, / tu pigli assai villani e stran’ trastulli; / ma io pazzo a ‘mpacciarmi con fanciulli!” Lorenzo de’ Medici, 665, stanza 29, lines 5-8.

79. Lorenzo de’ Medici, 663, stanza 24, lines 1-2; Lorenzo de’ Medici, 664, stanza 26, line 1.

80. Lorenzo de’ Medici, 670, stanza 45, lines 5-6.

sociability: sexual performance in front of peers “helped validate one’s virility in the eyes of a comrade, and in the shared act created complicity and solidified friendships.”<sup>81</sup> In focusing so much on the description and activity of his friends’ phalli, Lorenzo’s poem contains a sense of homoeroticism regardless of the gender of the partridges. The colourful descriptions reflect some very close observance of one’s fellow man, not to mention more than a little comparison. That Lorenzo was able to put his friends’ names into the poem implies that these young men were able to openly talk about these experiences and even laugh about them. The possibility of awkward, mistaken sexual advances was not so humiliating as not to be included in the poem. While it might provoke momentary anger and embarrassment, it would not ruin a friendship. Rather, it was simply part of a young man’s experiences in growing up among other young men, all of whom were exploring their sexuality.

This, in fact, is reflected in written exchanges among Lorenzo’s *brigata*: in one letter to the teenaged Lorenzo, Braccio Martelli uses humorous exaggeration to describe the erect member of a young man in the *brigata*, and admits that he had learned this by spying on this same friend’s intimate activities!<sup>82</sup> From even a cursory look, then, Lorenzo appears at the very least to have been highly familiar with the common experiences of sexually active young

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81. Roche, *Forbidden Friendships*, 183.

82. “Non credere a [Braccio Martelli] che [Niccolò Ardinghelli] si sia indugiato che le luia sieno aperte; che sono sei di già che detto [Ardinghelli] le aperse sciarpello a [Lucrezia Donati], et io gli fe’ la guardia; e sai che [Ardinghelli] ha uno cazzo che pare corno di bue ....” Braccio Martelli to Lorenzo de’ Medici, 27 April, 1465, quoted in Rochon, *La jeunesse*, 132n380. See del Lungo, *Amori*, 35n1, for an explanation of the slang used here.

men, which frequently included some level of homoerotic flirtation or experimentation.

Lorenzo's later poetry also contains regular references to sexuality, especially his nearly pornographic Carnival songs. These use a variety of metaphors to explicitly celebrate several sexual activities, sodomy included. The sodomy in these poems is primarily heterosexual, but the "Canzona de' visi addrieto" is devoted entirely to same-sex sodomy.<sup>83</sup> Lorenzo humorously characterises passive partners as "carrying / their eyes behind and not in front" so that they can see the active partner approaching!<sup>84</sup> This song was likely performed at Carnival by men in masks, and it is fairly easy to imagine the humorous visuals that might have been employed.<sup>85</sup> Lorenzo's language is humorous, but not condemning; rather, he portrays sodomy as a perfectly acceptable alternative for men when women are not available. He was also at the very least familiar with the technicalities. Portions of the above song are practically an advice manual on how to go about it with minimal discomfort (or dishonour) to the passive partner.<sup>86</sup> Though he keeps a wry tone throughout, his language also casually normalises sodomy. According to Lorenzo, it's so common that "the ladies also do this" during their menstrual cycle, and thus

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83. Lorenzo de' Medici, "Canzona de' visi addrieto," in *Tutte le opere*, 2:806-809. For poetry in which Lorenzo describes heterosexual sodomy, see "Ragionavasi di sodo" in Lorenzo de' Medici, 738-40; "E' non c'è niun più bel giuoco," in Lorenzo de' Medici, 744-46; "Tra Empoli e Pontolmo" in Lorenzo de' Medici, 747; "Canzona degli Innestatori" in Lorenzo de' Medici, 786-89; "Canzona de' Fornai" in Lorenzo de' Medici, 794-97.

84. "portare / gli occhi drieto e non davanti ..." "Canzona de' visi addrieto," in Lorenzo de' Medici, *Tutte le opere*, 2:807, lines 5-6.

85. Orvieto, in Lorenzo de' Medici, 806nXI.

86. "con man tocca, pria ch'alloggi, / poi non ha vergogna o danno." Lorenzo de' Medici, 808, lines 21-22.

“everyone these days craftily / makes the double six every month ....”<sup>87</sup> Here, despite talking about heterosexual sodomy, he uses contemporary slang – the “double six” (*bisesto*), or sixty-six – specific to homosexual sodomy.<sup>88</sup> Thus, even heterosexual sodomy is casually included into wider patterns of homoerotic behaviour.

Another of Lorenzo’s Carnival songs, the “Canzona degli innestatori,” also describes sodomy with both genders.<sup>89</sup> However, this song does so in a way which relies far more on metaphor than the “Canzona de’ visi addrieto,” making his meaning somewhat more obscure. Lorenzo’s humour here comes not from the acts themselves, but the creative way he describes them. He walks right up to the line of outright vulgarity without stepping over it and invites his audience to laugh as they follow along with his clever wordplay. His humour and wordplay in both songs are virtually the same as in his Carnival songs which describe only heterosexual behaviour. Devoting two specific songs to anal sodomy – both hetero- and homosexual – suggests a perspective which saw the nature of the act as more definitive than the gender of one’s partner. The broad spectrum of human sex acts are all equally viable options as well as equally full of comedic potential.

### Love’s Light

While Lorenzo wrote poems *about* males, Poliziano wrote poetry *to* males. In one such poem, he describes the pleasure he takes in gazing upon a

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87. “ciascun oggi s’assotiglia, / ogni mese è lor bisesto ....” Lorenzo de’ Medici, 808, lines 31-32.

88. Lorenzo de’ Medici, 809n32.

89. Lorenzo de’ Medici, “Canzona degli innestatori,” 788, lines 43-45.

beautiful bird. When he can no longer resist and attempts to catch the bird, it went “in flight through the air / to return to the nest where it was born.”<sup>90</sup> As mentioned previously, birds were sometimes used to signify a phallus or an attractive boy. The nest (*nido*) is a clear metaphor for the vagina, suggesting that the “bird” left him to chase after girls. Poliziano’s exchanges with Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, in which the two discuss Pico’s love poetry, also contain deliberately homoerotic references. Pico, sending his poems to Poliziano for his feedback, suggestively asked the older poet to “castigate” (*castigentur*) and “spank” (*vapulent*) them.<sup>91</sup> In response, Poliziano playfully built on the metaphor, calling them “beautiful boys” (*bellos pueros*), and admits to having “stabbed” (*confodi*) them.<sup>92</sup> In this ever-increasing erotic wordplay, Pico asks: “who does not want to die by [your] sword?”<sup>93</sup>

More significant for our purposes, however, is the poetry Poliziano directed to Lorenzo during the late 1470s and early 1480s during and after his conflict with Clarice. These works employ a Petrarchan vocabulary of desire and suffering caused by an idealised figure. While Florentine men often used loving vocabulary in letters exchanged within patronage networks, it was rare for them to use love poetry in the same context.<sup>94</sup> Comparing the poems which Poliziano

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90. “per l’aria a volo / ritornassi al nido ove si nacque ....” Poliziano, Canzoni a ballo CIII, in *Rime*, ed. Daniela Delcorno Branca (Venice: Marsilio, 1990), 95, lines 16-17.

91. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola to Poliziano, 12 March, 1483, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:16.

92. Pico to Poliziano, 1483, in Poliziano, 18. The poems have unfortunately not survived; in a fit of guilt, Pico burned them all.

93. “Quis enim nolit ab isto ense mori?” Pico to Poliziano, 1483, in Poliziano, 20.

94. Dale Kent, *Friendship, Love, and Trust*, 57.

wrote to Lorenzo to his love poetry (to both males *and* females) suggests that he was intentionally framing this patron-client relationship in eroticised terms, deliberately pushing the unclear boundaries between friend, patron, and erotic desire. Like in his poem about the boy-bird, unsatisfied desire is both soothed and intensified by sight. In one epigram addressed to Lorenzo, Poliziano envisions himself separated from his patron by a great crowd. Unable to touch or speak to Lorenzo, he can only “behold” (*aspiciam*).<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, he is inflamed by jealousy upon seeing Lorenzo touch and greet others and yearns for such an interaction himself.

Much of Poliziano’s amorous poetry focuses on seeing the beloved’s eyes. In one poem the coldness of his beloved tortures him, and he begs her to turn her star-like eyes toward him, “and then I will be content even if you kill me.”<sup>96</sup> Similarly, he celebrates Lorenzo’s eyes and gaze, both of which are portrayed as divine light, echoing the “stars” (*stelle*) or the “stars, not eyes” (*sidera non oculi*) of the male and female subjects of his amorous poems.<sup>97</sup> As he yearned to be seen by his beloveds, Poliziano yearns for Lorenzo’s gaze: “Why, Lorenzo, do you avert your eyes? Restore, / Restore, I pray, the light of

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95. Poliziano, Epigrammata latina XXIV, in *Prose volgari*, 127.

96. “e poi contento son se ben m’uccidi.” Poliziano, Rispetti XXXVII, in *Rime*, 70, lines 5-8. For other poems in which Poliziano explores this theme, see Rispetti III, XV, XXI, *Canzoni a ballo* CVI, and CIX, all in *Rime*, 54, 58, 60, 97, and 100, respectively.

97. Poliziano, Epigrammata latina LXII, in *Prose volgari*, 144, line 8.

my eyes.”<sup>98</sup> The eyes of the beloved must meet the eyes of the lover, and in this way, he is healed by the light flowing between them.<sup>99</sup>

The beloved has the power to wound or heal the lover as they please. They can hold the lover “in weeping and sighing” (*in pianti e in sospiri*) or conquer him in warfare.<sup>100</sup> In one of many romantic epigrams to a boy nicknamed Chrysocomus, he likewise claims his beloved can both “torture” (*crucias*) and “love” (*amas*) him.<sup>101</sup> The lover begs his beloved to give him “succour” (*soccorso*), for she has his fate in her hands.<sup>102</sup> Being ignored causes a suffering that is deeply physical, while receiving the attentions of the beloved brings relief and joy. Similarly, in an epigram addressed to Lorenzo (likely written from Fiesole after being ejected from Cafaggiolo), Poliziano claims his hoarsened voice would again become melodious “If only you’d say: ‘Poliziano, come.’”<sup>103</sup>

His next epigram is worth quoting in its entirety:

I am yours, O Medici; I confess it, you yourself confess it:  
I am yours always; I beg you to have a care.  
Oh, I perish! oh, my heart is lacerated by twin lions!  
Rescue me, my only hope, from raging beasts.<sup>104</sup>

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98. “Cur ergo avertis, Laurenti, lumina? Redde / Redde meis, quaeso, lumina luminibus.” Poliziano, Epigrammata latina XXXV, in *Prose volgari*, 128, lines 11-12.

99. This was likely influenced by Ficino’s understanding of optics, in which the eyes are capable of emitting and reflecting “rays.” See Cavallo and Storey, *Healthy Living*, 196-97.

100. Poliziano, Rispetti XXXVII, in *Rime*, 70, line 2; Rispetti VIII, in *Rime*, 55, lines 1-2.

101. Poliziano, Epigrammata latina LXIV, in *Prose volgari*, 144, line 2.

102. Poliziano, Rispetti LXIX, in *Rime*, 81, lines 1-3.

103. “Si modo tu dicas: Politiane, veni.” Poliziano, Epigrammata latina XXVIII, in *Prose volgari*, 124, line 8. Del Lungo notes the link between this line and Poliziano’s letter of 6 May. See Poliziano, 123nXXVIII.

104. “Sum tuus, o Medices; fateor, tuque ipse fateris: / Sum tuus usque; tui sit tibi cura, precor. / Heu pereor! heu lacerant gemini mea corda leones! / Eripe me a rabidis, spes mea sola, feris.” Poliziano, Epigrammata latina XXIX, in *Prose volgari*, 124, lines 1-4. Del Lungo suggests that one of these lions may have represented Clarice. See Poliziano, 124nXXIX.



Here, Poliziano portrays himself as a helpless and passive victim in need of Lorenzo's rescue. There is an overtly romantic tone in this poem: he is entirely Lorenzo's, to the point that he entrusts his very heart (*corda*) to Lorenzo, as he can to no one else.

Poliziano's most revealing composition in this period, his play *La favola di Orfeo*, has been largely overlooked as a source for his point of view of the situation with Lorenzo and Clarice. As I shall argue in the next section, Poliziano chose to retell the story of a notoriously queer character in a way which reflected his own recent experiences. By playing with both a classical Ovidian tale and Renaissance homoeroticism, he vented the grief and hurt that had been building for months.

### **The Death of Orpheus**

In the winter of 1479, Lorenzo received word that King Ferrante of Naples was open to considering a peace treaty with Florence. That December, Lorenzo resolved to undertake the dangerous journey himself, with a small entourage of trusted men. Poliziano was informed that he was to accompany Lorenzo on his journey – but only so far as Pisa.<sup>105</sup> Upset and incredulous, Poliziano waited for hours to discuss this decision with Lorenzo, who avoided him entirely. Others eventually had to break the news to Poliziano that Lorenzo did not want his companionship in Naples.<sup>106</sup> Wounded, Poliziano left Florence

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105. Poliziano to Lorenzo de' Medici, 19 March, 1480, in Giovanni Battista Picotti, *Ricerche umanistiche* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1955), 79.

106. Orvieto, *Poliziano*, 95-96.

without his patron's permission. He had lost his position as family tutor, been kept outside the city for months without answers, and now Lorenzo was leaving him behind and had refused to discuss the decision in person.

In an apology letter sent from Mantua three months later, Poliziano provides his account of events and describes himself as "rejected by [Lorenzo], even with dishonour." In his view, he was "thrown out not only of [your] house but also far from the protection of your intimacy."<sup>107</sup> By leaving him behind, Lorenzo had not only rejected Poliziano's company, he had left him exposed to the rumours and scorn of his rivals. Poliziano had already been separated from the rest of the household while Lorenzo kept him in Fiesole, and now Lorenzo's actions appeared to be a public demonstration of abandonment.

Whether out of distraction or anger, Lorenzo was slow to respond. Believing Lorenzo was "enraged" (*succensuisse*), Poliziano remained in Mantua, where he wrote his *Orfeo*. This violently emotional play, composed hastily within only a couple of days, reflects the violent emotional turbulence in Poliziano's life over the preceding year.<sup>108</sup> While he had used the Orphic story as "a constant point of reference" in his work until then, this play was what Francesco Caruso has termed "a turning point" in Poliziano's understanding of Orpheus as a tragic

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107. "Repulsus a te etiam cum ignominia, Laurenti, dicebar: quid facerem istic a tua non solum domo sed etiam familiaritate praesidio eiectus." Poliziano to Lorenzo de' Medici, 19 March, 1480, in Picotti, *Ricerche umanistiche*, 81.

108. Picotti, 82. Del Lungo and Juliana Hill Cotton date the *Orfeo* at 1471, but the dedication to Francesco Gonzaga and its 1480 performance suggest that it was written while Poliziano was at the Mantuan court. Vittore Branca meanwhile believes that the *Orfeo* was composed to celebrate Isabelle d'Este's 1480 visit to Mantua, and that it was likely composed sometime in early June. See del Lungo, *Florentia*, 320; Juliana Hill Cotton, "The Life and Works of Politian" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1932), 9; Vittore Branca, *Poliziano e l'umanesimo*, 61.

(rather than a triumphant) figure.<sup>109</sup> The chief theme of *Orfeo* is the tragic irony that loss is the necessary result of over-passionate love. At the climactic moment, when Eurydice is snatched back to hell, she cries out, “Alas, that too great a love / Has undone us both.”<sup>110</sup> Her reference to “too great a love” (*‘l troppo amore*) reflects the premodern belief that over-passionate love was considered dangerous to both body and soul. Excessive passion marked the boundary between healthy and unhealthy love. When it came to male relationships, excess marked the boundary between holy platonic love and sodomy. In Ficinian terms, homoerotic chastity was an ideal that could lift men heavenward, but the temptation to over-indulge via carnal lust could change manly love from divine to damned. Sodomy was thus marked by “immoderation and excess” of passion in an otherwise healthy male friendship.<sup>111</sup> The healthy dynamics of a friendship could be permanently lost if emotions overcame reason, as with Orpheus looking back at Eurydice. If Poliziano was using the Orphic journey to wrestle with his own demons, his climactic use of *‘l troppo amore* may reveal something of his reflections about what had gone so terribly wrong in his own life.

Poliziano also gives Orpheus a final monologue that is infamously coloured by both misogyny and homoeroticism. Women should be avoided, for a man can never “believe in their countenances or their words!” They torment

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109. Caruso, “Philology as Thanatology,” 105-107.

110. “Oimè, chè ‘l troppo amore / N’ ha disfatti ambe dua.” Poliziano, *La favola di Orfeo* in *Le stanze l’Orfeo e le rime*, ed. Giosue Carducci (Florence: Barbèra, 1863), 108, lines 306-307.

111. Greene, ““You Must Eat Men,”” 177. See also Steven Soebbing, “The Fine Line of Friendship: Male Homoerotic Relationships in Mozart’s *Apollo et Hyacinthus*,” *Journal of Men’s Studies* 23, no. 1 (March 2015): 94

men: “She follows him who flees, and hides from him who wants her ....” Orpheus, stung by his loss of Eurydice, attacks marriage to women: “I encourage husbands to make a divorce, / And each to flee the feminine union.” He will no longer pursue ladies, but instead, “From here on out I go plucking the new flowers, / The spring of the better sex, / When they are all elegant and slender: / This is the sweeter and softer love.”<sup>112</sup> Poliziano is here adapting the words of Ovid, who presented Orpheus as the *auctor* of pederastic sex.<sup>113</sup> Many medieval writers who had adapted the Orphic story couched this part of the myth in moralistic warnings, while others had either tried to explain it away or ignored it outright.<sup>114</sup> Poliziano, in bold contrast, embraces Orpheus’s pederastic turn fully, and in fact allows Orpheus to defend himself in his own words. Having recently lost his position due to the interference of his patron’s wife, his screed against women and marriage should come as no surprise.

In contrast to the love of fickle women, when Poliziano’s Orpheus lists the mythical boys loved by gods and heroes he describes nothing but bliss. His language flirts with our modern concepts of kink by stressing the bliss that can be achieved through dominance and submission. Jupiter, “by that sweet amorous knot bound / Enjoys in heaven his beautiful Ganimede.”<sup>115</sup> “Bound” (*avvinto*) is

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112. “crede a suo’ sembianti o sue parole!” Poliziano, *Orfeo*, 110, line 341; “Segue chi fugge: a chi la vuol s’asconde ....” Poliziano, line 344; “Conforto e’ maritati a far divorzio, / E ciascun fugga il femminil consorzio.” Poliziano, lines 352-53; “Da qui innanzi io vo corre i fior novelli, / La primavera del sesso migliore, / Quando son tutti leggiadretti e snelli: / Quest’ è più dolce e più suave amore.” Poliziano, 109, lines 330-33.

113. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10.83-85.

114. Robert Mills, *Seeing Sodomy in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 138-43.

115. “dal dolce amoroso nodo avvinto / Si gode in cielo il suo bel Ganimede.” Poliziano, *Orfeo*, 110, lines 347-48.

here contrasted with “enjoy” (*gode*). *Avvinto* is descended from Latin *vincere*, “to vanquish,” literally making mighty Jupiter defeated by Ganymede. Meanwhile, *gode*, while generally meaning pleasure and enjoyment, has the additional meaning of “exult” or “triumph.”<sup>116</sup> Unlike bending to the illogical demands of a woman, defeat at the hands of a boy is actually a victory. This love is a “holy love” (*santo amore*) whose conquest is joyful.<sup>117</sup>

Poliziano’s above implication that there was a natural rivalry between male and female love was a recurrent assumption in other Italian Renaissance texts on homoeroticism and sodomy. As mentioned above, Ficino believed that men were most adept at “ensnaring” other men due to their inherent similarity. Bernardino da Siena, meanwhile, preached that sodomites acted out of a hatred for women, and that it was therefore ““more than reasonable”” for women to hate them in return.<sup>118</sup> This theme of gendered rivalry is present throughout Orpheus’ monologue, and it is driven home by the play’s end. Having overheard Orpheus’ misogynistic speech, enraged Bacchantes tear him to shreds. This is not a moral victory, but a disordered one: the play ends in a song of gruesome frenzy. Here, Poliziano makes a striking break from Ovid’s narrative. While Ovid reunites Orpheus and Eurydice happily in the afterlife and punishes the Bacchantes for their crimes, Poliziano cuts the narrative off abruptly with the Bacchantes soaked in blood and wine. Female irrationality has triumphed, with Orpheus its victim.

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116. TLIO, s.v. “godere v.,” accessed 17 February, 2017, <http://tlio.ovi.cnr.it/voci/029288.htm>.

117. Poliziano, *Orfeo*, 110, line 350.

118. Bernardino da Siena, *Le prediche volgari*, ed. P. Bargellini (Milan: Rizzoli, 1936), 910-11, quoted in Michael Rocke, “Sodomites in Fifteenth-Century Tuscany,” in *Pursuit of Sodomy*, 20. Translation by Rocke.

This gory, dark ending reflects, I believe, the mood at the time of its author. Poliziano, far from his home, had perhaps found kindred spirits in both Orpheus and Ovid, themselves both exiles. However, for someone who had so faithfully followed Ovid's text, without any attempt to moralize the most problematic elements, his divergence from Ovid's ending is telling. By tampering with the narrative, he bent Orpheus' story to his own image. Just as Orpheus is ripped to shreds by wild, frenzied women, Poliziano had been, from his perspective, victimised. Through eroticized competition with his patron's wife, he provoked her womanly rage, until, like the lions of his earlier epigram, she ripped him apart by interrupting his work and coming between himself and Lorenzo.

Between June and August of 1480, Lorenzo called Poliziano back to Florence. However, Poliziano did not return to live in the Palazzo Medici. Rather, Lorenzo gave him a small villa of his own in Fiesole, near the Medici villa.<sup>119</sup> He resumed his position as tutor to Piero il Fatuo, and likely had a position of influence in the education of Lorenzo's two other sons as well. *The Confirmation of the Rule*, part of a fresco cycle by Domenico Ghirlandaio in the Sassetti Chapel of Santa Trinita, depicts Poliziano accompanying all three boys as the most important of their teachers (Figure 12).<sup>120</sup> Just as the Pope raises his hand in blessing of the Franciscan order, Lorenzo raises his hand in greeting to Poliziano,

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119. Picotti, *Ricerche umanistiche*, 68-69.

120. Orvieto and Picotti disagree about whether Poliziano taught the two younger boys directly. See Orvieto, *Poliziano*, 98; Picotti, *Ricerche umanistiche*, 68.

confirming Poliziano to take his sons out into the world to do the work of the Medici. Thus, this scene effectively canonizes Poliziano as a representative of Medicean values. Painted in the mid-1480s, it advertises the prestige and influence Poliziano enjoyed. As one of Poliziano's correspondents wrote, "you can move the great Medici with your voice to whatever thing you want."<sup>121</sup> Poliziano would remain a close friend to Lorenzo, even staying by his patron's side at his death, but the boundaries between friendship and eroticism were now far more firmly established.

But what of Clarice? Giovanni Battista Picotti believes that Poliziano's continued removal from the Palazzo indicates a concession on Lorenzo's part.<sup>122</sup> At the very least, Poliziano having his own permanent residence must have helped things. It is easy to conclude, as Picotti does, that Lorenzo had bent to Clarice's will. However, Lorenzo's decisions in the way he handled Poliziano were probably made for his own sake as much as out of respect for his wife. Because Poliziano's membership in the family entirely depended upon his employment, the demands he could make on the relationship with his patron were limited. Lorenzo, in turn, had far looser obligations to his family tutor than he did to his wife, who was tied to him by both holy matrimony and the children they shared.

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121. "puoi muovere con la voce il gran Medici a qualunque cosa tu voglia." Naldo Naldi to Poliziano, quoted in Picotti, 68.

122. Picotti, 69.

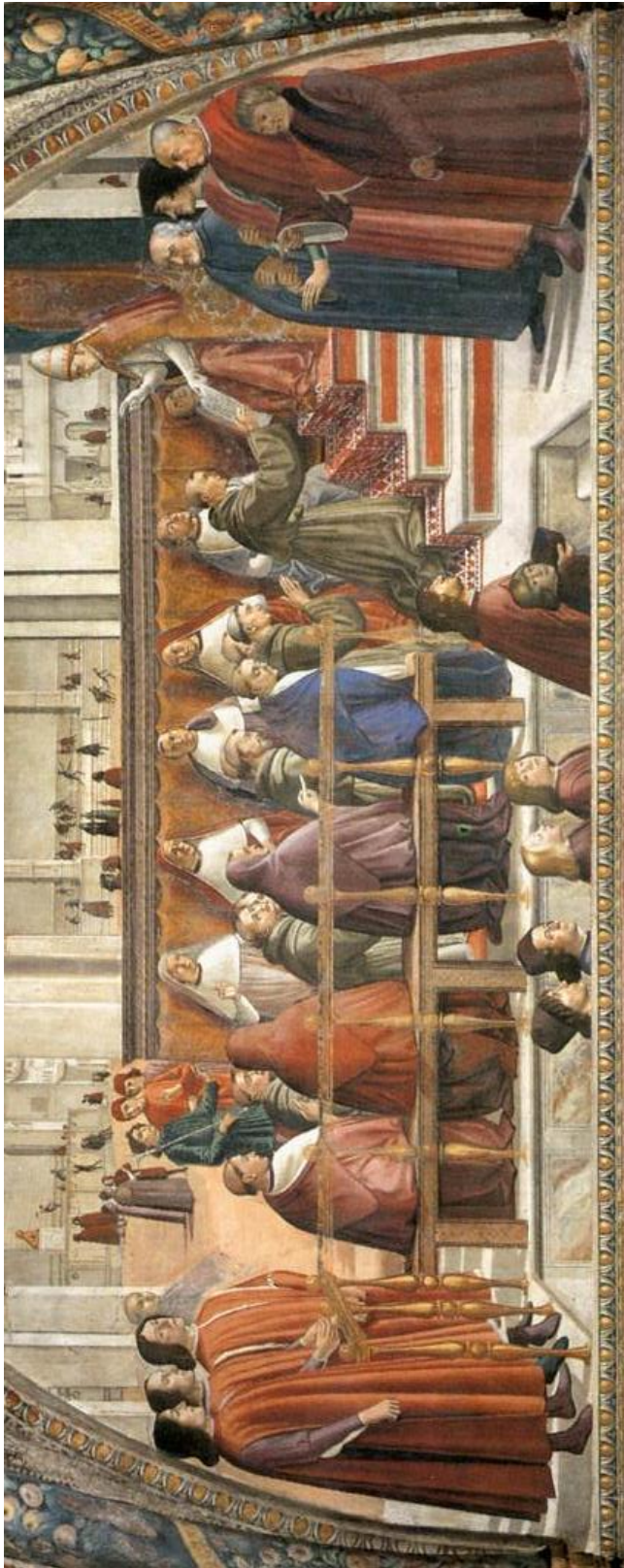


Figure 12. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Confirmation of the Rule* (detail), ca. 1480-1485, Santa Trinita, Florence, Italy, Wikimedia Commons.



Regardless of whether Lorenzo and Poliziano ever had a physical affair, their early friendship was deeply coloured by homoeroticism. Like so many friendships and patron-client relationships of the period, the emotional language in their correspondence was tinged both with the romantic and the erotic. Poliziano especially used language to explore and push the boundaries of his and Lorenzo's bond, and for his part Lorenzo seems to have accepted these occasional transgressions and even encouraged them. While Lorenzo may have seen his close friendship with Poliziano as reconcilable with his marriage, both Clarice and Poliziano seem to have viewed the homoerotic entanglement between poet and patron as a natural rival to marriage. While Clarice, secure in her position as a wife, felt the freedom to assert boundaries for herself and her children and approach Lorenzo with her grievances, Poliziano had no such privilege. His *Orfeo* thus became an indirect means for him to express his frustration and hurt in ways which his position otherwise forbade. The conflict between these three persons, far from being simply a difference of pedagogical or philosophical opinion, demonstrates the importance that male *amicizia* could have in the lives of the men involved – and what could happen when the evolving structure of a household made it necessary for that bond to evolve as well.

## Chapter Five: The Magnificent Death

Sometime during the night on 8 April, 1492, while listening to the Passion narrative being read aloud and surrounded by friends and family, Lorenzo passed away. He had been suffering from chronic illness and pain for years, but he had always rallied and returned to his regular activities. By early April, he had “suffered ... around two months” from abdominal pains, but everyone – including his trusted doctor Piero Leoni da Spoleto – believed he would recover as usual with a little rest and the right treatment.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, by the end of March, it was reported that Lorenzo was “continuing to improve” in his health.<sup>2</sup> Instead, during the first week of April, he suddenly deteriorated again. By 5 April, there were rumours that he may be close to death, and soon after Lorenzo realised there was no hope.<sup>3</sup> He removed himself to his villa at Careggi, the same place where Cosimo had gone to die. Though doctors continued working tirelessly to save him, he was dead shortly afterwards. Most mysteriously, Piero Leoni was found dead in a well only hours later.

In the following weeks, months, and years, contemporaries would relate very different versions of the event. Many were written by those who had only heard second-hand accounts of the death, but some – such as that of Poliziano – were the first-hand recollections of those who had witnessed it. Modern studies on Lorenzo’s death have primarily focused on reconstructing

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1. Poliziano to Iacopo Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:228; see also Delumeau, *Sin and Fear*, 171-72.

2. “Il Mag[nifico] Lorenzo ... va pur continuando in migliorare...” Manfredo di Manfredi to Ercole d’Este, 25 March, 1492, quoted in “Lettere di Lorenzo” 1:312.

3. Manfredo di Manfredi to Ercole d’Este, 5 April, 1492, quoted in “Lettere di Lorenzo.”

the truth of what happened, including the truth of how Lorenzo died. This is understandable: the events surrounding Lorenzo's death are shrouded in mystery and uncertainty, and the strange circumstances of his passing are only exacerbated by conflicting accounts.

My goal in this chapter is not to reconstruct the events of Lorenzo's death. Rather, I am interested in the ways in which contemporaries evaluated Lorenzo's death within the framework of premodern attitudes about death. While various diarists and chroniclers recall the death differently, they are united in their aim of establishing whether Lorenzo died well. In a period in which one's final moments had become a definitive summary of one's life, the details surrounding the death became an area of contention. What took place in the deathbed had profound implications for both a man's immortal soul and for his lasting memory. The ability – or inability – to control one's emotions, to face death “like a man,” took on a lasting importance for how one was remembered by survivors. Like most everything else in his life, these aspects of Lorenzo's behaviour took on extra political weight due to his position. His contemporaries made much of his final moments, often giving them a sense of great drama as befitted a great man. This chapter will thus examine the assumptions early modern people had about death, emotion, and gender, and how Lorenzo's contemporaries contextualised his death within these assumptions.

Lorenzo's contemporaries repeatedly framed his death, and the grief of those surrounding him, in terms of goodness or badness. The main factor in these estimations was political: Mediceans universally acclaimed his bravery, modesty, and decorum. Anti-Mediceans, meanwhile, were split in their opinions: some, while disagreeing with his politics, admired him as a

person, and their portrayals of his death remained sympathetic. However, they were also more likely to include less-than-flattering anecdotes of Lorenzo's or his companions' behaviour at the deathbed. Furthermore, this group tended to be far more sympathetic toward the unfortunate incident of Piero Leoni. Leoni's death thus becomes a yardstick for Lorenzo's: if Leoni died a coward's death by suicide, Lorenzo died like a man while his companions mourned like men. If, however, Leoni was a murder victim, he was the victim of the irrational, unmanly behaviour of pro-Mediceans driven mad by uncontrolled grief. The competing narratives of this event, which became a turning point in Florence's fate, would seek to establish credibility based not only on eyewitness reports, but on effective use of the emotions surrounding death, mourning, and gender.

## **Historiography**

### Death and Grief

Starting with Ariès' seminal series of lectures, published together as *The Hour of Our Death*, the study of premodern death and dying has been one of polarity. Ariès, who based his studies on "a chaotic mass of documents ... to decipher ... the unconscious expression of the sensibility of the age," suggested that a significant shift in the mentality surrounding death had occurred in the early Renaissance. He proposed that as Christian theology began to increasingly emphasise the role of the individual in the redemption narrative, the moment of death became a decisive factor in one's eternal fate.<sup>4</sup>

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4. Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. H. Weaver (London: Peregrine, 1983), 106-107.

Most cultures have their own ideas of what good and bad deaths look like, but the increased cosmic significance of the deathbed in this period led to greater attention paid toward preparing for a good death. Wunderli and Broce would emphasize the heightened individualism of “the final moment” even more than Ariès: “The good/bad death of early modern Christian writers ... depends not on the community – despite the actual practise of making the death as public as possible – but rather on the individual will of *moriens*.”<sup>5</sup> In their view, what truly mattered was the dying person’s faith, which was outwardly manifested in a peaceful, humble attitude. However, as other historians have since indicated, this is not entirely true. Sources show that society still assigned value to death based on the mode of death, as well as upon the conduct of those surrounding the death bed. As we shall see, early modern writers could experience an unnerving dissonance when they believed an otherwise dignified and respectable person had suffered an ignominious death. Additionally, the dishonourable conduct of mourners or survivors could cast posthumous doubt on the character of the *moriens*.

Ariès himself notes that the ideal premodern death was sensed before its arrival.<sup>6</sup> This foreknowledge facilitated a Christian death, giving the dying enough time to prepare themselves for the inevitable on both a material and spiritual level, a necessity now that the final moment had become so critical. These preparations involved, first and foremost, accepting the loss of one’s life, possessions, and loved ones. The dying person gave some final directions regarding their funerals and the fate of their earthly possessions, said their

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5. Richard Wunderli and Gerald Broce, “The Final Moment before Death in Early Modern England,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 20, no. 2 (1989): 268.

6. Ariès, *Hour of Our Death*, 8.

goodbyes to loved ones, and imparted advice to those they left behind. Following this, they were led through their final spiritual journey by a priest and spent any remaining time on earth in prayer and meditation.<sup>7</sup> This death, in Ariès' famous words, was tame: it was an expected part of the rhythm of life, handled with "familiar simplicity" by both the moribund and the crowd that surrounded the deathbed.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, an evil death was unexpected. Whether by accident or violence, "a sudden death was a vile and ugly death; it was frightening ..."<sup>9</sup> It gave its victims no time to settle their affairs or prepare their soul and rendered their spiritual fate uncertain. Because the sudden death could be understood as a wrathful God's judgement on the victim, it "was regarded as ignominious and shameful."<sup>10</sup> For this reason, accidental death might also cast post-mortem suspicion on the character of the deceased. In a recent study on the emotional history of early modern death, McNamara and McIlvenna have noted that "certain types of death were criminal or sinful, others were 'good' and noteworthy – and this affected responses to the dead and their surviving families and communities."<sup>11</sup>

This is not to say, of course, that the attitude of the dying did not matter. Even if a premodern person sensed death coming for them, they did not always behave accordingly. Seeman notes that some "ministers warned that people's final estates could not be judged by the circumstances of their

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7. Ariès, 16-18.

8. Ariès, 18.

9. Ariès, 11.

10. Ariès, 10.

11. Rebecca F. McNamara and Una McIlvenna, "Medieval and Early Modern Emotional Responses to Death and Dying," *Parergon* 31, no. 2 (2014): 2.

deaths,” but this was little comfort to the people who worried that their loved ones’ ““extream agonies of the soul”” might indicate an inner rebellion against God’s will.<sup>12</sup> As Dollimore points out, *ars moriendi* authors openly acknowledged the difficulties of death which drove such behaviour; physical and emotional pain might make it difficult for the *moriens* to resist temptation. One such temptation was that of despair, which could even lead to suicide, especially if the alternative was a slow, painful passing.<sup>13</sup> This was not only intensely shameful for the family of the deceased, but was a mortal sin, guaranteeing damnation.

Ideally, the dying person displayed a “willingness to die derived from the anticipation of a union with Christ.”<sup>14</sup> They were neither overly eager to speed the process up beyond God’s allotted time, nor were they overly confident in their assurance of eternal life. Ultimately, however, a good death could not be achieved unless one had already spent their life preparing for the final moment. Preachers and other writers stressed the need to constantly live with death present in one’s mind as a way to remain humble and submissive to God’s will.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the individualistic shift Ariès detects in late medieval views on death, the emphasis placed on dying well has a distinctly communally-minded bent. Premodern deathbeds were crowded spaces: as we shall see,

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12. Erik R. Seeman, ““She Died like Good Old Jacob’: Deathbed Scenes and Inversions of Power in New England, 1675-1775,” *Publications of the American Antiquarian Society* 104 (1994): 293-94.

13. Fernando Espi Forcén and Carlos Espi Forcén, “*Ars Moriendi*: Coping with Death in the Late Middle Ages,” *Palliative and Supportive Care* 14 (October 2016): 556.

14. Seeman, ““Good Old Jacob,”” 291.

15. Arthur E. Imhof, “*Ars Moriendi*: How to Live and How to Die,” *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 22, no. 1 (January 1997): 195.

Lorenzo spent his final hours virtually surrounded by friends, family members, bodyguards, doctors, priests, servants, and a variety of others. People were encouraged to attend the deathbeds of loved ones and acquaintances to familiarise themselves with their own inescapable mortality. Likewise, the *moriens* was expected to be a model of what good death looked like to others.<sup>16</sup> The relationships at the deathbed were thus highly reciprocal: the *moriens* was not only meant to take this final opportunity to provide healing by forgiving any last grudges or making last apologies, but to also provide a kind of instruction to others. In turn, those at the deathbed would assist the *moriens* in performing final prayers, rituals, and meditation, or provide them with comfort.

Norms about death were often constructed to reassure the bereaved as much as – or even more so than – the *moriens*. Even as the *moriens* was expected to exercise their individual strength of will in choosing to die well, the community still invested a dying person’s final moment(s) with emotional valence based on how well communal values were reflected.<sup>17</sup> Signs of despair or rebellion on the deathbed could be severely distressing to bystanders, who worried about what it meant for the state of the *moriens*’ soul. The lack of certainty made the grieving process even more agonizing by robbing the bereaved of closure.

Grief also became an area of increasing concern during the early modern period. In recent decades, historians have begun exploring the ways in which gender played into these concerns. Lansing has observed that in

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16. Donald F. Duclow, “Dying Well: The *Ars Moriendi* and the Dormition of the Virgin,” in *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages*, ed. Edelgard E. Dubruck and Barbara I. Gusick (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 385.

17. Wunderli and Broce, “The Final Moment,” 268.



early Renaissance Italy, legal language began feminising open displays of grief: public weeping and lamenting was portrayed as something that women do, not men. Governments produced new laws designed to keep mourning a private affair behind closed doors and penalise those who lamented on the streets or in other public places. Paradoxically, though the language of these laws targeted women, the ones who were most frequently penalised were men.<sup>18</sup> Lansing suggests that the late medieval and early Renaissance periods marked a transition in the way grief and gender intertwined. Up until around the thirteenth century, “noisy grief and laments were an obligatory show of honour, loyalty, and affection among men.”<sup>19</sup> Loud mourning displays were a sign of masculinity and virility, and of the intensity of the male bond. However, as Stoicism gained a renewed influence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, open grief became increasingly associated with chaos and disorder.<sup>20</sup> Plague, war, and other disasters pushed lawmakers to ask how to make society more controlled, more civilised. Violent emotion could only lead to social violence, as seen in the family feuds that tore apart Italian cities. As lamenting became more and more irrational in public thought, it simultaneously became more and more feminine. In contrast, virile grief was now expressed through reasoned, philosophical discourse.<sup>21</sup>

Steinhoff, meanwhile, notes that not all displays of “womanly” grief were unacceptable. Rather, “strong emotion was expected, and even required

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18. Carol Lansing, *Passion and Order: Restraint of Grief in the Medieval Italian Communes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 2.

19. Lansing, 6.

20. Lansing, 117.

21. Lansing, 191.

to be expressed by women, but only within precisely controlled parameters.”<sup>22</sup> Women’s grieving was mainly confined to the household, especially in Tuscany, where women were increasingly marginalised from funerals.<sup>23</sup> When Lorenzo’s grandfather Cosimo died in 1464, for example, his funeral procession was unusual in that it included his wife. However, her participation in the funeral was highly limited: completely silent and covered from head to toe in layers of black veils, she was effectively neither seen nor heard. In later male funerals for the early Medici household, there is no evidence of any female participation. The public funeral had become entirely masculine, conducted with a solemn dignity. That Lorenzo openly wept on the way home from his father’s funeral thus became something worth noting.

At the same time, Steinhoff reminds us, the household became the domain of female grief after a death, both during the lying-in period and just after the funeral. In Siena, for example, “all the women of the neighbourhood and family” would grieve for a short period over the recently deceased before the body was moved “to the upper story ... where only female blood relatives or others living in the house could gesture dramatically and cry out.”<sup>24</sup> These strong female emotions became even more visible in art, especially religious art, as Steinhoff illustrates with an example of the crucifixion. While men are depicted at the periphery, lamenting women are increasingly centralized alongside Christ’s body.

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22. Judith Steinhoff, “Weeping Women: Social Roles and Images in Fourteenth-Century Tuscany,” in *Crying in the Middle Ages: Tears of History*, ed. Elina Gertsman (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2012), 48.

23. Steinhoff, 37.

24. Steinhoff, 47-48.

Katherine Harvey points out that there were certain instances in which male tears and laments remained acceptable as she explores reports of weeping among bishops. In these cases, religious weeping was an outer sign of an inner transformation: “proof of God’s love” with “the capacity to wash away sins.”<sup>25</sup> Eucharistic tears worked to ally the weeper more closely with Christ’s own passion through both empathy and emulation.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, tears of sorrow during the act of contrition were evidence of sincerity and growth. However, as Harvey reminds us, there were still restrictions on what tears were acceptable. Too much grief over the dead suggested a lack of faith in the resurrection, and to do so publicly was feminine and shameful.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, “tears of self-pity ... were certainly not acceptable,” especially not for ministers.<sup>28</sup>

Capp further problematises the distinction between manly and unmanly grief by noting that, at least in Renaissance England, private tears were to be far more expected from grieving men. While “the public funeral demanded restraint in the interests of piety and decorum,” few writers condemned men who wept for loved ones behind closed doors.<sup>29</sup> Criticism only arose when, in the eyes of contemporaries, the grief lingered and became almost self-indulgent. Moderation remained key, and literature on mourning promoted resolution and closure. Grief was also, Capp finds, gendered on a

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25. Katherine Harvey, “Episcopal Emotions: Tears in the Life of the Medieval Bishop,” *Historical Research* 87, no. 238 (November 2014): 593.

26. Harvey, 595.

27. Harvey, 605.

28. Harvey, 606.

29. Bernard Capp, “‘Jesus Wept’ but Did the Englishman? Masculinity and Emotion in Early Modern England,” *Past and Present*, no. 224 (August 2014): 90.

medical level: “women and children were more susceptible” to weeping because “they possessed ‘a moist, rare, and tender body, especially of brayne and heart.’”<sup>30</sup> Men’s constitutions were drier, and part of a boy’s growth into a man involved learning to push themselves toward that maturity while leaving behind the effeminacy of childhood. As a boy grew into a man, his tears literally dried up. Adult men were thus expected to express their grief in controlled, socially acceptable ways, such as in writing. If grief led to emotional outbursts, such as excessive weeping or even violence, it cast doubt on not only the character of the mourners but on the person being mourned.

As this chapter will show, contemporary writers would use expressions of grief to their political advantage and would sometimes even play with the concept in innovative ways. Poliziano, we shall see, would use various kinds of weeping to affirm Lorenzo’s piety and masculine strength even as the latter died in a weakened, potentially unmanly state. Similarly, Poliziano would self-deprecatingly describe himself in an almost effeminate state of grief during Lorenzo’s final moments while simultaneously reaffirming his overall emotional self-discipline (and masculinity) through the act of humanist letter-writing. Meanwhile, some anti-Mediceans invoked the unbecoming emotions of Lorenzo’s survivors in order to cast doubt on the regime. In their view, the immoderate grief of Lorenzo’s bodyguards and his son Piero had led to a dangerous rage, proving how tyrannical the family had become.

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30. Timothy Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie: Containing the Causes Therof, and Reasons of the Strange Effects it Worketh in Our Minds and Bodies* (London: Thomas Vautrolier, 1586), 1-2, quoted in Capp, ““Jesus Wept,”” 77.

## A Death at Careggi

Almost a week after Lorenzo passed away, the humanist Iacopo Antiquari, a member of the Milanese court, wrote a letter of consolation to his friend Poliziano. Most of this letter is spent on empathetic commiseration. Antiquari relates the very physical symptoms of grief he experienced upon hearing of Lorenzo's death: he stood there "stunned, with [his] eyes fixed upon the ground," a facial expression associated with deep sorrow. He then spent several days in this physical mourning, "tortured" (*torqueri*) by "pains" (*dolori*), for both his own sake and others'.<sup>31</sup> *Torqueo* quite literally means "to twist" or "distort," invoking the limbs that are twisted and broken on torture machines, and Antiquari's use of it for grief was no doubt inspired by Cicero's use of it for the very same emotion.<sup>32</sup> Lorenzo's death, he says, is like those "fresh wounds" (*recenti vulneri*) which ache all the worse once the scabs begin to form. His pains help him to sympathise with the "disaster" (*calamitate*) and "misfortune" (*iactura*) Poliziano has experienced. His word choice implies that Poliziano's pain must be even greater; though Antiquari has been wounded, Poliziano's entire world has been shaken by calamity. This prompts him to make a gentle suggestion that Poliziano try something which may provide "consolation" to "both of us" (*in utriusque nostrorum consolationem*), that is, to "wipe ... [his] tears" (*abstersis ... lachrymis*) and commit Lorenzo's last moments to the page.<sup>33</sup> Writing about personal loss had become a form of catharsis for Renaissance humanists, who found closure

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31. "attonitus, oculos cum in terram defixissem ...." Antiquari to Poliziano, 14 April, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:224.

32. Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "torqueo."

33. Antiquari to Poliziano, 14 April, 1492, in *Lettere*, 1:226.

by placing their pain into the frames of oration and philosophy.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, this would be a service to “Lorenzo’s own blessed memory,” as Poliziano’s words would create a definitive (and hopefully eternal) record of his final moments.<sup>35</sup> The poet’s eloquence could thus be of service to his patron one last time. Antiquari’s questions (Did he fear for his soul? What were his last words? With what honours was he mourned and buried?) reflect the chief milestones of death that had come to summarize, in the early modern mind, a person’s life.

It took Poliziano more than a month to respond. He admits that his delay was out of fear: even though recording his memories might be cleansing, the idea of “re-touching that pain” makes his “soul shudder and recoil ....” To adapt his metaphor: the infection needs to be drained, but the dread of the lancet stands in the way. Nevertheless, he says, he will do it, and here he introduces one of the primary motifs of this long letter, that is, the dichotomy of strength and weakness. By himself, Poliziano is too weak of spirit to undertake such a task, but Antiquari’s “will” (*voluntati*) is “great” (*tantae*) and “honourable” (*honestae*).<sup>36</sup> His friend’s willpower, not his own, is what empowers him to finally put pen to paper, blade to skin, and cut.

It quickly becomes clear that one of Poliziano’s goals is to, as Antiquari suggested, establish the model way in which Lorenzo passed. This account, much like Poliziano’s account of the Pazzi conspiracy, has a heavy

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34. McClure, “The Art of Mourning,” 440-41.

35. Antiquari to Poliziano, 14 April, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:227. Translation by Butler.

36. “et fletu impediore et a recordatione ipsa quasique retractatione doloris abhorret animus ac resilit, obtemperabo tamen tuae tantae ac tam honestae voluntati, cui deesse pro instituta inter nos amicitia neque volo neque possum.” Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, 228.

pro-Medicean political spin. Lorenzo's body was not even cold before rumours were already flying about the cause and manner of his death. Indeed, many still fly centuries later, and likely for good reason. Poliziano's eyewitness report, meant for public circulation in humanist circles, would not only serve as a form of self-consolation, but it would provide a quasi-official narrative of Lorenzo's dying days to challenge any anti-Medicean rumours. With that goal in mind, Poliziano uses the first half of his letter to depict Lorenzo faithfully following the ritual motions expected of a dying Christian in the Renaissance. He also carefully reconstructs Lorenzo's emotional journey as death approaches: except for an outburst of holy sorrow in front of the Host, he is portrayed as striking a balance between Stoic acceptance and martyr-like serenity. In this way, Poliziano gives Lorenzo a death that is both ideally Christian and ideally philosophical. As Godman puts it, Poliziano uses this first half to turn Lorenzo into "a secular saint ...."<sup>37</sup>

In the second half of the letter, Poliziano turns to thoughts of consolation. He is comforted by the presence of Piero il Fatuo, who he praises as a worthy and able successor, and by the memory of Lorenzo's many good qualities. While the first half is strictly chronological, the second half focuses on different themes. This part is also extremely complimentary to Piero il Fatuo. This, too, had a political purpose: "to reassure Milan and other centres of learning ... that power had transferred smoothly ... from Lorenzo the Magnificent to Piero, his heir." By the end of that June, the letter had been published and widely disseminated, which no doubt was part of its original purpose.<sup>38</sup>

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37. Peter Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli: Florentine Humanism in the High Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 17.

38. Godman, 5.

As Piero was now his new patron, Poliziano no doubt also had personal motivations for being as complimentary to the young Medici as he could. His embellishments at times strain the bounds of credulity; contemporaries such as Chalcondyles noted that “Poliziano had ‘inserted many other things’” beyond those which could be believed.<sup>39</sup> Godman makes much of the self-aggrandizing aspects of Poliziano’s letter, implying that Poliziano’s decision to emphasize the literary significance of Lorenzo’s death was primarily a choice made of ruthless professional ambition. Poliziano, a literary man writing to an audience of other literary men, certainly used the language and ideals of his profession to describe an event which he viewed as deeply impactful on their professional world. However, Godman has little interest in the intense emotional vocabulary Poliziano uses in his tragedy and is more interested in the subtle indications of his jealousy and ambition. Poliziano’s effusive emotional expressions alongside Chalcondyles’ doubts only serve to cast doubt on Poliziano’s sincerity in Godman’s view.<sup>40</sup> However, I believe Poliziano’s structural and linguistic choices indicate more about *which* truths Poliziano wished to convey.

In the deathbed narrative, Poliziano carefully illustrates Lorenzo moving in an orderly fashion through the rituals of the ideal early modern death. First, we are told, Lorenzo realised on the seventh that he was most certainly dying.<sup>41</sup> As Ariès illustrates, this moment of realization was the beginning of dying well: it was considered natural “that death made itself

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39. Godman, 28.

40. See Godman, 12-13.

41. Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:230.



known,” thus giving the dying time to prepare.<sup>42</sup> A bad death was one that came unexpectedly, for the dying had no chance to arrange either their earthly or heavenly affairs beforehand. The second step, closely tied to the first, was acceptance. Ideally, premodern people “were in no hurry to die, but when they saw the time approaching ... they died like Christians.”<sup>43</sup> That is, they submitted to God’s will for the end of their life. The un-Christian death, on the other hand, was characterized by defiance, railing against God, and refusal to adequately prepare for the journey ahead. Lorenzo, we are told, willingly submitted to his impending death. Moreover, being “most prudent, as always” (*ut semper cautissimus*), he prioritised the spiritual matters: he sent immediately for a priest to hear his final confession.<sup>44</sup> His secretary Piero Dovizi told Pace di Bambello that when Dovizi “reminded Lorenzo that it would be good to make a confession, [Lorenzo] responded the sooner the better, and that he was fully ready to die with an honest soul ...”<sup>45</sup> This was in accordance with most good Catholic advice for the dying, which “urge us to make our confession immediately and order our affairs so that we will always be ready if death takes us unawares.”<sup>46</sup> Poliziano gives Lorenzo most of the

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42. Ariès, *Hour of Our Death*, 8.

43. Jean Guitton, *M. Pouget* (Paris: Gallimard, 1941), 14, quoted in Ariès, *Hour of Our Death*, 10.

44. Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:230.

45. “e quando ser Piero [Dovizi] li ricordi che era bene che si confessassi, li rispuose che quanto piu presto meglio e che era prontissimo a morire con francho animo ....” Pace di Bambello to Michelozzi, 11 April, 1492, quoted in Alison Brown, “Women, Children, and Politics in the Letters of a Florentine Notary, Ser Pace di Bambello,” in *Florence and Beyond*, 252.

46. Donald Weinstein, “The Art of Dying Well and Popular Piety in the Preaching and Thought of Girolamo Savonarola,” in *Life and Death in Fifteenth-Century Florence*, ed. Marcel Tetel, Ronald G. Witt, and Rona Goffen (London: Duke University Press, 1989), 94. See also Girolamo Savonarola’s advice to immediately attend confession in the event of illness. Savonarola, “Ruth and Micheas, Sermon XXVIII,” in *Selected Writings of Girolamo Savonarola: Religion and Politics, 1490-1498*, ed. and trans. Anne Borelli and Maria Pastore Passaro (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2006), 49-50.

initiative in this decision, but Dovizi's addition shows how much a premodern secretary could help his employer organise himself, even in spiritual affairs. The confession then initiated the Last Rites, which "ideally" included "the sacraments of Confession, Communion, and Extreme Unction," which "might be administered over three successive visits or all in one."<sup>47</sup> As we shall see, Poliziano carefully divided each sacrament into distinct moments of time, thus making it obvious that Lorenzo's experience conformed to the ideal.

Lorenzo spent the night "in stillness and meditating" (*quiescenti meditantique*) until "the middle of the night" (*nocte dein media*) when a priest arrived with the *viaticum*.<sup>48</sup> Having tended to his soul, he then turned to earthly matters, namely consoling and advising his son and heir, Piero. Poliziano describes this as happening immediately after the *viaticum*, and then resuming after a short rest.<sup>49</sup> The death of the father was considered an especially delicate time for a young male heir, who took on great responsibility while still lacking his father's prudence or experience. This is reflected in at least one Book of Hours analysed by Wieck, in which a young man wrestles with the temptation of squandering his inheritance before his father has even departed.<sup>50</sup>

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47. Roger S. Wieck, "The Death Desired: Books of Hours and the Medieval Funeral," in *Death and Dying*, 435. In the pre-Tridentine era, the order of the final two sacraments was more flexible.

48. Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:230; Poliziano, 232.

49. Poliziano, 234.

50. See Figure 2 in Wieck, "Death Desired," 450.

At least two other sources report on Lorenzo giving Piero dying advice.<sup>51</sup> Cerretani writes that after giving him “certain warnings and reminders,” Lorenzo “sent him out of the room,” while Parenti goes so far as to say that Piero “immediately” (*subito*) returned to Florence afterward.<sup>52</sup> Poliziano’s account suggests that Piero never left his father’s side. Piero’s behaviour here became a marker of the regime; Parenti, who was critical of the Medici, was concerned to show the priority given to political control, even (and especially) in a time of illness and death. Ever wary of the way their weaknesses could be exploited by their enemies, the Medici knew the importance of Piero’s physical presence in the proverbial seat of power during the critical moment. Poliziano, meanwhile, was concerned with demonstrating Piero’s closeness to Lorenzo as a means of assuring their close allies that the son would continue the policies of his father. For this purpose, he writes of the young man’s “piety” (*pietas*) towards Lorenzo, a “truly great and clear sign” confirming Lorenzo’s “opinion and premonition” that Piero was more than ready for the role of first citizen.<sup>53</sup>

Despite their differences, these three writers show great interest in this final, private moment between father and son. If the son was the living image of the father, this moment represented the final moment of communion between the original man and his image before the image became his own man. Any knowledge or wisdom that the father had not yet imparted to his

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51. “a ore 19 addi otto ....” Bartolomeo Cerretani, *Storia fiorentina* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1994), 184; “poco avanti morissi, chiamò a sé Piero suo figliuolo ....” Piero di Marco Parenti, *Storia fiorentina*, ed. Andrea Matucci (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1994), 22.

52. “et fatogli certe amonitioni et richorddi lo mandò fuori di chamera.” Cerretani, *Storia fiorentina*, 184; Piero di Marco Parenti, *Storia fiorentina*, 22.

53. “Atque huius quidem iudicii praesagiique paterni magnum profecto et clarum specimen hoc nuper dedit ....” Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:244.

son depended upon this last conversation. The privacy of the conversation only added to the aura of mystery surrounding Lorenzo's death. No doubt, in the minds of writers like Cerretani and Parenti, Lorenzo spent those final moments with his son passing on secrets of state. Poliziano does the opposite: by telling his readers that Lorenzo gave Piero rather rote wisdom, he demysticizes this final exchange and reassures his audience that Lorenzo was simply following previous Medicean policy.

Having encouraged his eldest son, Lorenzo then made arrangements for his funeral. With the most pressing concerns addressed, the activity around the deathbed seems to slow for a time. The doctors' duties had not yet ceased: though death seemed certain, their duties still included making the patient as comfortable as possible.<sup>54</sup> Lorenzo took this time to visit, for the last time, with two of his closest friends, Poliziano and Pico della Mirandola. During this time, Girolamo Savonarola came to visit the dying man. Savonarola's arrival brings a return to the dictates of the *artes moriendi*, which instruct the priest (or, if the priest is absent, bystanders) to gently interrogate the *moriens* about their faith.<sup>55</sup> According to Poliziano, Savonarola "exhorted [him] to keep the faith," to which Lorenzo "said that he held it unshaken."<sup>56</sup> Poliziano here uses *ait* for "said," which indicates affirmation and certainty, thus echoing Beringer's suggestion that this was an interactive experience for the *moriens*, who did not simply passively allow a spiritual battle to happen *to* them, but who took an active part in the drama by

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54. Yves Ferroul, "The Doctor and Death in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance," in *Death and Dying*, 41.

55. Duclow, "Dying Well," 384.

56. "Hortatur ut fidem teneat (ille vero tenere se ait inconcussam) ...." Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:238.

affirming these spiritual truths.<sup>57</sup> Savonarola then asked if Lorenzo was willing to die, should God will it, and, if not, if he was willing to amend his ways. Lorenzo agreed to both.<sup>58</sup> These questions also reflect the *artes moriendi*, which encourage the *moriens* to resolve earthly conflicts, seek reconciliation, and make up for any crimes (such as theft) that they may have committed against others.<sup>59</sup>

Poliziano uses Savonarola's presence and interrogations as supporting evidence for Lorenzo's good death, but he makes it quite clear that this good death did not depend on Savonarola's presence. In fact, he seems to view Savonarola's questions as rather redundant; after all, Lorenzo had demonstrated his acceptance of God's will and his piety by immediately sending for a confessor and the *viaticum*. Furthermore, once Savonarola departed, Lorenzo – apparently on his own initiative – “gently embraced each [person], humbly requesting forgiveness” for any trouble he'd caused.<sup>60</sup> This, too, was part of the expected ritual of death: multiple premodern deathbed narratives describe the *moriens* simultaneously reconciling with and taking leave from their companions.<sup>61</sup> Finally, he received Extreme Unction and the

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57. Alison L. Beringer, “The Death of Christ as a Focus of the Fifteenth-century *Artes moriendi*,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 113, no. 4 (October 2014): 502.

58. Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in *Lettere*, 1:238.

59. Jared Wicks, “Applied Theology at the Deathbed: Luther and the Late-Medieval Tradition of the *Ars moriendi*,” *Gregorianum* 79, no. 2 (January 1998): 349-50. Savonarola's final question was no doubt the source for the later anti-Medicean propaganda in which Lorenzo refused to return Florence's “stolen” freedoms. Savonarola would later advise his audience to put their affairs in order early on, since the final moments were often too full of pain or confusion for the *moriens* to focus on making amends with God or men. See Savonarola, “Ruth and Micheas,” 51.

60. “Post id, blande singulos amplexatus, petitique suppliciter venia ....” Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:238.

61. Ariès, *Hour of Our Death*, 16; Ariès, 141.

priest recited the *Commendatio Animae*, the prayer echoing Christ's final words and the final step of the Last Rites.<sup>62</sup>

Lorenzo lingered for a time, listening to the Passion being read aloud while contemplating a crucifix. The *artes moriendi* often encourage the *moriens* to contemplate Christ's death. Christ's faith, humility, and patience on the cross would help the *moriens* to combat the devil's temptations during the throes of death.<sup>63</sup> Some texts specifically recommend that the *moriens* listen to the Passion narrative, as Lorenzo did. Furthermore, as Beringer notes, the *moriens* "is to respond affirmatively; he is not meant simply to listen passively to a retelling of the Passion story, but rather to think, and moreover to believe."<sup>64</sup> Accordingly, Poliziano portrays Lorenzo as being as interactive as his failing body would allow:

Then the gospel story began to be recited, namely the part in which the torments inflicted upon Christ are set forth, of which he signified that, sometimes by moving his lips silently, other times by lifting his wearied eyes, even occasionally by the gesture of a finger, he understood almost every word and sentence.<sup>65</sup>

Poliziano here uses *agnoscere* to mean "understood." This kind of understanding is itself active; not only does it signify recognition, but it also implies that "as a result of this knowledge or recognition," the subject will "declare" the object as their own.<sup>66</sup> By these feeble gestures, in place of his

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62. "totum se post illa perunctioni summae demigrantisque animae commendationi dedit." Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:238.

63. Beringer, "The Death of Christ," 507.

64. Wicks, "Applied Theology," 352; Beringer, "The Death of Christ," 502.

65. "Recitari dein evangelica historia coepta est, qua scilicet irrogati Christo cruciatus explicantur, cuius ille agnoscere se verba et sententias prope omnes, interdum etiam digitorum gestu, significabat." Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:238-40.

66. Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "agnosco."

faded voice, Lorenzo is claiming the words of the gospel as his own truth. These deathbed gestures which take the place of speech were considered “signs of what arises from the heart,” just as reflective of the *moriens*’ inner state as their final words.<sup>67</sup>

Keeping a crucifix in the room would serve as a visual reminder of Christ’s virtuous death and would hopefully “prepare the sick man for death and ... make him more willing to die ....”<sup>68</sup> Accordingly, Lorenzo spent his final moments “continuously contemplating and repeatedly kissing” a crucifix. This was no ordinary crucifix, but a “magnificently decorated” (*magnifice adornatum*) one, made of silver and covered in pearls and gems.<sup>69</sup> It may seem that Poliziano is here emphasizing Lorenzo’s wealth and magnificence at the expense of the detachment and humility expected of a good death. However, the splendid decoration of a crucifix would, to Poliziano’s audience, demonstrate the reverence and love Lorenzo had for Christ during his lifetime: commissioning and collecting such expensive religious objects was not a reflection of avarice, but devotion. Thus, the kind of crucifix he adored as he died was yet another marker of his Christian death.

#### Deathbed Emotions

Within the first half of Poliziano’s letter, Lorenzo’s emotional state conforms to both humanist and Christian expectations for the ideal death. By 1492, a humanist emotional regime had firmly replaced the old medieval emotional regime, at least among middle- and upper-class men. Duecento

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67. Wicks, “Applied Theology,” 352.

68. Beringer, “The Death of Christ,” 510.

69. “Postremo sigillum crucifixi argenteum margaritis gemmisque magnifice adornatum defixis usquequaque oculis intuens identidemque deosculans expiravit.” Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:240.

Italians had believed that “noisy grief and laments were an obligatory show of honour, loyalty, and affection among men.”<sup>70</sup> To display grief, Duecento men commonly “wept and cried out in loud voices,” or “pulled off their headgear or tore at their hair” in public.<sup>71</sup> By the late Trecento and early Quattrocento, humanists had “internalized” grief, and legal statutes had mandated “outward decorum” at funerals.<sup>72</sup> This internalization process was soon evident across Europe.<sup>73</sup>

The dying party apparently had very similar emotional expectations placed upon them. Socrates, in his stoic acceptance, was held up as a role model for “[facing] death ... with dignified composure.”<sup>74</sup> To grieve for one’s own death was self-pity, a “weak and womanish” behaviour.<sup>75</sup> By the Reformation, it had become entirely unchristian: the stoic deaths of believers were contrasted with those of non-believers, who “died miserably, filled with despair.”<sup>76</sup> Earlier sources suggest that this was not an attitude unique to the Reformation: even in the medieval era, when “the mourning of the survivors was wild,” the dying Christian “regretted life no more than was appropriate; he retained his calm and composure right to the end.”<sup>77</sup> As stated previously, Poliziano makes it clear once Lorenzo realised death was inevitable, he

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70. Lansing, *Passion and Order*, 6.

71. Lansing, 12-13.

72. Sharon T. Strocchia, *Death and Ritual in Renaissance Florence* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 117.

73. See Seeman, “Good Old Jacob,” 285-314; Wunderli and Broce, “The Final Moment,” 259-275; Capp, “Jesus Wept,” 75-108.

74. Capp, “Jesus Wept,” 79.

75. Capp, 84.

76. Wunderli and Broce, “The Final Moment,” 271.

77. Ariès, *Hour of Our Death*, 142.



willingly accepted the fact and took appropriate steps. Throughout the majority of the deathbed narrative, he forms an emotional vocabulary that is, ironically, about the *stifling* of emotion. When he makes his final confession, he is “steady, ready for death, and unafraid” in a way which made the priest “astonished” (*mirabundum*).<sup>78</sup>

This attitude could suggest that Lorenzo had given in to one of the devil’s final temptations: “complacence,” the opposite of despair, when the dying take their salvation for granted and “attempt to stand on their own virtues and deeds” instead of humbly remembering their sins.<sup>79</sup> However, Poliziano counters this potential criticism by portraying a scene in which Lorenzo does indeed weep. However, this is done in a way that would, to contemporary readers, provide evidence of Lorenzo’s humble piety without simultaneously threatening his masculinity.

When a priest arrives bearing the *viaticum*, Lorenzo insists on being “lifted” from his bed and taken “all the way to the hall” to greet him.<sup>80</sup> Like a dying saint, Lorenzo defies his physical weakness and goes out to greet Christ, embodied in the priest, “To whose knees he crawled, kneeling and weeping ....”<sup>81</sup> Here Poliziano follows established models of pious grief which were frequently used by hagiographers to prove the sainthood of the weeper: one medieval bishop “wept in order to ‘clear his conscience’ before receiving” the *viaticum*. Another, like Lorenzo, “insisted on being carried to

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78. “constans, paratusque adversus mortem, atque imperterritus ....” Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:230.

79. Duclow, “Dying Well,” 382.

80. Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:230; Poliziano, 232.

81. “Cuius ad genua prorepens, supplexque ac lacrimans ....” Poliziano, 232.

the sacrament and ‘received the salutary *viaticum* with tears of contrition.’”<sup>82</sup> Unlike tears of immoderate grief or despair, contrite tears were a gift “granted by God ... a divine operation on the soul,” which “had the capacity of washing sins away ....”<sup>83</sup> Like the words and gestures of the dying, such tears were recognised to be “directly from the heart or the soul and ... not manipulated by reason and will.”<sup>84</sup> They were efficacious in the process of salvation precisely because they were an uncontrollable outpouring of God’s grace, a “second baptism” that was both the sign and the process of redemption.<sup>85</sup>

As Lorenzo weeps tears of contrition, he also makes a prayer of contrition, in which he dwells on his own unworthiness and Christ’s suffering and begs, “avert your face from my sins ....”<sup>86</sup> This prayer is very likely a bit of creative work on Poliziano’s part: the words spoken from the deathbed were of such importance that, when abbreviated or not clearly remembered, premodern survivors had few qualms about writing down what “the author ... felt that the hero of the story must or might have said ....”<sup>87</sup> Poliziano was present for this prayer, but it is unlikely that he remembered every word a month later. Furthermore, the prayer is rather formulaic in its expressions of humility, contrition, and faith. Poliziano himself implies that his record isn’t

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82. Harvey, “Episcopal Emotions,” 593..

83. Piroska Nagy, “Religious Weeping as Ritual in the Medieval West,” *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice* 48, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 122.

84. Nagy, 123.

85. Nagy, 125.

86. “avertas faciem a peccatis meis ....” Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:232.

87. Peter Nissen, “Words for the Final Hour: On Deathbed Prayer in the Christian Tradition,” in *Changing European Death Ways*, ed. Eric Venbrux et al. (London: LIT Verlag, 2013), 89.

entirely verbatim, writing at the end that Lorenzo had said “This and other things” before the priest insisted that Lorenzo be picked up and carried back to bed before being given the Host.<sup>88</sup>

Lorenzo’s weeping did the holy work of preparing him to receive the Eucharist. The tears ecclesiastics shed during mass, especially during the sacrament, were a sign of “identification with Christ, who was believed to have shed tears of pain on the cross,” or of identification with those who had witnessed the Crucifixion.<sup>89</sup> Already going to his death with the same humility and submission as Christ, Lorenzo thus now emotionally participates, like a saint, in Christ’s suffering. These holy tears have their expected effect. Weeping eventually gives way to catharsis; if religious weeping is a spiritual transformation, the catharsis that comes afterward is the completion of that transformation. Once he is taken back to his bedroom, Lorenzo has achieved that transformation: “full now of sanctity, and made venerable by a kind of divine grandeur, he received the Lord’s body and blood.”<sup>90</sup> Thus, according to Poliziano, Lorenzo’s only moment of open emotional distress is a licit one, which gives way to a divine calm.

Now at peace with his creator, Lorenzo returns to his apparently unperturbed state. Though others become increasingly distressed as Lorenzo drew closer to death, he gives “no sign of pain, of perturbation, or sorrow” and instead keeps his “accustomed mental steadiness, self-possession,

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88. “Haec atque alia cum diceret ....” Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:232.

89. Harvey, “Episcopal Emotions,” 594-595.

90. Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:233. Translation by Butler.

balance, and dignity ...”<sup>91</sup> In fact, his resistance to sorrow is so great that he even seems cheerful at times. He addresses Poliziano “merrily, as he always used to,” and talks to him “very courteously” or “very engagingly” (*perblande*).<sup>92</sup> With his friends, he brings up “witty and familiar topics, as he was used to [doing].” Through Poliziano’s repeated use of “used to” (*solitus, solebat*), the reader is reminded of how *normally* Lorenzo is behaving, which is presented as remarkable: not only is he at peace, as all good Christians should be on their deathbed, but he is so unafraid that he is behaving as if this day were no different from any other. “Even then, he joked with us,” and he even “mocked his own death somewhat.”<sup>93</sup>

However, Lorenzo’s portrayal in the first half of Poliziano’s letter may not be the entire story. In fact, in the second half of this same letter, it is strongly suggested that Lorenzo’s self-control was performative – and an imperfect performance at that. Nissen reminds us that even the most accurately recorded deathbed words and behaviour may not reflect “the dying person’s hidden, inner reality,” as often “even the strong ... will observe the conventions that will make their death bearable for the bereaved.”<sup>94</sup> Social expectations of deathbed stoicism, compounded by the awareness of his station and his religious beliefs, may have caused Lorenzo to limit his own emotional expression. Poliziano describes Lorenzo doing exactly that:

[Lorenzo] himself, in order not to render [Piero il Fatuo] sadder with his [own] sadness, fashioned for himself, as it were, an improvised

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91. “consuetemque animi rigorem, constantiam, aequabilitatem, magnitudinem ...” Poliziano, 238.

92. “ac me hilare intuens, ut semper solitus ....” Poliziano, 234; Poliziano, 236.

93. “Tum sermones iniecit urbanos, ut solebat, et familiares. Nonnihl etiam tunc quoque iocatus nobiscum ...” Poliziano, 236; “ut de sua quoque ipsius morte nonnihl cavillaretur ...” Poliziano, 238.

94. Nissen, “Words for the Final Hour,” 89.

countenance, and for his sake tamed his weeping eyes, never dismayed in spirit nor broken while his son appeared in his presence.<sup>95</sup>

Poliziano stresses in this passage that Lorenzo's apparent "[indifference] to grief" is only a façade.<sup>96</sup> "Fashioned" (*fingebat*) does not only mean shaping or forming but is also used to describe intentional deception via dissembling.<sup>97</sup> "Tamed" (*continebat*), too, is stronger in the original Latin, and suggests that Lorenzo is forcibly suppressing and restraining his emotions.<sup>98</sup> As Poliziano then clarifies, Lorenzo "vied to do violence to his emotions ...."<sup>99</sup> Putting on a brave face for the benefit of his loved ones was not simply an act of courtesy or repression, but a form of violence against the self. Stoicism did not come naturally but was an act of the will and a sign of how deeply Lorenzo loved his son. Here, again, we find parallels to Christ, who sacrificed his own needs for the sake of others. Repression of fear, sorrow, and pain (and the deception that came with it) was not a sign of duplicity, but strength (*fortis*).<sup>100</sup>

Cerretani, however, suggests that Lorenzo was not quite as adept at hiding his agony. According to the chronicler, around "the 20<sup>th</sup> hour, [Lorenzo] began to scream: 'I'm dying, I'm dying and [no-one or nothing]

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95. "invicem pater quoque ipse, ne tristiozem filium tristitia sua redderet, frontem sibi ex tempore velut aliam fingebat, ac fluentes oculos in illius gratiam continebat, nunquam aut consternatus animo aut fractus, donec ante ora natus obversaretur." Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:244.

96. Godman, *From Poliziano to Machiavelli*, 16.

97. Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "fingo."

98. Lewis and Short, s.v. "contineo."

99. "certatim vim facere affectibus suis ...." Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:244.

100. Poliziano, 238.

helps me!’ at which [point] everyone ran [to him].”<sup>101</sup> Following this, “He said he wanted to get up a little; he raised himself up on his arms, [then] screaming [fell] back into bed ... and swooned somewhat.”<sup>102</sup> This agonized behaviour certainly seems more in keeping with both the fever and the severe gastrointestinal pain Lorenzo was said to have experienced in his final days. Cerretani was not present for the death, and likely got this information via hearsay, but it adds an interesting alternative to Poliziano’s interpretation. Concerned for his patron’s reputation, knowing his letter would be widely circulated, Poliziano may have decided only to describe the moments in which Lorenzo prevailed, quietly ‘forgetting’ the moments in which he reacted out of pain and distress.

In bringing up Lorenzo’s repression of his own distress and other negative emotions, Poliziano was preserving his integrity and virtue as a Florentine man. The manner of Lorenzo’s death put his virility into question: by the end of his life, he was “totally weakened and brought down, [so] that not only his strength but even almost his whole body wasted away, lost and consumed.”<sup>103</sup> Strength (*vis*) is traditionally considered to come from the same basic root as man (*vir*).<sup>104</sup> Both classical and Renaissance writers saw the two as intrinsically related. Strength was manly, and manliness was

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101. “A ore 20 chominciò a gridare: ‘io mi moio, io mi moio et non sono aiutato,’ a qual grida corse la c[i]aschuno.” Cerretani, *Storia fiorentina*, 184.

102. “Lui disse volerssi um po’ levare; levatosi a bracia, gridanddo tornò ne[l] lecto ... et stato alquanto si svenne.” Cerretani, 184.

103. “sic hominem debilitaverat prorsus atque afflixerat ut non viribus modo sed corpore etiam pene omni amisso et consumpto distabesceret.” Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:230.

104. Michiel de Vaan has cast some doubt on this analysis. See de Vaan, *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the Other Italic Languages*, s.v. “vis” (Boston: Brill, 2008), 683. See also “vir,” in de Vaan, 681.

strength: one finds a combination of the ideas in *virtus*, “the sum of all the corporeal or mental excellences of man,” including strength and power.<sup>105</sup> The plural declensions of *vis* all begin with the prefix *vir-*, and no doubt these declensions solidified the association in the minds of writers and readers. As his strength fades, therefore, so do the outward signs of manhood.

### Manly Death

It may have been that Poliziano’s classical sensibilities compounded his sense of the wrongness of Lorenzo’s death. To him, Lorenzo was comparable to the heroes of Homer or Virgil, but he died in weakness and infirmity during what should have been his prime, his body as crippled as an old man’s. Poliziano thus sought to contrast Lorenzo’s physical decrepitude with his manly spirit, describing him as “supporting the feebleness of his body on his soul” when he struggled to get out of bed to greet the priest with the *viaticum*.<sup>106</sup> Soul (*animus*) in Latin does not only indicate the metaphysical concept of the spirit or consciousness, but also the qualities which flow from the soul, including reason, willpower, and courage.<sup>107</sup> He “remained *fortis* until the end,” *fortis* here used to mean internally “firm, steadfast, stout, courageous, brave, [and] manly” rather than external, physical strength.<sup>108</sup>

Lorenzo’s inner strength is contrasted not only with his physical weakness, but also the weakness of those around him. Poliziano describes

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105. Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. “*virtus*.”

106. “*animo corporis imbecillitatem sustentans ....*” Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:230.

107. Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. “*animo*.”

108. “*fortis ad extremum perstitit ....*” Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:238; Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. “*fortis*.”

himself as too “hindered” (*praepediri*) by “tears” (*fletu*) to attend Lorenzo.<sup>109</sup> Similarly, while “the sorrow of his familiars” was “now open, and beyond concealment,” Lorenzo “gave no sign of sadness, and conducted [himself with] his habitual firmness of will, constancy, evenness, and dignity down to his last breath.”<sup>110</sup> Again Poliziano uses *animus*, this time explicitly to describe Lorenzo’s indomitable will, unbroken even in the presence of such grief.

By repressing his own negative emotions, Lorenzo was showing the manly strength (*fortis*) of not his body, but his soul. In contrast, those gathered around Lorenzo were feminised by their open mourning: Lansing finds that “Tears and loud outcries – and the implied fear of death – [were considered] shameful, cowardly, and feminine.”<sup>111</sup> Open grief was “not virile but weak and womanly” in the minds of Renaissance humanists, who were influenced deeply by Stoic thought.<sup>112</sup> Despite his enfeebled body, Lorenzo thus becomes the only “real” man in the room by internalising his grief.

Indeed, the cast of Poliziano’s narrative is exclusively male: besides himself and Lorenzo, it includes Lorenzo’s son Piero, Lazzaro the physician, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Girolamo Savonarola, and Piero Leoni da Spoleto (though Poliziano avoids using the latter’s name, perhaps out of discretion).<sup>113</sup> Carlo del Benino adds Niccolo Ridolfi, Paolantonio Soderini,

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109. Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:236.

110. “ne tantillum quidem familiarium luctu, aperto iam neque se ulterius dissimulante, commotus .... nullam tristitiae significationem dabat, consuetumque animi rigorem, constantiam, aequabilitatem, magnitudinem, ad extremum usque spiritum producebat.” Poliziano, 238.

111. Lansing, *Passion and Order*, 106.

112. Lansing, 117.

113. Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:230-48.



Piero Corsini, and possibly Cosimo Martelli to this number.<sup>114</sup> There are also various unnamed religious figures (*animae medicum, sacerdos*), “intimates” or “familiaris” (*familiarium*), and doctors (*medici*).<sup>115</sup> All these nouns are strictly male. Even when Poliziano uses impersonals, such as “everyone else” (*caeteris*), “somebody” (*cuidam*), or “each [person]” (*singulos*), the Latin renders these general plural nouns masculine by default.<sup>116</sup> Del Benino also mentions the presence of “footmen” (*stafieri*), also a male noun and profession.<sup>117</sup> Cerretani tells us that Lorenzo passed “in the arms of one of his manservants” (*chameriere*).<sup>118</sup> The word Cerretani uses derives from *camera*, bedroom, indicating the level of intimacy; this was not simply any manservant, but one who had served him closely.

In fact, in Poliziano’s entire letter, only one woman is mentioned: “a woman (I don’t know who)” (*mulier nescioquae*) who had a vision on 5 April that supposedly foretold Lorenzo’s death.<sup>119</sup> Even Lorenzo’s daughters are absent. Poliziano writes that Lorenzo’s children (*liberi*, also male by default) are a comfort in his absence – but only the sons.<sup>120</sup> Lucrezina, Maddalena, and Contessina have disappeared, neither able to grieve for their father nor provide comfort to his male mourners via their presence. With none present at the deathbed, the men in the room must play the part of the wailing women

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114. Carlo del Benino to Guicciardini, quoted in Roberto Ridolfi, “La visita del Savonarola al Magnifico morente e la leggenda della negata assoluzione,” *Archivio storico italiano* 86, no. 4 (January 1928): 211.

115. Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:230-38.

116. Poliziano, 238.

117. Del Benino to Guicciardini, quoted in Ridolfi, “La visita,” 211.

118. Cerretani, *Storia fiorentina*, 184.

119. Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:246.

120. Poliziano, 242.

while Lorenzo's sickly, broken presence provides the steady, reliable pulse of masculinity. This only adds to the sense of wrongness and imbalance: with Lorenzo gone, his feminised entourage is now as distraught, unreasonable, and vulnerable as the stereotypical widow. As del Benino says, Lorenzo was "the common father of all our city."<sup>121</sup> When the *paterfamilias*, the only anchor of true *virtus*, true manhood, dies, all else is set adrift.

### Insane Death

In contrast to Lorenzo's "good death," full of grace and magnanimity, contemporaries treat that of Piero Leoni as a bad, even cursed, death. Shortly before Lorenzo's death, the frantic and presumably exhausted doctor had been escorted to the neighbouring villa of Malcantone at San Cervagio (or Gervasio) and left there. In the early morning hours, his dead body was discovered head-first in the local well. The incident was sensational news and it led to a frenzy of gossip and speculation throughout the Italian peninsula. Public sentiment ranged from astonishment – "extraordinary" (*mirabile*), "amazing" (*mirificum*) – to horror: "horrendous" (*horrendo*), "shameful" (*vituperevole*).<sup>122</sup>

Opinions were divided on whether it was a murder or a suicide, but most writers were united in their surprise that this educated, famous doctor had come to such a bad end. Outside of a couple Medicean hardliners, sources treat the mode of death as being intrinsically opposed to the man's

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121. Del Benino to Guicciardini, quoted in Ridolfi, "La visita," 210.

122. See Ridolfi, 211; Petrus Crinitus, *De honesta disciplina*, Book III, in the Asklepios Library, accessed 12 September, 2019, [http://asklepios.chez.com/crinitus/Liber\\_03.htm](http://asklepios.chez.com/crinitus/Liber_03.htm); Bartolomeo Dei to Benedetto Dei, 14 April, 1492, quoted in Ludovico Frati, "La morte di Lorenzo de' Medici e il suicidio di Pier Leoni," *Archivio storico italiano* 4, no. 173/174 (1889): 259; Piero di Marco Parenti, *Storia fiorentina*, 23.

presumably elevated nature. It lacked in dignity and grace and had given Leoni no time to settle either his earthly or spiritual affairs as a dying man should. If it were a murder, then it was shockingly violent, but bestowed none of the honour of those who died valiantly in battle. Suicide was even more problematic: it was not only a mortal sin, but the ultimate rebellion against God's will.<sup>123</sup> An impulsive suicide was moreover an act of cowardice and shame, a form of running away from one's responsibilities. In the eyes of some, it was even an admission of guilt.

One of his relatives, Francesco di Pierangelo Mugnoni, declared that Leoni had been a murder victim, claiming that Piero il Fatuo had ordered that Leoni be strangled and then thrown into the well.<sup>124</sup> The Church also chose to treat Leoni's death as a murder: as Kate Lowe has mentioned, the doctor was buried "with a full religious ceremony" in the family chapel in Spoleto, indicating that he was not considered a suicide. Lowe suggests that this means that "the suicide theory must have been generally disbelieved" by others.<sup>125</sup> However, this is not necessarily the case. The well-off Leoni family may have had some influence with the local Church authorities in Spoleto and Church officials may have decided to err on the side of caution in case the rumours of murder were true.

Few other writers openly espoused the murder theory. This was perhaps out of fear of reprisals, but also may have been from genuine doubt.

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123. Espi Forcén and Espi Forcén, "*Ars Moriendi*," 556.

124. "Perino figliolo del dicto Lorenzo ... reputato homo bestiale ...." In L. Guerra-Coppioli, "M[ae]stro] Pierleone da Spoleto, medico e filosofo: Note biografiche con documenti inediti," *Bolletino della Regia Deputazione di Storia Patria per l'Umbria* 21 (1915): 430.

125. K. J. P. Lowe, "Redrawing the Line between Murder and Suicide," in *Murder in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Trevor Dean and Lowe (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 203.

Instead, they merely discuss the many *rumours* of murder, including the rumour that Leoni had been threatened by some of Lorenzo's men. In this version of events, Leoni had been taken from Careggi to San Cervagio for his own safety.<sup>126</sup> In fact, some thought that Leoni had reason to even be afraid of Piero il Fatuo. Pontifical Master of Ceremonies Johann Burchard, who kept meticulous diaries of his days in the Holy See, reports that the Cardinal Giovanni had received a letter from his elder brother stating that Leoni had died due to his own "carelessness" in treating their father. As a result, "It was thought by many that [Leoni] had been murdered and thrown into the well, rather than that he had thrown himself in alive."<sup>127</sup> Unfortunately, I have found no such letter; if it did exist, such a dark statement certainly could implicate him.

Though he dismisses notions of murder, the chronicler Cerretani acknowledges that Leoni had been endangered: "The footmen of [Lorenzo] threatened the aforesaid Piero Leoni ... they might have killed him, but some escorted him to San Cervagio ... to take him away from them."<sup>128</sup> He also finds it important to mention that Leoni had been fully clothed (*vestito*) when his body was found the next morning.<sup>129</sup> This may be why Cerretani says it was a suicide: had Mediceans come to murder Leoni (who presumably should

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126. "S. Cervagio ... dove era stato trafugato, perche certi famiglj di Lorenzo l'avevano voluto ammazzare per sospetto ...." Anonymous, quoted in Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis*, 2:397.

127. John Burchard, *The Diary of John Burchard of Strasburg*, trans. Arnold Harris Mathew (London: Francis Griffiths, 1910), 1:328.

128. "Gli staffieri del quale minac[i]ando il decto maestro Piero Lioni, il quale insino a pochi dì apresso la morte haveva lor dato speranza grandissima, l'arebbono forse morto, m'alchuni lo ghuidorono a S. Cervagio in chasa e Martelli per levarlo loro dinanzi." Cerretani, *Storia fiorentina*, 184-85.

129. Cerretani, 185.

have been undressed and in bed at that time in the morning), they probably would not have taken time to dress him before killing him. Leoni's clothes indicated, at least to Cerretani, that he had gotten out of bed and gone out to the well of his own free will – and, presumably, had thrown himself in.

Some believed Leoni had killed himself precisely because he feared Medicean revenge. According to del Benino, Piero il Fatuo himself suggested that Leoni might have done it out of “fear” (*timore*) of him.<sup>130</sup> Parenti mentions rumours that Leoni had been frightened of the possibility of “examined with torture” and preferred death.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, the idea that the more passionate members of Lorenzo's household might have threatened the doctor is not at all far-fetched. Accounts of the event emphasise the sense of betrayed trust permeating the Medici household. This famed “top physician” had given them “great hope” (*speranza grandissima*) in his healing abilities, and inspired confidence that Lorenzo would rally as he always had before.<sup>132</sup> Up to the night of the seventh, Bartolomeo Dei wrote furiously, “there was no doubting of anything, especially because of the counsel of that bedevilled Maestro Piero Leoni da Spoleto, who was always saying, even until the final day, that one cannot die from this illness.”<sup>133</sup>

A common sentiment seemed to be that Leoni's suicide was the logical result of overwhelming shame. Parenti records rumours that Leoni had killed himself out of “desperation” (*disperazione*):

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130. “stimando Piero che lui lo facessi per timore di sé ...” Del Benino to Guicciardini, quoted in Ridolfi, “La visita,” 211.

131. Piero di Marco Parenti, *Storia fiorentina*, 23.

132. Piero di Marco Parenti, 23; Cerretani, *Storia fiorentina*, 184.

133. “non si dubitava di nulla et maxime pe' conforti dello indiuolato maestro Piero Lioni da Spuleto, che sempre infino all'ultimo di diceva che non potería perire di quello male.” Bartolomeo Dei to Benedetto Dei, quoted in Frati, “La morte,” 258-59.

not being able to resist the displeasure of his soul, in such a shameful way he gave himself death, believing [himself] to have lost his reputation, which he valued above all else ....<sup>134</sup>

Surprisingly, the ever-loyal Poliziano is one of the most charitable, writing that the doctor “sacrificed himself in honour of the very prince of the Medical family (if you consider the expression).”<sup>135</sup> Here he is obviously making a pun on the name Medici, but at the same time he is giving Leoni back a bit of honour in the face of such shame, a rather kind gesture from one who perhaps had more reason than any to curse medical ineptitude. Nevertheless, this still functions as a means of magnifying his former patron: by having Leoni metaphorically throw himself onto the funeral pyre, Poliziano reinforces the heroic image he has painted of Lorenzo. Medicean Pace di Bambello, meanwhile, shows no compassion for the dead doctor:

[Lorenzo’s] dead and it’s ... from bad care, by bad care this *patria* has lost such a great head, and may such scant diligence be damned ... and that ‘talented’ man Maestro Piero Leoni, out of desperation and madness, threw himself into a well and drowned himself like a beast, which he was.<sup>136</sup>

Like Bambello, Dei seems to think that Leoni had simply gone mad and met an “insane death” (*insana morte*). According to Dei, the doctor began exhibiting signs of a disordered mind as soon as it became apparent that Lorenzo was beyond all help. He was acting erratically, “halfway outside of himself” (*mezzo fuori di sè*). The most prominent indicator of this sudden

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134. “non potendo al dispiacere suo dell’animo resistere, in tale virtuperevole modo si dette la morte, parendoli avere perso la reputazione, quale sopra ogni altra cosa stimava ....” Piero di Marco Parenti, *Storia fiorentina*, 23.

135. “ac principi ipsi Medicae (si vocabulum spectes) familiae sua nece parentaverit.” Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:248.

136. “È morto e appena s’intende come per mala cura, per mala cura ha perduto questa patria uno tanto capo, che maladecta sia si poca diligentia ... et quello valente huomo di maestro Piero Lione per disperato e per pazia s’è gittato in uno pozzo et anegatosi come una bestia, che egli era.” Bambello to Michelozzi, quoted in Brown, “Women, Children, and Politics,” 251. “Talented” (*valente*) is almost certainly meant to be sarcastic.

“melancholy” (*maninconia*) was that he fell completely silent, “not responding to anything.”<sup>137</sup> Eventually, some bystanders took him to San Cervagio, “and with effort put him to bed” before leaving him there and returning to Careggi.<sup>138</sup> In this version, Leoni’s retreat to San Cervagio was merely due to his exhausted mind. Early the next morning, Leoni went out to wash his face at the villa’s well and asked a farmer how deep the water was. The farmer left Leoni there “alone, leaning on the side [of the well],” and “not much time later” a woman came by and discovered him dead, his head submerged.<sup>139</sup>

Del Benino mentions rumours that Leoni had been imbalanced even before Lorenzo’s decline: “some say that in Padua, to withstand his competitors, he had in a way fatigued his wits” so that the added “pain” (*dolore*) of Lorenzo’s death made him finally “lose his mind.” Furthermore, his “evil and erroneous life” had surely contributed to this madness, though del Benino gives no indication of what evil and erroneous behaviour this may have been.<sup>140</sup> Dei goes so far as to suggest that his “false science ... had been mixed with necromancy,” an evil practice that would have caused his final

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137. “diventò mezzo fuori di sè ... pieno di maninconia e mai parlava, nò rispondeva cosa alcuna.” Bartolomeo Dei to Benedetto Dei, quoted in Frati, “La morte,” 259.

138. Del Benino to Guicciardini, quoted in Ridolfi, “La visita,” 211. See also Cerretani, *Storia fiorentina*, 185; Bartolomeo Dei to Benedetto Dei, quoted in Frati, “La morte,” 259. San Cervagio belonged to the Martelli family.

139. “rimaso quivi solo appoggiato alla sponda, non dopo molto tempo fu da una donna che acqua andava attignere col capo di sotto nel pozo veduto, mezo fuori dell’acqua ...” Frati, 259.

140. “alcuni dicano che a Padova, per resistere al concorrente, haveva in modo afaticato lo ‘ngegno che aggiuntovi questo altro dolore gli toglessi il cervello; molti altri impunato alla Divina Justitia per la sua mala et erronicha vita.” Del Benino to Guicciardini, quoted in Ridolfi, “La visita,” 211.

spiral into madness and suicide.<sup>141</sup> This last rumour may have been based on Leoni's known astrological expertise.

Whether it was murder or suicide, Leoni's death had been a violent, embarrassing end to what had been an otherwise successful life, and the incongruity of such disgrace coming to such a preeminent man of learning was difficult for Renaissance Italians to reconcile. They resolved this dissonance, as people so often do, with several theories and conspiracies, hoping to find sense in a senseless death. This, of course, excluded those who were happy to see him die. Some, like Dei and Bambello, found this bestial death to be perfectly appropriate for the man who had so savagely betrayed their trust. The propensity to lean in one direction or the other seems to have in a large way been driven by politics. Mediceans generally believed the case to be a suicide, though their reactions to this varied widely between horror, sympathy, and perverse triumph. Meanwhile, Frati points out that those who believed it was murder also had their own axes to grind: Sanazzaro, who wrote an elegy for Leoni, did so during a time of increased anti-Medicean propaganda. Chalcondyles, Poliziano's rival and critic, also "asserted, like it was a certainty, that Leoni had been thrown into the well by order of Piero de' Medici."<sup>142</sup>

By the end of his letter, Poliziano finds that, indeed, he does feel better: remembering Lorenzo, "while bitter," also brings "a certain sweetness,

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141. "poi che si vide ingannato dalla sua falsa scienza, la quale alcuni dicono era mescolata con nigromantia ...." Bartolomeo Dei to Benedetto Dei, quoted in Frati, "La morte," 259.

142. "Demetrio Calcondila, scrivendo da Milano trentasei giorni dopo la morte del Magnifico, asserì, come cosa certa, che Leone era stato gettato nel pozzo per ordine di Piero de' Medici." Frati, "La morte," 255.



almost a pleasure ....”<sup>143</sup> The process of writing had led to its intended effect of purging his grief in a philosophical, civilised way. Though he admits he had briefly acted without decorum during Lorenzo’s death, unable to control his own tears, he now finds healing in the humanist art of writing. What was most important to him, however, was establishing a narrative of Lorenzo’s good death. This was, in a sense, one last service he could do to his friend and patron. The Lorenzo he describes is thus the picture of masculine dignity, neither soft nor unfeeling, self-controlled even in his pain, and putting others’ comfort before his own even in extremity. His death, as tragically premature as it was, was consistently mentioned in tandem with the death of Piero Leoni, who played his opposite. One died either a hero or a tyrant, the other a coward or a martyr. In any case, the effect remained the same: Lorenzo experienced the proper death of a patrician Florentine man, while his doctor died like an animal, his earthly honour tarnished and his eternal fate thrown into doubt by an ugly, untamed death.

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143. “etiam amara quaedam dulcedo quasique titillatio ....” Poliziano to Antiquari, 18 May, 1492, in Poliziano, *Letters*, 1:248-50.

## Concluding Remarks

This thesis has been, as I mentioned in the introduction, a sort of experiment: how can emotions history be applied to the close study of individual historical figures (in this case, Lorenzo de' Medici)? Additionally, what new light can this shed on both Lorenzo himself and on his sociocultural environment? The resulting contribution of this thesis has been threefold: first, I have modelled a relational approach in interpreting and reconstructing emotions in a Quattrocento household. Secondly, I have explored novel ways of integrating a wide variety of source materials, including letters, art, and poetry, into this reconstruction. Finally, I have demonstrated some of the creative ways in which methodologies from emotions history can be combined with those from a diverse array of other sociohistorical fields to provide new paths of inquiry into subjects like family, masculinity, sexuality, friendship, and death. Overall, I believe this thesis has served as an example of how an interdisciplinary approach can simultaneously broaden the horizons of emotions history and introduce a unique perspective to more traditional subject matter.

Much – if not most – of the evidence available to premodern emotions historians is that which was produced in a relational context: letters written between two (or more) parties; poetic compositions addressed or dedicated to a beloved or admired person; paintings representing not only the social contract between patron and artist, but also the relationships between the figures depicted, whether real or ideal. At the same time, relationships are open to constant change and renegotiation, which not only prompts communication (and therefore the production of the above evidence), but also a variety of emotional responses. This

thesis has therefore focused primarily on the source- and emotion-rich periods, as one might call them, in which Lorenzo and his relationships were undergoing significant changes. This dynamic picture of relational renegotiation has thus integrated and reconciled behaviours and emotions which have appeared nonsensical and contradictory in previous, more static analyses.

I began my thesis by exploring the Quattrocento Florentine household, which in a sense was a relationship in and of itself. My analysis of the letters exchanged between the members of the Medici household has confirmed recent studies which argue that the premodern household extended far beyond the realm of kinship. While kinship could impact one's status within the household, it was not the sole determinant of one's role and participation in this group. However, I have also expanded on the potential scope of household studies by approaching the Medici household specifically as an emotional community, with a shared system of emotional norms and a shared emotional vocabulary. When viewed this way, the potential boundaries of the Quattrocento Florentine household expand beyond the primary residence – though this may still be viewed as a “headquarters” of sorts – to include not only the residents and employees living and working at properties like villas and farms, but also those who may only work in the household without residing in it. Even *vicini* or certain frequent or long-term visitors might be members of a household's emotional community while being outsiders according to legal documents. In this sense, the *brigata* becomes an important extension of a Quattrocento household, whether it is made up entirely or only partly of household members. Indeed, my careful analysis of

Medici letters confirms that they often used this term interchangeably with others to reflect a sense of ownership and belonging in the household-family.

As I have argued, the Quattrocento household was a community in which its younger members learned how to understand, manage, and navigate their emotional lives. Household members beyond a child's parents were fully involved in this process, reinforcing household norms – which may or may not coincide with the norms of a wider society – through both admonition and example. In my third and fourth chapters, I demonstrated that during disputes, it was common and even desired that other household members step in to mediate and restore harmony. Clergymen like Gentile Becchi or Marsilio Ficino, for example, may use their spiritual authority to admonish and instil guilt in those considered to be at fault for the problems. Those involved in a dispute might appeal to other trusted household members to speak with the *paterfamilias* on their behalf, as when Poliziano asked Lorenzo's influential mother for help in restoring his tutoring position.

Within the boundaries of the Medici household, I have specifically looked at Lorenzo's relationships with other men. I begin with the father-son relationship, which as I have demonstrated was characterised in Quattrocento Florence by an extreme power imbalance and was considered formative in the socialisation of young men and the way they understood their part in a lineage. While previous scholarship has demonstrated that Lorenzo's father and other predecessors intentionally groomed him for a leadership role in Florence, I have specifically examined the emotional aspects of this process. As I have found, the emotional vocabulary which frequently appeared in letters to and from his father

was one of labour and exhaustion (*fatica*), specifically in relation to the youth's ideal behaviour. While this grooming process and its attendant emotional vocabulary reflected norms common among patrician Florentine men, the unique pressure, speed, and publicity of Lorenzo's growth into manhood pushed these societal moulds to their breaking point. This chapter proposes that as a direct result, Lorenzo both perceived his role as an unavoidable burden and retreated into emotions and behaviours that, to contemporaries and even to many Laurentian historians, seemed utterly incompatible with the rest of his identity. Despite his carefully constructed reputation as a sober and level-headed statesman, Lorenzo also engaged in displays of immaturity which other Florentine men considered shocking and shameful, whether it was playing on the floor with his children or riding out at midnight to visit a lover. However, I have shown that when viewed in the perspective of his upbringing and his relationship with his father, these two disparate personalities can be reconciled.

In contrast to his relationship with his father, which was characterised by a clear and constant power imbalance and an emphasis on hard work and emotional sobriety, Lorenzo's relationship with his brother Giuliano was one of apparent equality – at least during childhood. Though Lorenzo took increasing prominence over Giuliano, I have shown through my analysis of Medicean portraiture that before 1478, the brothers were nearly always portrayed as a set pair. However, as the power difference between the brothers shifted, so too did their depictions. While as children they were grouped closely together, as if heirs to a shared legacy, by 1475 they were – according to my analysis – on opposite ends of the canvas. Giuliano was slowly being pushed out of the line of

succession, and moreover, he was aware of it. This issue reflected wider conflicts in patrician Florence, where the competitive seeds of primogeniture were just beginning to take root in a society which otherwise valued the cooperative ideals of *fraterna*.

My thesis posits that in the case of the Medici household, this shift was partly due to the major disruptions in the household structure brought by the cluster of deaths of all the other males in the immediate patriline. Whereas the business partnerships and artistic patronage of previous generations of Medici men had reflected a strong sense of *fraterna*, Lorenzo's sudden ascent to the role of *paterfamilias* impacted what had previously been a rather egalitarian relationship. Lorenzo, still technically a youth himself, now legally became a "father" to a teenage brother only a few years younger than himself. The brothers emotionally negotiated this change quite differently. Giuliano reacted with resentment and resorted to open displays of anger (yelling at Lorenzo, making accusations, and even running away from home) in order to try and regain some autonomy. Lorenzo, meanwhile, seems to have vacillated between placating his younger brother and being firm, but – according to outside parties – never lost his composure. His identity as *paterfamilias* could offer him a sense of assurance in the renegotiation of relationships which others could not enjoy. At the same time, however, his status required that he regulate his emotions to maintain his performance of mature manhood, while the younger Giuliano had more freedom to vent his frustrations without bringing himself too much dishonour. Though the premature death of fathers was extremely common in Quattrocento Florence, this

case illustrates the significant relational issues such a death could generate in a household even years into the future.

Finally, I argue that after Giuliano's assassination in 1478, Medicean portrayals of the brothers demonstrate a clear awareness of the way art could be used to communicate ideas about fraternity. Afterwards, Lorenzo was portrayed as someone who had permanently lost a part of himself. The brothers were once again on more-or-less equal footing (to the point of being mirror images), and the living reality of growing fraternal inequality was forgotten. In Chapter Three, I have thus also demonstrated that, rather than being merely supplemental, visual depictions themselves can communicate important perspectives about a relationship that may be less obvious in written texts.

Chapter Four illustrates the ways in which a precise and careful linguistic analysis can result in a deeper understanding of the ways subordinate household members had to navigate change and conflict. It also demonstrates the expectations that could be brought to a male friendship in Florence and the cultural norms which impacted the evolution of a friendship over a lifetime. When outside circumstances demanded that household relationships be renegotiated, those renegotiations depended upon the role and status one held. I have argued that a sexually-charged vocabulary of honour and dishonour illustrates that the conflict with Poliziano was Clarice's means of defending her dignity and authority as the *paterfamilias*' wife. Meanwhile, a close reading of Poliziano's contemporary poetic work shows that for an employee like Poliziano, his intimate *amicizia* with Lorenzo was closely tied to his sense of belonging in the household. When his job was threatened, he saw a threat to his friendship

with his patron, and vice versa. In Poliziano's case, poetry has proven an invaluable source on his emotional responses to these changes; far from being merely supplemental to his letters, the conventions of poetry allowed him to express emotions which were otherwise constrained by the conventions of letter-writing and the power imbalance between himself and his patron. Poetry thus became one of the primary forms of communication by which Poliziano sought to renegotiate first his relationship with his patron, and then his role as a poet.

Emotion continued to be an important tool when it came to negotiating the changes brought by one's own death, as I have demonstrated in my final chapter. The construction of Lorenzo's identity, I have found, did not end in death: it was carried on and endlessly re-negotiated in the memories of survivors. Determining the way survivors remembered the *moriens*, then, became key to determining which aspects of Lorenzo's identity became immortalized. Dying well (that is, with dignity, calm, and a measured sense of repentance) was considered the final proof of one's worth as a man in both fifteenth-century religion and philosophy, and Florentines evaluated an entire lifetime based on these last moments. By analysing the vocabulary Florentines (and others) used to describe Lorenzo's death, I have found that, according to those writing immediately after the fact, he successfully navigated his final moments. Even many of Lorenzo's political enemies, for example, begrudgingly admitted that he had died with the magnificence appropriate to his station.

At the same time, however, this chapter illustrates the communal nature of the premodern deathbed: ideally, it was surrounded by a crowd of kin, friends, servants, doctors, priests, and various other figures. The final moments were not



a solo act, but an ensemble, and the conduct of those attending the *moriens* could significantly influence the way the event was remembered. Poliziano, for example, expects his audience to be understanding and empathetic towards his grief, given the gravity of the situation. At the same time, when his weeping becomes uncontrollable, he excuses himself to another room so as not to risk upsetting or embarrassing Lorenzo and marring his legacy. Nevertheless, other emotions still cast their shadows: the death of Piero Leoni, whether it was caused by Leoni's despair or the murderous rage of Lorenzo's companions, would end up tarnishing Lorenzo's post-mortem identity. The question of Leoni's strange death, and of whose uncontrolled (and therefore unmanly) outburst was to blame, became a point of contention in the period of political instability that followed. No matter how Lorenzo and the surviving Mediceans attempted to reinforce Lorenzo's post-mortem image as a benevolent *pater patriae*, by the time of Savonarolan dominance Lorenzo's deathbed had been transformed into a narrative of emotional chaos and Lorenzo himself into a tyrant.

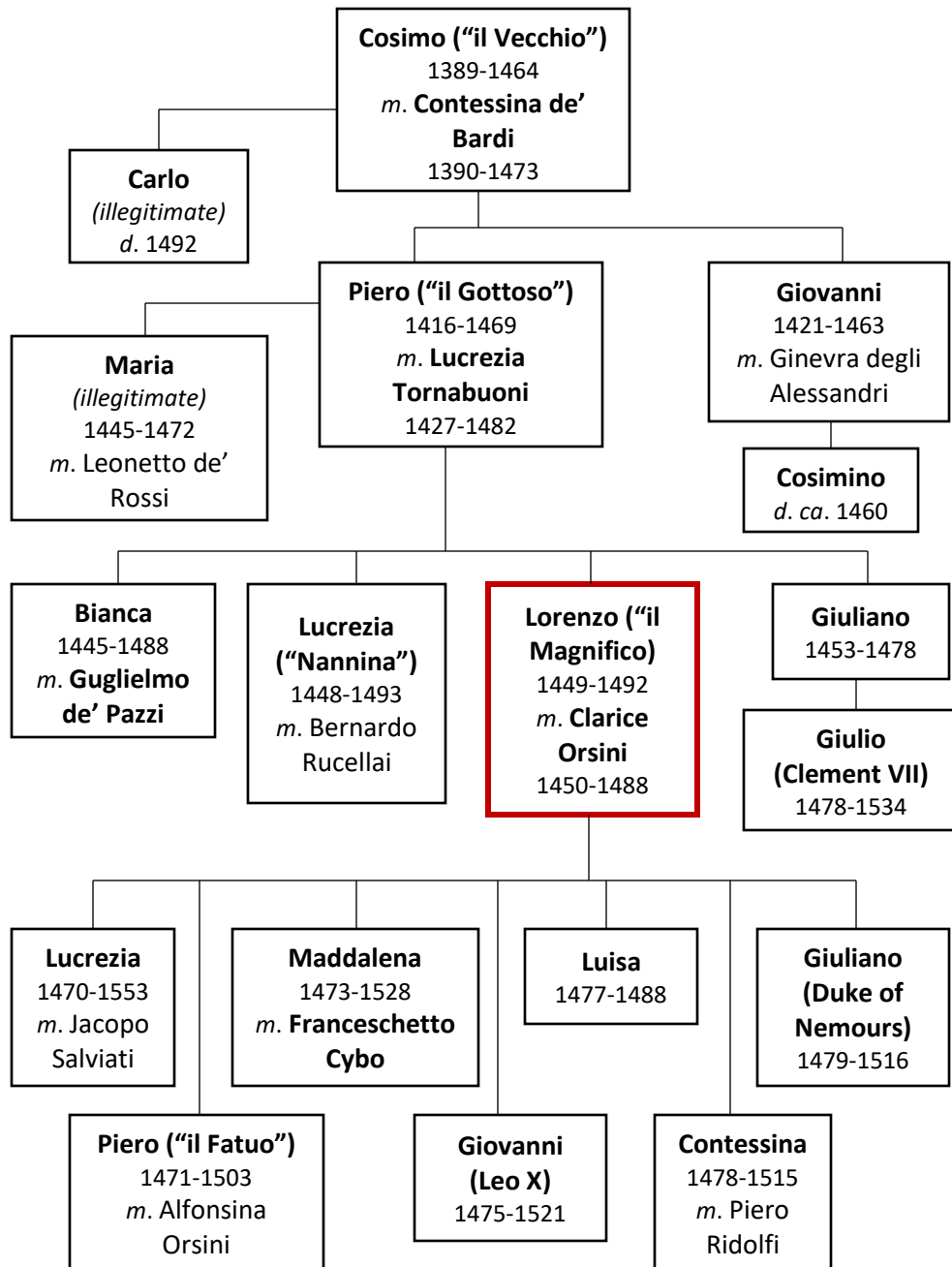
This thesis was fundamentally an attempt to explore the possibilities available to historians of emotion both in terms of methodology and source material. So as not to stretch myself too thin, I limited the application of my ideas to one man, and even then, to only specific aspects of one man's life. Despite this, the broad range of topics covered in this thesis reflects the depth and breadth that an eclectic approach to emotions history can achieve. By familiarising ourselves with a variety of methodologies and becoming comfortable in using a diversity of sources, emotions historians can add further layers of perspective to

our subject matter. Lorenzo was, after all, a man of his times, and his emotional life was inseparably wrapped up in Quattrocento norms regarding maturity, brotherhood, sex, manhood, and other such topics. By analysing the intersection of one man's emotional life with the world in which he was raised, I have, I hope, shed light on the potential for integrating emotional history into our wider understanding of the social world of the Florentine patrician.

More, of course, remains to be done. This thesis was, after all, only an exploration, and this approach is in no way a coherent methodological system to rival those of the Stearnses, Reddy, or Rosenstein. However, there are still a good deal of applications possible for this style of eclecticism, both in Laurentian studies and beyond. Though I chose to focus on Lorenzo's male relationships because I wished (in part) to explore the potential intersections of masculinity studies and emotions history, there is still much left unexplored in Lorenzo's relationships with women, especially with his sisters, his wife, and his daughters. Other close studies of patrician men, both in Florence and beyond, could provide valuable comparisons which would strengthen our understanding of early modern Italy. Of course, there is no need to stop with patrician men, either; a rich variety of material is left from all corners of Quattrocento society. This could, in turn, lead to the incorporation of further sources and methodologies: while this thesis only brushed lightly against material history, Lorenzo alone left behind a literal wealth of objects which could be analysed for information about relationships, identity, and other emotion-laced themes. By viewing emotions in their relational contexts, and by mining a variety of sources for perspectives on

those relationships, this thesis represents a test run for just a few of the many possible future directions of emotions history.

## Appendix A. Medici Family Tree



## Appendix B. Glossary of Names

- Ambrogini, Angelo “Il Poliziano” (14 July, 1454 – 24 September, 1494):** A close friend of Lorenzo’s, he was employed by Lorenzo as a clerk, poet, librarian, and tutor. Fluent in both Latin and Greek, he tutored various members of the Medici household, including Giuliano and Piero il Fatuo.
- Becchi, Gentile de’ (1420 – 1497):** The bishop of Arezzo, a celebrated orator, and one of Lorenzo and Giuliano’s childhood tutors. He also served as tutor to Giovanni di Lorenzo.
- Cybo, Francesco “Franceschetto” (ca. 1450 – 25 July, 1519):** Lorenzo’s son-in-law by marriage to Maddalena de’ Medici. He was the illegitimate son of Pope Innocent VIII.
- Donati, Lucrezia (ca. 1447 – 1501):** Slightly older than Lorenzo, Lucrezia was likely his first lover, and he addressed many poems to her. She was the wife of Niccolò Ardinghelli.
- Dovizi, Piero (ca. 1456 – 8 January, 1514):** Lorenzo’s principal secretary for the last few years of Lorenzo’s life.
- Ficino, Marsilio (19 October, 1433 – 1 October, 1499):** The neo-Platonic philosopher employed by Cosimo il Vecchio, and a tutor and mentor to Lorenzo, Giuliano, and Poliziano.
- Franco, Matteo (1448 – 6 September, 1494):** A canon and member of the Medici household. He acted as chaplain to Clarice Orsini and later departed the Medici household to join the household of Maddalena de’ Medici and Franceschetto Cybo.
- Leoni, Piero (ca. 1445 – ca. 9 April, 1492):** An accomplished doctor who served Lorenzo in his final years. He was found dead under mysterious circumstances on the morning after Lorenzo’s death. The manner of his death would become a source of controversy.
- Martelli, Braccio (1442 - 1513):** A childhood friend and neighbour of Lorenzo’s. Later in life, he was accused of sodomy.
- Michelozzi, Niccolò (5 December, 1444 – ca. 20 January, 1526):** The son of Michelozzo Michelozzi, Cosimo il Vecchio’s chief architect. He was Lorenzo’s principal secretary for most of Lorenzo’s adult life. He accompanied Lorenzo on his voyage to Naples in 1478 and later served as an ambassador to other Italian courts, including Rome and Naples.
- Nasi, Bartolomea de’:** Lorenzo’s last known lover, and the wife of Donato Benci. Their passionate courtship was considered strange for a man of Lorenzo’s age and reputation.
- Pazzi, Guglielmo de’ (6 August, 1437 – 6 July, 1516):** Lorenzo’s brother-in-law by marriage to Bianca de’ Medici, and a member of Lorenzo’s youthful *brigata*. He was spared from imprisonment or execution after

the Pazzi conspiracy but was exiled from Florence with his sons until the fall of the Medici in 1494.

**Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni (24 February, 1463 – 17 November, 1494):**

A philosopher, poet, and close friend of Poliziano. Poliziano met him while he was in the north in 1480, and their correspondence later led to Pico's entrance into the Medici circle in 1488.

**Pulci, Luigi (1432 – 1484):** A poet employed by Piero di Cosimo and Lucrezia Tornabuoni. He was a part of Lorenzo's youthful *brigata*. He eventually left the Medici household after irreconcilable differences with Matteo Franco and Marsilio Ficino.

**Rucellai, Bernardo (11 August, 1448 – 7 October, 1514):** Lorenzo's brother-in-law by marriage to Nannina de' Medici, and an occasional member of Lorenzo's youthful *brigata*.

**Stufa, Sigismondo della:** A close childhood friend and neighbour of Lorenzo's and a member of Lorenzo's youthful *brigata*. He aided Lorenzo during the Pazzi conspiracy.

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-----, MAP, XXIII, 1.

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-----, MAP, XXIV, 134.

-----, MAP, XXIV, 205.

-----, MAP, XXV, 92.

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