

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



# Damnatio memoriae: The Rebirth of Condemnation of Memory in Renaissance Florence

Tracy E. Robey

Volume 36, numéro 3, été 2013

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1091027ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v36i3.20545>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Robey, T. (2013). *Damnatio memoriae: The Rebirth of Condemnation of Memory in Renaissance Florence*. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 36(3), 5–32. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v36i3.20545>

### Résumé de l'article

Dans cet article, on montre que l'ancienne pratique de la *damnatio memoriae*, ou condamnation de la mémoire, est réapparue dans la Florence de la Renaissance. Les chercheurs associent habituellement la *damnatio memoriae* avec la Rome antique. Toutefois, les florentins de la Renaissance ont emprunté leur destruction de la mémoire extra-juridique au modèle antique. La *damnatio memoriae* florentine se concrétise en une destruction des habitations, un effacement et une altération d'images, de documents et de symboles, et même en un violent cannibalisme. On montre également que les changements de structure politique et des idées au sujet de la renommée ont donné lieu à des transformations significatives dans la façon que les florentins condamnaient la mémoire entre la fin du treizième siècle et l'époque du principat des Médicis du seizième siècle. En outre, on avance que la *damnatio memoriae* est non seulement une pratique dont l'étude est négligée, mais qu'elle affecte aussi l'approche méthodologique des sources, alors que la conscience de cette interaction peut modifier ou enrichir leurs interprétations.

# *Damnatio memoriae*: The Rebirth of Condemnation of Memory in Renaissance Florence

TRACY E. ROBEY

*Dans cet article, on montre que l'ancienne pratique de la damnatio memoriae, ou condamnation de la mémoire, est réapparue dans la Florence de la Renaissance. Les chercheurs associent habituellement la damnatio memoriae avec la Rome antique. Toutefois, les florentins de la Renaissance ont emprunté leur destruction de la mémoire extra-juridique au modèle antique. La damnatio memoriae florentine se concrétise en une destruction des habitations, un effacement et une altération d'images, de documents et de symboles, et même en un violent cannibalisme. On montre également que les changements de structure politique et des idées au sujet de la renommée ont donné lieu à des transformations significatives dans la façon que les florentins condamnaient la mémoire entre la fin du treizième siècle et l'époque du principat des Médicis du seizième siècle. En outre, on avance que la damnatio memoriae est non seulement une pratique dont l'étude est négligée, mais qu'elle affecte aussi l'approche méthodologique des sources, alors que la conscience de cette interaction peut modifier ou enrichir leurs interprétations.*

Historian Benedetto Varchi wrote that in 1527, Florentine citizens burned down villas owned by the exiled Salviati and Medici families.<sup>1</sup> When a new government came to power in 1530, officials ordered a “damnation of the memory [*memoria danata*] of five banished and imprisoned citizens” for destroying the villas. As a result, “their memories were damned and their assets seized.”<sup>2</sup> The destruction of the villas and legal condemnation of the perpetrators’ memories serve as two Renaissance examples of *damnatio memoriae*, or condemnation of memory, which had been used for political purposes in antiquity. In this article I argue that *damnatio memoriae* prominently reappeared throughout Northern Italy in the Renaissance. In the Renaissance, republican governments, princes, individual citizens, and crowds performed largely extra-legal<sup>3</sup> *damnatio memoriae* on rebellious cities; on citizens and whole families belonging to parties ousted from power; on tyrants, usurpers, and assassins of

the prince—all of whom fundamentally threatened the structure and stability of the government and economy; on whole religious sects and governments; and on disgraced family members of the prince whose infamy and memory threatened his honour. Each of these categories earned their own types of punishment, some of which were performed on one kind of offender only. For example, crowds sometimes cannibalized or dismembered tyrants, but never citizens on the wrong side of the Guelph and Ghibelline conflict, to my knowledge. The second argument is that the practice of *damnatio memoriae* changed significantly from 1250 to 1600. Following a brief discussion of the theory and history of *damnatio memoriae*, the three sections of this article support the second argument by examining condemnation of memory in Florence between the twelfth century and 1343; in the second half of the fifteenth century and the first decades of the sixteenth; and under the Medici grand dukes from 1532 to 1600. As the structure of government in Florence and ideas about memory transformed, so did condemnation of memory.

Scholars have identified cases of *damnatio memoriae*, but an overview of the practice in the Renaissance has yet to appear. The first book-length examination of the history of *damnatio memoriae* in the Renaissance appeared as a volume of conference proceedings published in late 2010. The volume, *Condannare l'oblio: pratiche della Damnatio memoriae nel Medioevo*, contains a number of fine essays, yet the book's impact is limited by the fact that the authors discuss isolated cases of *damnatio memoriae* in many different places and centuries, without the work providing a systematic overview that allows comparisons of, or larger conclusions to be drawn from, the cases.<sup>4</sup> A two-page overview of Renaissance *damnatio memoriae* appears in art historian Samuel Y. Edgerton's 1985 study of *pitture infamanti*, or defaming paintings, in the Florentine Renaissance.<sup>5</sup> Art historians have studied examples of destroyed and manipulated paintings and statues,<sup>6</sup> since condemnation of memory also resulted in altered and erased laws, buildings, wills, and literary sources, making *damnatio memoriae* a necessary topic for all Renaissance scholars. Although *damnatio memoriae* often coincided with banishment in early Renaissance Florence, memory does not play a significant role in recent scholarship on political exclusion.<sup>7</sup>

The Renaissance recovery of ancient ideas concerning fame and immortality allowed *damnatio memoriae* punishments to extend beyond the political realm. The "cult of fame," discussed by Jacob Burckhardt, Paul Oskar Kristeller,

and others,<sup>8</sup> inspired many Renaissance writers, artists, and public figures.<sup>9</sup> Records of past people and events were purposefully inscribed in order to transmit them to posterity for fear that time would obliterate all memories not recorded in or on tangible objects such as histories, poems, sculptures, and paintings.<sup>10</sup> Historians envisioned themselves fighting the force of time to preserve or rescue the past from oblivion.<sup>11</sup> Humanists debated which disciplines would confer the longest lasting memory—giving the greatest endorsements to those fields in which they worked.<sup>12</sup> Immediately preserving the more recent past was important because of a very particular, quasi-pagan belief system in which a positive and sustained posthumous memory could allow a person literally to live on earth eternally after the death of their body while their soul simultaneously lived in the Christian heaven, hell, or purgatory.<sup>13</sup> The promise of immortal life on earth inspired many writers and political actors, yet they saw fame as a limited resource that they needed to fight to protect and win.<sup>14</sup> These beliefs combined with political condemnation to make *damnatio memoriae* a particularly weighty punishment that constituted excommunication from the Florentine state both in life and in death.<sup>15</sup>

Although condemnation of memory in the Renaissance has received limited attention, it is a topic to which all scholars should attend because the primary sources they use have often been altered by its process. Such manipulation is conspicuous in the case of funeral orations and official portraits, which are self-evidently constructed to praise or blame their subjects, but *damnatio memoriae* is far more widespread and sometimes difficult to recognize. Almost every text, work of art, and tomb from the Renaissance serves as an instrument by which to secure the glory or infamy of its subject, documenting an existence that might otherwise succumb to the natural process of forgetting, and so achieve an earthly form of eternal life. Just as these artifacts were created, so too were they destroyed or manipulated so as to shape the legacy later to be accessed by researchers, thus arranging the glorification of heroes, or condemnation of villains, long after their deaths. Scholars must be alert to this process or, by repeating the slanders inserted into the historical record by enemies of their subjects, they may wrongfully perpetuate the *damnatio memoriae*.<sup>16</sup>

This article uses the term to discuss memory erasure and manipulation. Romans used “*damnatio memoriae*” for a very specific legal punishment inflicted in only a few instances, yet modern scholars incorrectly expanded the term until

Friedrich Vittinghoff, German historian of the Roman Empire, exposed the inaccuracies in 1936.<sup>17</sup> Historians writing long after the ancient period adapted the Roman legal term to describe more generally punishments employed by the Romans to limit, manipulate, or destroy the memory of elite citizens condemned by the community after death.<sup>18</sup> Although the Romans did not use the term to mean this wider corpus of punishments, it has been deemed by scholars to be useful as long as it is understood to imply a loose category analogous to “memory punishment.”<sup>19</sup> Yet categorizing *damnatio memoriae* as “memory punishments” creates false limits; in many cases, *damnatio memoriae* erasures and manipulations happened without formal sanction or a legal sentence, and were thus not official punishments. The term “memory punishment” was both too specific to adequately define *damnatio memoriae* in the Renaissance, and too vague. In the Renaissance, “memory punishment” or “memory manipulation” could include any number of behaviours, from razing family palaces after an attempted coup to posthumous slander regarding a neighbour’s sexuality.

I adapt the methodology developed by historians and art historians studying ancient Rome, who have published extensively on *damnatio memoriae* in recent years, to discuss condemnation of memory in the Renaissance.<sup>20</sup> Most notably, historian Charles Hedrick observed, “The *damnatio memoriae* did not negate historical traces, but created gestures that served to *dishonor* the record of the person and so, in an oblique way, to confirm memory.”<sup>21</sup> For example, observers could still recognize a sculpture that lost its eyes, nose, and ears in a *damnatio memoriae* attack, and the mutilated sculpture helped them to remember to dishonour the condemned person, as well as avoid the condemned behaviour. The work of ancient historians and art historians has resulted in a refined methodology that I have attempted to adapt and use here to discuss *damnatio memoriae* in the Renaissance. Despite modelling their own condemnations of memory on ancient examples, Florentines condemned memory more often than had the ancient Romans.

The ancient Greeks and Romans punished traitors and tyrants by razing their homes, an act later parroted by the Renaissance Italians. The Greeks practised *kataskaphê*, or the razing of houses, walls, and whole cities in Athens, Sparta, Corinth, Syracuse, and Locris during the archaic and classical periods as a punishment for crimes against the state. Other punishments happened concurrent with the razing, including the placement of bronze *stele* commemorating

treason on the site of the razed structure, destruction of tombs and removal of bones, denial of an honourable burial, a curse, a fine, and exile of those condemned who were still living.<sup>22</sup> The ancient Roman senate or emperor also ordered the homes of political usurpers razed during the Republic and the Empire. Official house razing happened infrequently during the Roman Republic; sources identify no more than nine examples of it in nearly five centuries.<sup>23</sup> Cicero protested the razing of his house in an oration, *De domo sua*, in which he complained about being treated like an actual traitor and claimed that he felt the eyes of all Rome on the lot where his domicile once stood.<sup>24</sup> In pre-modern Europe, families used their palaces as both shelter for blood kin, servants, apprentices, and illegitimate children, and also as business and political offices, personal fortresses, and symbols of the family's importance. Death masks and other objects necessary to maintaining the family cult were kept in homes, as well.

In the rare cases where execution and *damnatio memoriae* happened concurrently in ancient Rome, even high-born citizens and former emperors could be subjected to the sort of *poena post mortem*, or posthumous bodily punishment, typically reserved for common offenders. While Roman history and literature contain few representations of cannibalism, the murderers of Caligula ate the flesh off the detested emperor's body. Discovered conspiring against Tiberius, Sejanus was forced to watch the destruction of his own portraits; his executioners then killed him and gave his corpse to crowds, who violated his body for a three-day period. Punishers fed usurper Celsus's corpse to dogs, an insult otherwise only inflicted on Emperors Maximinus Thrax and Maximus.<sup>25</sup> Exemplary condemnations of memory in antiquity inspired Renaissance governments and citizens to inflict *damnatio memoriae* for similar crimes.

Frequent exchanges of power in Renaissance Florence between the Guelfs and Ghibellines resulted in the razing of many houses. In the twelfth century, the attempt by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa (1122–90, r. 1155–90) to assert his power in northern Italy met the resistance of the papacy, which caused the formation of parties: the Papal Guelfs and the Imperial Ghibellines. The conflict resulted in many symbolic and practical attacks on buildings. In the middle of the twelfth century, when the Ghibellines gained control of Florence, they discussed razing the entire city as the Romans had deliberately destroyed Corinth and Carthage in 146 BC.<sup>26</sup> Dante's *Inferno* references the moment when

Ghibelline leader Farinata degli Uberti supposedly rejected the plan (*Inferno*, 10.91–93).<sup>27</sup> The Ghibellines instead levelled 103 Guelf palaces, 580 houses, and 85 defensive towers, among many other shops and castles outside the city.<sup>28</sup> Such a widespread attack on Guelf structures erased not only memory but also the economic base of the party. When the Guelfs returned to power, they convicted Farinata degli Uberti of heresy, nineteen years after his death, for supposedly denying the immortality of the soul. The surviving document that details the blended civic and church excommunication of Farinata and his wife stipulates that their bodies be disinterred from the family tomb and burned, their wealth confiscated, and their heirs permanently disinherited.<sup>29</sup> According to the chronicle of Giovanni Villani (1280–1348), the Piazza della Signoria in Florence is irregularly shaped because the new Signoria palace and piazza were built on the site of the razed Uberti *palazzo* to ensure that nothing ever be built there again.<sup>30</sup>

The Venetian government also razed homes. Only a few decades after the Guelfs destroyed the Uberti *palazzo*, the Venetian government razed the house of Bajamonte Tiepolo, who had attempted to overthrow the doge and Grand Council of Venice in 1310. Following Tiepolo's conspiracy, the Venetian government ordered that his house be razed to the ground and a column *d'infamia* erected to mark the spot where it once stood. The column read: "Of Bajamonte had been this ground, / And now through him you know the wickedness of treason / It was placed by the commune so others would know / And by showing to everyone, everyone always knowing."<sup>31</sup> The column played the double role of dishonouring Tiepolo's memory and advising citizens to stay loyal to the Venetian government.

Sources disagree about whether the Black Guelfs razed Dante Alighieri's house in 1302 when they condemned him to exile and confiscated his wealth for his involvement in the White Guelf party.<sup>32</sup> The Guelfs in Florence split into two factions following their decisive defeat of the Ghibellines at Campaldino in 1289: the Black Guelfs, who supported the pope, and the White Guelfs, who opposed papal influence in the city. Dante (1265–1321) served as a White Guelf ambassador to Pope Boniface VIII (1235–1303, r. 1294–1303) in 1301, at the same time that the Black Guelfs entered Florence and forcibly gained control. Boniface allowed the other delegates to return to Florence, but strongly implied that Dante should stay at his court rather than return to fight the punishment of exile and confiscation of his goods and property in Florence. Dante refused

several offers sent by the new government that would have allowed him to return to Florence but surrender his honour in the process. After some time had passed, the government converted Dante's temporary sentence of banishment to a permanent punishment of exile, with the threat that if he were to return to the city, he would be burned alive for his crimes. Dante's first biographer, Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–75), lamented the punishment in his *Trattatello in laude di Dante* (1357), bemoaning, "[i]n place of reward" Dante received "injustice and furious condemnation, perpetual banishment and alienation of [his] paternal estate, and, if that could have been accomplished, the staining of [his] most glorious fame with false accusations."<sup>33</sup> The quotation by Boccaccio shows that exile and the confiscation of wealth were understood to attack fame, which I argue makes them legitimate condemnations of memory, even when the terms *damnatio memoriae* or the Tuscan *memoria dannata* were not mentioned. Unlike Machiavelli,<sup>34</sup> Boccaccio does not specifically mention that Dante's house was razed, but the law passed by the Black Guelph government of Florence states that *omnia bona* (all the goods) of Dante would be destroyed if he did not pay the fine—which Dante refused to do.<sup>35</sup>

In the wake of his own *damnatio memoriae*, Dante Alighieri lived in exile and constructed an imagined world of the dead in the *Divine Comedy* into which he damned his enemy, Pope Boniface VIII. In the circle of hell for those who practised simony, or paying for holy sacraments and church positions, the similarly-damned Pope Nicholas III mistook Dante for Pope Boniface, come earlier than expected to assume his position upside down and buried in a hole with his feet exposed and on fire for his sins (*Inferno*, 19.49–63). While Dante lost the official power to condemn his enemies to exile and raze their houses when the White Guelphs lost control of Florence, he condemned the memory of Boniface VIII (whom he called "the prince of the new Pharisees") in the *Divine Comedy* by creating a new and disgraceful memory of him in literature (*Inferno*, 27.85). Later in the *Inferno*, Dante accused Boniface of promising indulgences to the soldiers who razed the town of Palestrina and salted its earth, an ancient curse, yet another example of *damnatio memoriae* (*Inferno*, 27.101–02). The chronicler Villani confirms that Pope Boniface ordered the Colonna family's town of "Pilestrino" razed, among others.<sup>36</sup> The destruction of Palestrina appears to harken back to biblical punishments, as well as to Rome's legendary razing of Carthage and Corinth. The memory of Pope Boniface VIII faced an additional posthumous attack when the newly-created Avignon papacy held a



trial in 1310–11 to determine if his rule would be subject to an official *damnatio memoriae*. According to Villani, “if the Church had condemned the memory of Pope Boniface, that which he had done would have been made null and void” (se la Chiesa avesse condannata la memoria di papa Bonifazio, ciò ch’aveva fatto era casso e annullato), although the council did not find him guilty.<sup>37</sup> Villani’s use of the term *condannata la memoria* suggests that he was familiar with at least an ecclesiastical concept of memory condemnation, possibly analogous to excommunication for those outside the Church hierarchy.<sup>38</sup>

The process by which Walter of Brienne VI, Duke of Athens (1304–56, r. 1342–43) condemned the memory of the Florentine republic, and was then condemned himself, follows a very different pattern of memory condemnation from that practised by the Guelfs and Ghibellines on individuals. Members of the leading Florentine families had asked Walter of Brienne in 1342 to come and act as the lord of the city in order to restore order during a time of economic and political trouble. The lower classes proclaimed him *signore* for life shortly thereafter. After claiming power, the Duke of Athens performed a *damnatio memoriae* on symbols associated with the Florentine republic, which eventually contributed to his downfall. Merchants resisted his reign, Machiavelli later claimed, in part because “the [government] palace was sacked by the family of the duke, the standard of the people torn apart, and his ensign raised above the palace.” The gesture of destroying the symbols associated with Florence’s self-government “was received with the inestimable sorrow and affliction of good men, and with great pleasure by those who either in ignorance or out of wickedness had consented to it.”<sup>39</sup> In his *Discourses on Livy* (ca. 1517), Machiavelli referenced large-scale *damnatio memoriae* performed on whole religions and governments in the ancient period. “Records of past times are destroyed for many different reasons,” Machiavelli wrote, citing the example of St. Gregory and other early Church leaders, who stubbornly “pursued every record from ancient times, burning the works of poets and historians, destroying images, and ruining everything else that retained any sign of antiquity” so that “nothing is left for the survivors but what he has wished to set down in writing and nothing else.”<sup>40</sup> Although Machiavelli failed to name what he describes as large-scale *damnatio memoriae*, he was almost certainly referring to them. The assertion that as the Duke of Athens was losing power, he “had his own ensigns taken down from the palace and raised those of the people” in an attempt to quell a

possible revolt against his rule, demonstrates the centrality of public symbols to politics.<sup>41</sup>

In return, the duke suffered a more comprehensive *damnatio memoriae* than those inflicted in Florence before his rule. In 1343, a conspiracy ousted Walter of Brienne from office and he fled the city to save his own life.<sup>42</sup> As the ancient Romans had done to a few hated emperors, the Florentine republic that replaced the Duke of Athens ordered all memory of him and his rule erased, and all images and mementos of him destroyed immediately.<sup>43</sup> Yet exactly one year after his fall, the Florentine government paid for a public *pittura infamante*, a defaming painting, which depicted the duke and his supporters.<sup>44</sup> Instead of uniformly enforcing the ban on all images of Walter of Brienne, the Florentine government created a new image of him, suggesting that they believed it may have been more effective to remember to dishonour his memory after a short period of punitive erasure than to forget it entirely. The city also celebrated the duke's expulsion yearly on Saint Anne's Day,<sup>45</sup> much as the Romans had celebrated the overthrow of their hated emperors on special holidays, and the ancient Greeks had celebrated the fourth-century BC destruction of the tyrants' palace in Sicily with a public holiday.<sup>46</sup> In addition to the official, legal punishments, a crowd of citizens stormed the government palace in order to burn archival documents, including those that provided for the incarceration of their family members.<sup>47</sup> The crowds destroyed far more than just documents attesting to their families' disgrace; few documents from the time of the Duke of Athens' rule remain in the Florentine archive due to the crowd's vengeance.

A crowd also cannibalized two of the duke's supporters in a particularly brutal form of bodily *damnatio memoriae* that seems to have emulated the corpse abuse practised on hated emperors in ancient Rome. As the duke's rule fell, crowds brutally murdered a number of his assistants, but none more horribly than Guglielmo d'Asciesi and his son Gabbriello. The Duke of Athens handed over Guglielmo and Gabbriello in an attempt to placate the crowd and to discourage them from entering the government palace and assassinating him. Villani, the fourteenth-century chronicler, observed, "in the presence of the father, and to his sorrow, the son pushed outside was dismembered and cut into little pieces." After the dismemberment of the son, the crowd murdered and cut up the father, "and some carried bits on lances, and some on swords through the city; and some were so cruel and animated by bestial fury that they ate their flesh raw."<sup>48</sup> Villani describes the cannibalism as a punishment

worse than dismemberment and more bestial than parading around the city with bits of flesh on sword points. The leaders of Florence had Guglielmo and Gabbriello “depainted” from the eventual *pittura infamante* of the Duke of Athens and his henchmen; art historian Samuel Edgerton attributes this to the shame Florentines felt when remembering their cannibalistic fury.<sup>49</sup> While this extreme reaction to the Duke of Athens’ usurpation of the Florentine government could be attributed to rage and revenge—and they certainly did play a role in the gruesome events—the ritualistic form the actions took, which was similar to those elsewhere in Italy during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, demonstrates a purpose far more complex than simply “blowing off steam.”<sup>50</sup>

Reports of cannibalism and corpse abuse from elsewhere in Italy demonstrate that crowds most often practised cannibalism and *poena post mortem* when rejecting tyrannical lords and assassins of accepted and established princes, which accounts for their absence from the many republican conflicts in Florence that preceded and followed the reign of the Duke of Athens. In April 1488, the Orsi brothers murdered tyrannical Count Girolamo Riario (1443–88) in Forlì’s governmental palace and threw his naked body down into the central square, where crowds abused it for several days. Following Riario’s assassination, the mood quickly turned and the assassins escaped the city, leaving their father Andrea to witness the rapid levelling of his house by 400 men before being dragged facedown by a horse around the public square.<sup>51</sup> Soldiers then quartered the elderly Orsi and spilled his entrails in the piazza; one reportedly cut out the man’s heart and bit into it.<sup>52</sup> What seems like the product of momentary rage was actually an extreme *damnatio memoriae* attack in line with ancient Greek and Roman punishments, intended to surpass the *poena post mortem* inflicted on Count Riario. Although extreme acts of violence happened throughout Italy during the Renaissance, they seem to have been reserved for the people who most threatened cherished forms of government and the stability of the state.<sup>53</sup>

The comprehensive *damnatio memoriae* of the Duke of Athens in fourteenth-century Florence stands in stark contrast to the fines, exile, and razed houses ordered against Guef and Ghibelline citizens. And yet, having one’s house razed inflicted shame, indicating how devastating the far more comprehensive attacks on the Duke of Athens were intended to be. Following the 1343 revolt that resulted in cannibalism, a burned archive, defamatory painting, and

the destruction of all traces of the tyrant, the Florentines again embraced their citizen-led republic.

The *damnatio memoriae* of the Duke of Athens was an aberration in the history of early Renaissance Florence, not an indication of the types of condemnations that would immediately follow. This yields several important findings. First, although the Florentine Guelfs and Ghibellines fought to death on the battlefield, they did not condemn each other to the worst punishments of memory conceivable when their respective groups obtained power. The most serious, comprehensive punishments were reserved for outsiders who attempted to impose tyrannical rule on the city, or citizens who attempted to assassinate a ruler. Second, by 1343, the Florentines must have been aware of the *damnatio memoriae* imposed on Roman emperors from reading ancient accounts. The Duke of Athens' condemnation and those of Roman emperors such as Caligula are too similar to be the product of coincidence. The *damnatio memoriae* of the Duke of Athens served as a remarkably effective deterrent to those who might have considered taking control of Florence. After the *damnatio memoriae* of 1343, the Florentine republic remained intact, in various forms, until the accession of Duke Alessandro de' Medici to the newly-created dukedom of Florence in 1532.

In the second half of the fifteenth century and the first decades of the sixteenth, Florence fell into a fairly stable pattern of control by de facto princes who maintained the symbols of the people's power and republican government structure. The *damnatio memoriae* that Lorenzo de' Medici ordered on the Pazzi family in 1478 reveals the line between de facto princely power and actually ruling as a prince. The Pazzi orchestrated an attack in the cathedral of Florence on April 26, 1478 that resulted in Giuliano de' Medici's death and Lorenzo barely escaping with his life. As Lorenzo tended to his wounds, he ordered the deaths of scores of men, seeking to do more than kill his enemies: he ordered the "ruin of the Pazzi."<sup>54</sup> Crowds shouting in support of the Medici attacked the bodies of the worst offenders, "and the limbs of the dead were seen fixed on the points of weapons or being dragged about the city, and everyone pursued the Pazzi with words full of anger and deeds full of cruelty."<sup>55</sup> So many plotters were executed and dismembered that "the streets were filled with the parts of men."<sup>56</sup> While crowds performed incredible acts of corpse abuse, they did not consume the flesh of the plotters. This could be due to the shameful memory of

the cannibalism practised in Florence in conjunction with the condemnation of the Duke of Athens' memory; the taboo against cannibalism may have been strong due to the earlier example. Conversely, the Pazzi attempted to assassinate Lorenzo, a *de facto* prince, and not an actual ruler. Lorenzo would only reach the height of his power in the aftermath of the Pazzi conspiracy, and he was never more than the head of the republic—not the official ruler of Florence. The crowds' behaviour suggests that they performed *poena post mortem* in tribute to an unofficial leader, and not to a prince.

Machiavelli's description of the symbolic, multi-stage burial of Jacopo de' Pazzi in retribution for his sons' plotting indicates that exemplary corpse abuse was deliberately performed to ensure the posthumous defamation of the worst criminals. The paterfamilias of the plotters, Jacopo de' Pazzi, faced a punishment similar to that inflicted on the patriarch Andrea Orsi in Forlì ten years later. Machiavelli noted "that this event might not be lacking in any extraordinary example, Messer Jacopo was entombed first in the sepulcher of his ancestors, then dragged from there as excommunicated, and buried along the walls of the city." From there he was "dug up again, he was dragged naked through the whole city by the noose with which he had been hanged." After that, "since no place on land had been found for his tomb, he was thrown, by the same ones who had dragged him, into the Arno River, whose waters were then at their highest."<sup>57</sup> This punishment could be viewed as brutal and primitive, but it was in fact a sophisticated condemnation of Pazzi memory drawing on several thousand years of culture. The crowd initially took Jacopo de' Pazzi's body down from where it hung and placed him in the tomb of his ancestors, as if to allow him an honourable burial. But they seem to have done this precisely to drag his corpse back out to pantomime the Church's excommunication practices, which involved disinterring bodies and burning or burying them outside the sacred civic and religious space. After performing a pseudo-Catholic damnation, the crowd then reenacted the *poena post mortem* of disgraced Romans such as the Emperor Commodus, who was likewise dragged around Rome by the noose from which he had been hanged.<sup>58</sup> Finally, the crowd threw the body of Jacopo de' Pazzi into the Arno river, as had crowds who wished to cleanse Rome of the portraits, statues, and corpses of hated emperors.<sup>59</sup>

Crowds subjected Savonarola to a similar type of corpse abuse that combined an actual Catholic excommunication with the civic *damnatio memoriae*. Girolamo Savonarola (1452–98), a Dominican friar eventually based at the

convent of San Marco in Florence, gained considerable influence by preaching his prophetic visions for the coming last days. Following the death of Lorenzo de' Medici in 1492 and the invasion of Italy by French King Charles VIII in 1494, the Florentines overthrew the government led by Lorenzo's son Piero. A short time later, Savonarola came to dominate political and social life in the city. In 1497, Savonarola threatened to raze the Strozzi, Nerli, and Giugni palaces for the families' opposition to his regime.<sup>60</sup> In the same year, Savonarola and his supporters organized the famous Bonfire of the Vanities, in which items associated with moral laxity were burned in the Piazza della Signoria, itself created by the *damnatio memoriae* of the Uberti. Among the items burned were books, paintings, cosmetics, and fine clothing. Pope Alexander VI (1431–1503, r. 1492–1503) ordered Savonarola's excommunication and arrest in the same year. Following long periods of torture, on May 23, 1498, Savonarola was slowly burned alive for heresy on the spot where he had once burned books and criminals. According to the sixteenth-century Savonarolan Jacopo Nardi, the prophet was "publicly degraded, hanged and burned in the *Piazza*, and the ashes [were] thrown in the Arno."<sup>61</sup> The disposal of Savonarola's ashes in the Arno River could be seen as a measure intended to prevent his followers from collecting relics around which a cult might survive.<sup>62</sup> In this case, I argue that the two practices of civic condemnation of memory and Church excommunication mutually reinforced each other to punish Savonarola for his usurpation of Church and government power.

In the 1520s, the Florentine republic, then under the control of a future Medici pope, performed a legal and secular *damnatio memoriae* curse on the memory of a usurper. Following the fall of Savonarola, citizens hoping for greater stability elected Piero Soderini *gonfaloniere* (standard-bearer and head of the republican government) for life in 1502. The Medici family seized power from Soderini in 1512, and their party controlled the republic once again from 1512 until 1527 as Medici Popes Leo X and Clement VII ruled in Rome. Several members of the Soderini family attempted a coup in the early 1520s to regain the power they had once had during the rule of Piero. In response to the failed coup attempt, the Florentine republic condemned Piero Soderini's memory and confiscated his possessions for supposedly participating in the plot, although he had already died of natural causes when the government handed down the punishment.<sup>63</sup> In the condemnation of Soderini, the Eight on Security reasoned that because Piero "committed high treason it is possible, although afterwards

he was dead (and one cannot punish the dead) [...] to damn the memory of him, and confiscate his goods and deny him his rights” and because of this, posthumously sentence him to the “damnation of his memory and the confiscation of his honours.”<sup>64</sup>

The condemnation of Piero Soderini illustrates the impact of the Renaissance rediscovery of better copies of ancient texts on the form that *damnatio memoriae* took in Florence in the second half of the fifteenth century and through the sixteenth. Soderini’s condemnation lifts phrases from a declamation by Quintilian, indicating that a government—controlled by a Medici cardinal and eventual pope—copied from ancient texts when performing *damnatio memoriae*.<sup>65</sup> Poggio Bracciolini found a complete manuscript of Quintilian at the monastery at St. Gall in 1416, and from his initial copy many additional copies were made. Lorenzo de’ Medici’s library included several Quintilian manuscripts based on both the manuscript Poggio discovered and the copy he made.<sup>66</sup> Exposure to these Quintilian manuscripts could have instructed Lorenzo de’ Medici’s descendants and fellow Florentines on the form of Soderini’s *damnatio memoriae*.<sup>67</sup> The practice of *damnatio memoriae* in Florence changed like so many things in light of the humanist mission and greater direct exposure to the writing of the ancients.

Under the Medici dukes, starting with Alessandro in 1532, but especially Duke Cosimo I, *damnatio memoriae* changed from public displays against citizens to silent attacks on those who threatened the honour of the prince. The dukes maintained their honour by erasing the memory of adulterous sisters and disobedient courtiers, but they appear to have practised fewer *damnatio memoriae* outside of their families after the first few years of establishing the dukedom. While the Medici dukes condemned memory in new ways, governments outside of Florence continued to practise *damnatio memoriae* as the Florentines had in earlier periods.

Enemies of the first Duke of Florence, Alessandro de’ Medici (1512–37, r. 1531–37), accused him of erasing the memory of the earlier, citizen-led Florentine republic, as had the Duke of Athens. The Medici family regained official power in Florence following the siege of 1529–30, after which Alessandro de’ Medici ascended to the new dukedom. Alessandro’s *damnatio memoriae* of the republic so infuriated Florentine exiles that in 1535 they included it in their list of reasons why Duke Alessandro’s overlord, Holy Roman Emperor

Charles V, should have deposed him. The exiles bemoaned the loss of the “supreme magistrates [the priors who served on the chief executive council] in whom resided the defense and the insignia of liberty. Because of this their title was *Priores libertatis*,” but under Alessandro that “ha[d] been extinguished, so that with the name is extinguished the form and essence of liberty [si estingnesse la forma e la essenza della libertà].”<sup>68</sup> Duke Alessandro and his supporters dismantled the traditional republican government and appointed only pro-Medici officials to the new positions, but Alessandro’s critics also accused him of systematically destroying all imagery associated with the prior republic. According to the duke’s enemies, Alessandro “changed the shape of the coins, and removed the people’s sign, and in place of it in one part put up his family arms,” and “in the other where there had been carved the image of the precursor to Christ, St. John the Baptist,” patron saint of Florence, “there he had stamped the image of Saints Cosmo and Damiano, the patron saints of the House of Medici, so that no memory remains of the ancient republic or of freedom.”<sup>69</sup> The complaint by the exiles shows that the memory of the republic was transmitted by the existence of these sacral things: a supreme magistrate (*gonfaloniere di giustizia*), the Florentine money, the patron saint of Florence, and the people’s emblem—and that without them, “no memory remains” of the previous republic. Duke Alessandro compounded the bitter feelings by triumphantly replacing the insignia of the republic with his own family’s emblems.

Alessandro appears to have displayed knowledge of *damnatio memoriae* by commissioning Giorgio Vasari to paint a scene from the life (*vite*) of Julius Caesar that commemorated and celebrated a notable example of document destruction. Vasari claimed in his own *Vite* that Alessandro commissioned him to paint four scenes in the Palazzo Medici. The scenes included one image of Caesar “causing the writings of Pompey to be burnt, that he may not see the works of his enemies.”<sup>70</sup> It is unclear if this allusion to the practice of burning the documents of one’s enemies inspired similar actions on the part of Alessandro. Varchi noted that documents from the period immediately before Alessandro came to power are few.<sup>71</sup> This moment from the Life of Caesar—one of only four depicted—might also refer to Alessandro or other Medici family members destroying other documents, such as those of rival families. Conversely, Alessandro may have simply found the scene pleasing to contemplate. Selecting Caesar’s erasure of Pompey’s documents suggests that Duke Alessandro recognized document destruction as an aggressive act done to punish one’s enemies.



The Medici family—Pope Clement VII most likely—may have been responsible for creating the gap in archival documents from the Florentine republic preceding Alessandro's rule.

When Charles V refused to remove Duke Alessandro from power, exiles plotted the duke's assassination, leading to yet another *damnatio memoriae*. Superstitious people noted that Lorenzino de' Medici (1514–48) assassinated Duke Alessandro in the sixth year of his reign by stabbing him six times at six o'clock on January 6, 1536, according to the Florentine calendar.<sup>72</sup> The provisional government of Florence declared Lorenzino a traitor and ordered a defaming likeness of him to be painted on the new Florentine fortress, the Fortezza da Basso. The painting depicted Lorenzino upside down and ingloriously hanging from a rope by one foot, in the style of *pitture infamante*. The government also banished Lorenzino from the city, put a bounty on his head, and looted his house, through the ruins of which was purportedly cut a road, christened "Traitor's Alley," sixteen arm-lengths wide, broadcasting to all observers the consequences of crimes against the state.<sup>73</sup> Lorenzino, who some said carried out the assassination to earn everlasting glory, as Brutus had when he murdered Caesar, "of these things boasted greatly, saying that they greatly immortalized his name, and would make it glorious forever." (*delle quali cose egli si gloriava grandemente, dicendo che erano cose che immortalavano maggiormente il suo nome, e l'averebbero reso glorioso per tutti i secoli.*)<sup>74</sup> Instead of feeling shame, Lorenzino and his supporters appear to have believed that the honour of his crime would transcend the *damnatio memoriae* intended to defame him, and that he would be remembered in part due to the public disgrace.

Condemnation of memory initially continued under Duke Cosimo I, Duke Alessandro's successor. Shortly after ascending to the dukedom in 1537, Cosimo ordered the destruction of the Podestà's house in Gambassi, 35 kilometres south of Florence. Because the residents of Gambassi had used the house as a stronghold in their rebellion against Cosimo's rule, he ordered the structure razed in order to damn the citizens and inflict economic hardship on them.<sup>75</sup> After Cosimo secured his territory, there seem to have been fewer mentions of razed houses and legal curses in the primary sources. This coincides with evidence from elsewhere in the past that demonstrates a direct positive correlation between the frequency of shifts in political power and the number of *damnatio memoriae* instances in sources.

Public condemnations of memory happened less frequently in the relatively stable duchy of Florence, but scholars have identified different cases of erasure from portraits that may have occurred during the rule of Duke Cosimo I, or under his sons, Grand Dukes Francesco (1541–87, r. 1574–87) and Ferdinando (1549–1609, r. 1587–1609). Art historians suspect that Isabella de' Medici's (1542–76) powerful brothers Francesco and Ferdinando could have destroyed or manipulated portraits to erase memory of her after she flagrantly conducted an adulterous affair with a Medici cousin. Karla Langedijk found it strange that no portraits exist of Isabella, considering that she was beloved by her father, and lived most of her life at a court continually captured in oil paint. In addition to the lack of portraits, Isabella's absence from an otherwise complete collection of tin miniatures originally owned by Cosimo, and always kept in Florence, further bolstered the hypothesis that Isabella was subjected to a *damnatio memoriae* at some point.<sup>76</sup> Gabrielle Langdon further explored Langedijk's thesis and argued that several paintings of Isabella had been deliberately altered or misidentified so that they appeared to be depictions of other Medici women. In the portrait now identified by Langdon as *Isabella de' Medici Orsini with Virginio*, someone deliberately expunged the letters of inscription that would allow viewers to identify Isabella via her age. Other portraits recorded earlier as depictions of Bianca Cappello or Laudomia de' Medici, women who bore no resemblance to Isabella, are now identified as likenesses of Isabella. Langdon theorized that Isabella's brothers and heirs of the portraits, Ferdinando and Francesco, felt Isabella had harmed their social status enough with her affair to justify her *damnatio memoriae*.<sup>77</sup>

Isabella was not the first Medici princess to suffer a *damnatio memoriae*. The family arms of Bianca Cappello (1548–47), the former mistress and eventual wife of Grand Duke Francesco, were obliterated throughout Italy, and any reference to her as grand duchess was banned when her vengeful brother-in-law inherited the dukedom. Such comprehensive and silent punishments suggest that punishers wished to erase the memory of these women rather than simply dishonour them; publicly dishonouring women on the grounds of their sexual conduct would have shamed their husbands and male blood relatives, who were usually the punishers. As seen in the condemnation of the memories of Andrea Orsi and Jacopo de' Pazzi, male heads of the family sometimes paid in blood for the actions of their adult children; for the same reason, the sexual conduct of Medici princesses threatened the honour of the grand dukes and

might have suggested that they could not rule their own households. Other silent condemnations erased the memory of courtiers and family members who openly defied the prince. Gabrielle Langdon identifies Giulia de' Medici, the illegitimate daughter of Duke Alessandro, as the child in a portrait once painted over with black paint. Langdon suggests that Cosimo or his sons could have ordered the obliteration in retaliation for the adult Giulia demanding equal standing at court to that of Cosimo's daughters, even after Cosimo ascended to the title of grand duke in the 1550s.<sup>78</sup> Evidence also shows that in 1556 Cosimo murdered and silently condemned the memory of Sforza Almeni, a long-time courtier. The courtier had criticized Cosimo's liaison with the young Eleonora degli Albizi, and Cosimo had Almeni's "role at court thus obliterated" in official documents altered and destroyed following his murder.<sup>79</sup>

The practice of painting people out of portraits was not new, and evidence from Venice and Siena shows that "depainting" could either erase or very publicly condemn disgraced people, depending on the colour of the paint used. The doge Marin Falier staged a coup to name himself Prince of Venice in 1355. Upon discovering his betrayal, Venetians decapitated Falier on the staircase of the ducal palace, mutilated his body, and buried him without honours.<sup>80</sup> In 1366—eleven years after the conspiracy—the Council of Ten decreed that his portrait in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio be painted over specifically with azurite paint. In addition to painting Falier out of the portrait, the Council of Ten ordered that a phrase in Latin stating "In this place is the site where Marin Falier was decapitated for the crime of treason" (*Hic fuit locus Ser Marini Faletro decapitati pro crimine prodicionis*) explain his absence from the portraits of doges in the Great Council Hall.<sup>81</sup> In Siena's Palazzo Pubblico, the fresco of Guidoriccio da Fogliano contains a figure whose image was initially defaced by objects thrown against it, and then also covered by a layer of azurite paint.<sup>82</sup> These examples suggest that Renaissance Italians covered disgraced figures with azurite paint for a reason. Although ultramarine paint cost more at the time, azurite was the most important blue pigment in the medieval period. Viewers of Falier's infamous and memorable portrait now see a coat of black paint in the shape of a drape where he was once depicted, but this could have been the product of either another layer of paint or the fact that azurite turns black when heated to a high temperature or when exposed to sulfur fumes.<sup>83</sup> The use of azurite by republics in earlier periods suggests that Renaissance depainting with bright blue paint could have been used to shame people condemned to a *damnatio*

*memoriae* in an eye-catching way, whereas the Medici dukes silently used black paint to erase their disobedient family members and courtiers.

Despite Cosimo's use of *damnatio memoriae* early in his reign, few sources attest to continued public condemnation of memory in Florence. There could be a few reasons for this shift. With Lorenzino de' Medici's *pittura infamante* in 1537, the use of defaming paintings ended in the city, as it had elsewhere. Samuel Edgerton argues that *pittura infamante* ended because art began to be seen as something created for its own sake.<sup>84</sup> The curtailing of public *pittura infamante* and *damnatio memoriae* could have also been the result of the growing acceptance that even infamy was thought to grant immortal life on earth, which was why Lorenzino de' Medici welcomed the condemnation cast against him. At the same time that public *damnatio memoriae* faded from Florence, it continued elsewhere. In 1535, a law passed in the Kingdom of Naples mentions condemnation of memory (*condennata la memoria*) and implies that it was an ongoing practice.<sup>85</sup> Sixteenth-century church officials overseeing the suppression of Lutheranism in Spain condemned the "memory and fame" of an already dead woman by burning her in effigy, confiscating her property, and razing her house before erecting a column to explain the reason for the destruction.<sup>86</sup>

The political structure of Florence in the later period may also have discouraged the Medici dukes from officially condemning memory. The army of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V captured Florence in 1530, and the Medici family gained their dukedom in 1532 as a result of a treaty with Charles, not their own conquest. As a result, the Holy Roman Emperors served as the overlords for the Medici dukes; each duke received his power and titles from the emperor. In the fifteenth century, Duke Ludovico Sforza of Milan governed under a similar arrangement and found that he did not have the ability to condemn the memory of disobedient citizens due to his subordinate status to the emperor.<sup>87</sup> The Medici dukes may have been constrained by a similar problem or feared that enacting a *damnatio memoriae* on a living citizen would reveal the limits of their power, thereby resulting in public embarrassment. The Medici dukes may also have faced fewer political threats outside their families after Cosimo I established his rule. As seen throughout this article, instances of *damnatio memoriae* seem to have inspired retaliation in kind. After Florence's government grew more stable, Cosimo and his sons would have had less need for condemning memory, and they may have realized that performing public condemnations of memory could inspire unrest and revolt by citizens

who wanted to avenge the dishonour. In contrast to the problems posed by traditional condemnations of memory, silent erasures of family members seem to have solved problems facing the Medici dukes without provoking political retaliation.

This article demonstrates that condemnation of memory was no mere byproduct of politics, but a significant inspiration for political action and an important tool forged by the ancients and wielded by Renaissance governments and citizens to the terror of their enemies. In several infamous cases, mobs orchestrated destruction and even cannibalism with rational ends in mind, as they sought to inflict ancient-style *damnatio memoriae*. Behind some of the most spectacular explosions of violence was a figurative rubric of punishments that matched crimes to the appropriate crowd responses. The desire to avenge these bloody and humiliating condemnations of memory contributed to the swift changes in government control in the early Renaissance. Later, as the Medici dukes established their early modern dynasty, the desire for stability necessitated a silent form of erasure intended to control memory privately rather than inflict public shame. Our subjects thoroughly considered how to best create, manipulate, and destroy memory objects, including archival documents. Yet they also considered how their behaviour would enter the historical record to emphasize the rejection of a regime, a ruler, or an assassin for eternity. The purpose of *damnatio memoriae* was to control how and if posterity remembered people, parties, and places. Until we understand the process of *damnatio memoriae*, some of our subjects will remain concealed, their memories still bearing the burden of punishments inflicted centuries ago.

### Notes

\* All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

1. Benedetto Varchi, *Storia fiorentina* (Colonia, 1721), p. 293.
2. Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, p. 452.
3. Based on Roman and Renaissance practices, I define extra-legal *damnatio memoriae* as the erasure or alteration of objects—paintings, funeral monuments, corpses, and homes, for example—that aided in recalling the good memory of a condemned person or group.

4. I. Lori Sanfilippo and A. Rigoni, eds., *Condannare l'oblio: pratiche della damnatio memoriae nel Medioevo* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 2010). Missing from *Condannare l'oblio* and from the literature in general is an overview that sets out what constituted *damnatio memoriae*, what people in the Middle Ages and Renaissance themselves said about it, who merited punishment by *damnatio memoriae*, who wielded such punishments, and what the practice was thought to accomplish. This article provides a preliminary overview so that discussion of *damnatio memoriae* can hopefully progress beyond merely pointing out cases.
5. Samuel Y. Edgerton, *Pictures and Punishment: Art and Criminal Prosecution during the Florentine Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 68–69. The section says little more than that the practice existed, which is understandable given its brevity.
6. Wendy J. Wegener, “‘That the Practice of Arms is Most Excellent Declare the Statues of Valiant Men’: The Luccan War and Florentine Political Ideology in Paintings by Uccello and Castagno,” *Renaissance Studies* 7, no. 2 (1993), p. 159; Gabrielle Langdon, *Medici Women: Portraits of Power, Love, and Betrayal from the Court of Duke Cosimo I* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), pp. 146–70 (the chapter entitled “*Damnatio memoriae*: Isabella de’ Medici Orsini, ‘La stella di casa Medici’”); John T. Paoletti, “Medici Funerary Monuments in the Duomo of Florence during the Fourteenth Century: A Prologue to ‘The Early Medici,’” *Renaissance Quarterly* 59 (2006), pp. 1117–63.
7. Fabrizio Ricciardelli, *The Politics of Exclusion in Early Renaissance Florence* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007).
8. Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S. G. C. Middlemore (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. 87–93; Paul F. Grendler, “The Rejection of Learning in Mid-Cinquecento Italy,” *Studies in the Renaissance* 13 (1966), p. 245; Paul Oskar Kristeller, “The Immortality of the Soul,” in *Renaissance Thought and its Sources* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), pp. 182–83; Piero Boitani, *Chaucer and the Imaginary World of Fame* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 1984), pp. 72–158; Rosa Prieto Gilday, “Politics as Usual: Depictions of Petrarch’s *Triumph of Fame* in Early Renaissance Florence” (PhD Diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1996); Hillay Zmora, “A World Without a Saving Grace: Glory and Immortality in Machiavelli,” *History of Political Thought* 28, no. 3 (2007), pp. 449–68.
9. See Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Volume 1: The Inferno*, trans. Mark Musa (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 209; Giovanni Boccaccio, *Life of*

- Dante*, trans. Philip H. Wicksteed, ed. William Chamberlain (London: Oneworld Classics, 2009), pp. 9, 15, 40, 55; Pius II, *Commentaries*, ed. Margaret Meserve and Marcello Simonetta (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), vol. 1, pp. 3, 5; Matteo Palmieri, *La vita di Niccolò Acciaiuoli*, ed. Alessandra Mita Ferraro (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2001), p. 2. Thinkers appear to have pursued earthly fame because they believed that it could do no less than liberate the dead from the bonds of time and space. See Petrarch, *Letters on Old Age*, trans. Aldo S. Bernardo, Reta A. Bernardo, and Saul Levin (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), vol. 2, p. 672; Petrarch, *Letters on Familiar Matters*, ed. and trans. Aldo S. Bernardo (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), vol. 3, pp. 317, 321; Niccolò Machiavelli, *Machiavelli and His Friends: Their Personal Correspondence*, trans. James B. Atkinson and David Sices (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996), p. 264.
10. Boccaccio, pp. 3, 21, 50; Petrarch, "On His Own Ignorance and That of Many Others," in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Paul Oskar Kristeller and John Herman Randall, Jr., trans. Hans Nachod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 56.
  11. Palmieri, pp. 4–5; Flavio Biondo, *Italy Illuminated*, trans. Jeffrey A. White (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), vol. 1, pp. 3, 5; Leonardo Bruni, *History of the Florentine People*, trans. James Hankins (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 3, 5.
  12. Petrarch, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime Sparse and Other Lyrics*, trans. and ed. Robert M. Durling (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 207; Jacopo Nardi, "Trionfo della fama e della gloria," in *Vita di Antonio Giacomini e altri scritti minori* (Florence: Barbèra, 1867), p. 496.
  13. Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture*, trans. and ed. Cecil Grayson (London: Phaidon, 1972), p. 61; Nardi, "Trionfo della fama," pp. 496–97; Benedetto Varchi, *L'Ercolano* (Florence: Agenzia Libreria, 1846), pp. 7–8.
  14. Petrarch, "On His Own Ignorance and That of Many Others," in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, pp. 49–133, pp. 63, 71, 118.
  15. For information about the concept of a Florentine civil religion see Maurizio Viroli, *Machiavelli's God* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).
  16. Italian scholars have recently begun rehabilitating the memory of Lucrezia Borgia, for example, once condemned by the *pratiche dell'infamia*, or practice of infamy. For information on the defamation and reevaluation of Lucrezia Borgia, see

- Michele Bordin and Paolo Trovato, *Lucrezia Borgia: storia e mito* (Florence: L.S. Olshki, 2006), pp. 165–254.
17. Friedrich Vittinghoff, *Der Staatsfeind in der römischen Kaiserzeit: Untersuchungen zu “damnatio memoriae”* (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt Verlag, 1936).
18. See Vittinghoff; Harriet Flower, *The Art of Forgetting: Disgrace and Oblivion in Roman Political Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), pp. xix, 5; and Charles Hedrick, Jr., *History and Silence: Purge and Rehabilitation of Memory in Late Antiquity* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), pp. 93–94.
19. Hedrick, p. xii.
20. See Flower; Hedrick; and Eric R. Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation: Damnatio Memoriae and Roman Imperial Portraiture* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2004).
21. Hedrick, p. 93.
22. W. R. Conner, “The Razing of the House in Greek Society,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 115 (1985), pp. 79–85.
23. Matthew B. Roller, “Demolished Houses, Monumentality, and Memory in Roman Culture,” *Classical Antiquity* 29, no. 1 (April 2010), pp. 117–80.
24. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Back from Exile: Six Speeches upon His Return*, trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), pp. 80–81. Cicero was certainly known to Renaissance humanists; Leonardo Bruni wrote a biography of Cicero, *Vita Ciceronis*, in 1413. See Gary Ianziti, *Writing History in Renaissance Italy: Leonardo Bruni and the Uses of the Past* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 12–14.
25. Eric Varner, “Punishment after Death: Mutilation of Images and Corpse Abuse in Ancient Rome,” *Mortality* 6, no. 1 (March 2001), pp. 55–57.
26. Flower, p. 62. The razings of Carthage and Corinth were themselves inspired by the desire to emulate and surpass the Greeks’ destruction of Troy.
27. Here and throughout this essay, references to Dante’s *Inferno* will appear in parentheses in the main text, citing canto and line numbers, using the Mark Musa translation (see note 9).
28. Giovanni Villani, *Cronica di Giovanni Villani* (Florence: Sansone, 1845), vol. 2, pp. 116–18; Dante, p. 161; John M. Najemy, *A History of Florence, 1200–1575* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 71–72.
29. Nicola Ottokar, “La condanna postuma di Farinata degli Uberti,” *Studi comunali e fiorentini* 3 (1948), pp. 115–23; Najemy, pp. 33–34; Nicola Carinci, *Farinata degli Uberti nel canto X dell’Inferno dantesco* (Chiavari: Tipografia Artistica L. Colombo, 1935).



30. Roger J. Crum and John T. Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 89. Crum and Paoletti mention the razing of the Uberti palace again on page 225, and refer to the act as a *damnatio memoriae* unmatched by later punishments (241–42).
31. Quoted in Pompeo Molmenti, *Venice*, trans. Horatio F. Brown, part 1, vol. 1 (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1906), p. 86, n. 1. “Di Bajamonte fo questo tereno, / E mo per lo so iniquo tradimenlo / Se posto in Chomun per Altrui spavento / E per mostrar a tutti sempre seno.”
32. Najemy, p. 92.
33. Boccaccio, pp. 5–6.
34. Niccolò Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 73.
35. Francesca Klein and Simone Sartini, eds., *Il libro del Chiodo: riproduzione in facsimile con edizione critica* (Florence: Polistampa, 2004), p. 170. “...Palmerium, Dante, Orlanduccium et Lippum...quod si non solverint condemnationem infra tertiam diem a die sententie computandam omnia bona talis non solventis publicentur, vastentur et destruantur et vastata et destructa remaneant in comuni, et si solverint condemnationem predictam ipsi vel ipsorum aliquis nichilominus stare debeat extra provinciam Tuscie ad confines duobus annis, et ut predictorum domini Palmerii, Dante, Lippi et Orlanducci propterea eorum nomina fiat memoria // scribantur in stat(uto) populi et tanquam falsarii et baracterii nullo tempore possint habere aliquod offitium vel benefitium pro comuni vel a comuni Florentie in civitate, comitatu vel districtu vel alibi, sive condemnationem solverint sive non, in hiis scriptis sententialiter condemnamus, computato bampno in condemnatione presenti.”
36. Villani, vol. 2, p. 28.
37. Villani, vol. 2, p. 135.
38. The relationship between *damnatio memoriae* and excommunication has been noted by scholars of memory. See Harald Weinrich, *Lethe: The Art and Critique of Forgetting* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 33; Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 73.
39. Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, p. 94.
40. Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella (New York, 1997), pp. 168–69.
41. Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, p. 98.
42. Villani, vol. 4, pp. 30–37.

43. Cesare Paoli, ed., *Della Signoria di Gualtieri Duca d'Atene in Firenze* (Florence, 1862), pp. 125–35.
44. Edgerton, pp. 80–85.
45. Villani, vol. 4, p. 37.
46. Varner, *Mutilation and Transformation*, p. 1; Flower, p. 21. Plutarch discussed the case of the destruction of the tyrants' palaces and tombs at Syracuse in *Timoleon*; see Plutarch, *Lives*, VI, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1918), pp. 313–15. The work of Plutarch was certainly known to Renaissance humanists such as Leonardo Bruni; see Ianziti, p. 12.
47. Amedeo de Vincentiis, "Politica, memoria e oblio a Firenze nel XIV secolo. La tradizione documentaria della signoria del duca d'Atene," *Archivio storico italiano* 2 (2003), pp. 209–48.
48. Villani, vol. 4, pp. 35–36.
49. Edgerton, p. 84.
50. The Florentine crowd that burned the documents in the Florentine archive, as the Duke of Athens' regime fell, sang songs about erasing political memory as they raided and burned. Crowds in Ferrara in 1385 murdered a secretary of the state chancellery, Tomasso da Tortona, tore his body to pieces, and burnt bits of his corpse over a pyre made of financial documents from the chancellery, demonstrating that citizens' rage stemmed from political and social complaints, causing it to take particular forms. See Amedeo De Vincentiis, "Memorie bruciate. Conflitti, documenti, oblio nelle città italiane del tardo medioevo," *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo* 106 (2004), pp. 167–98; and Richard Brown, "Death of a Renaissance Record-Keeper: The Murder of Tomasso da Tortona in Ferrara, 1385," *Archivaria* 44 (1997), p. 3. Actions once attributed to rage and revenge have been interpreted by many cultural historians, who have shown that behaviour such as smashing altars and killing cats can have complex intellectual origins shaping how rage and revenge are expressed. See the classic works of Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Rites of Violence," *Past and Present* 59 (1973), pp. 51–91, and Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), pp. 75–104.
51. Lauro Martines, *April Blood: Florence and the Plot against the Medici* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 11.
52. Martines, p. 11.
53. In Rome, crowds turned against the rule of the former Tribune Cola di Rienzo (1313–54), capturing him while he tried to flee the city in disguise. An anonymous

- Roman commented that angry citizens punctured Rienzo's body with so many holes from swords and other instruments that it was like a sieve. Although his head and part of a thigh were missing, the crowd jested as Rienzo hung by his feet that he "was so fat that he seemed like a big buffalo or cow in the slaughterhouse." After two days, Rienzo was dragged to the Jewish quarter, where "he was burned and reduced to ashes; not a bit remained." See Anonymous, "La Vita di Cola di Rienzo," in *Cronica*, ed. Giuseppe Porta (Milan, 1981), pp. 193–98, translated and cited in Sergio Bertelli, *The King's Body* (University Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), pp. 238–39. Crowds also hung by one foot the body of Andrea Lampugnani, one of the men who attempted to assassinate the Duke of Milan, Galeazzo Maria Sforza, in 1476. Youths dragged Lampugnani through the streets, cut his body to bits, "with their teeth bit heart and hands," and finally fed his remains to pigs. Gabriel Paverus Fontana, *Gabrielis pueri fontanæ Placentini de uita et obitu Galeaz Mariæ Sfortiæ Vicecomitis Mediolani ducis Quinti* (Milan, 1476), translated and cited in Bertelli, pp. 239–40.
54. Jacopo Nardi, "Breve discorso fatto in Vinegia dopo la morte di papa Clemente VII," in Jacopo Nardi and Carlo Gargioli, *Vita di Antonio Giacomini: e altri scritti minori* (Florence, 1867), p. 130.
  55. Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, p. 326.
  56. Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, p. 327.
  57. Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, pp. 326–27.
  58. David Magie, ed. and trans., *The Scriptores historiae Augustae* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 305–13.
  59. Varner, "Punishment after Death," pp. 55–57.
  60. Jacopo Nardi, *Istorie della città di Firenze*, ed. Agenore Gelli, vol. 1 (Florence, 1888), p. 110.
  61. Nardi, "Breve discorso," pp. 135–36.
  62. Throwing remains of religious figures into bodies of water to prevent the collection of relics appears to have been fairly standard practice. See Marina Warner, *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (New York: Knopf, 1981), p. 13.
  63. Filippo de' Nerli, "Commentari de' fatti civili occorsi nella città di Firenze dal 1215 al 1537. Edizione critica," ed. Sergio Russo (PhD dissertation, Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, 2007), p. 145.
  64. "Documenti della congiura contro il cardinale Giulio de' Medici nel 1522," *Giornale storico degli archivi Toscani* 3, no. 1 (1859), pp. 133–34. ("Magnifici et spectabiles viri domini Octo custodie et balie civitatis Florentie, animadvertentes quod Pierus

domini Tommasi de Soderinis, post citationem de eo factam et termino citationis predicto, emigrasset; et cum eis per legiptimas probationes liqueat, dictum Petrum in vita sua dictum tratatum fecisse, illumque scrivesse et non revelasse, et in effectu durante eius vita conmisisse crimen lese maiestatis, et tractasse subvertere ac mutare presentem pacificum statum: et animadvertentes, quod, cum in vita sua fecerit dictum tractatum, et non revelaverit, et crimen lese maiestatis commiserit, licet mortuus postea fuerit, et mortuus non possit damnari; tamen potest eius memoria damnari, et bona et iura eius confiscari: et intendentes contra eius bona et alios pro eo affectos ad ipsius memorie damnationem honorumque confiscationem procedere....")

65. Quintilian, *M. Fabii Quintiliani declamationes minores*, ed. David R. Shackleton Bailey (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1989), p. 162.
66. Michael Winterbottom, "Fifteenth-Century Manuscripts of Quintilian," *The Classical Quarterly* 17, no. 2 (1967), pp. 339–69.
67. Quintilian, "Institutio oratoria," Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Pluteo 46.12
68. Archivio di Stato di Firenze (hereafter, ASF), Carte Stroziane, serie prima 95, "Narrazione fatta per M. Galeotto Giugni del processo della causa agitala appresso la Cesarea Maestà e suoi Agenti per la ricuperazione della libertà di Fiorenza, per li Reverendissimi Cardinali Salviali e Ridolfi, e fuorusciti fiorentini, e altri amatori della patria nobili fiorentini," 75v.
69. ASF, "Narrazione," 75v. Duke Alessandro replaced the silver *grosso* and gold *scudo d'oro* coins with new *scudo d'oro* and *testone* coins bearing his image, arms, name, and patron saints, as discussed in the next paragraph. See Beatrice Paolozzi Strozzi, *Monete fiorentine dalla repubblica ai Medici* (Florence: Museo Nazionale del Bargello, 1984), pp. 55–59. The Florentine people's sign was a red cross in a white field, carried since the early Renaissance in battle and public ceremonies.
70. Giorgio Vasari, *Vite de più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architetti* (Siena: a spese de' Pazzani Carli e compagno, 1791), vol. 1, p. 8.
71. Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, proemio (5<sup>th</sup> page in the unpaginated preface).
72. Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, p. 593. Corazzini cast doubt on the existence of the *Chiasso del Traditore* that Varchi mentions, but confirms that Lorenzino's house remained in ruins for two centuries; see Corazzini, "Il Chiasso del Traditore et la casa di Lorenzino de' Medici," *Miscellanea Fiorentina di Erudizione e Storia* I, no. 12 (1886), pp. 177–83.
73. Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, p. 612

74. "Origine e discendenza della casa de' Medici," Syracuse University, Ranke Manuscript 74, 204v.–205r. For further information on theories concerning Lorenzino's motives in carrying out the assassination, see Nicholas Scott Baker, "Writing the Wrongs of the Past: Vengeance, Humanism, and the Assassination of Alessandro de' Medici," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 38, no. 2 (2007), pp. 307–27.
75. Antonio Angelelli, *Memorie storiche di Montaione in Valdelsa* (Florence, 1875), p. 117.
76. Karla Langedijk, *Portraits of the Medici* (Florence: Studio per edizioni scelte, 1981–87), vol. 1, p. 128.
77. Langdon, pp. 166–68.
78. Langdon, pp. 166–68.
79. Charles Davis, "Frescos by Vasari for Sforza Almeni, 'Coppiere' to Duke Cosimo I," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 24, no. 2 (1980), pp. 127–202.
80. In the nineteenth century, a Venetian hospital still used Falier's tomb as a water tank and allowed his family emblems to remain on it, no doubt to insult the memory of Falier and his line. These attacks on the honour of families through their commemorative imagery upholds John Paoletti's assertion that in the Renaissance, honour was linked to visual representation, especially in funeral monuments. Paoletti, "Medici Funerary Monuments in the Duomo of Florence during the Fourteenth Century," *Renaissance Quarterly* 59 (2006), pp. 1117–63.
81. Molmenti, vol. 1, p. 86.
82. Michael Mallory and Gordon Moran, "New Evidence Concerning 'Guidoriccio,'" *The Burlington Magazine* 128, no. 997 (1986), p. 251.
83. Rutherford J. Gettens and Elisabeth West Fitzhugh, "Azurite and Blue Verditer," *Studies in Conservation* 11, no. 2 (1966), pp. 54–55.
84. Edgerton, p. 94.
85. *Privilegi et capitoli con altre gratie concesse alla fidelissima città di Napoli, & regno per li serenissimi ri di Casa de Aragona* (Milan, 1720), p. 163.
86. *Memoirs of the Council of Trent*, ed. Joseph Mendham (London, 1834), p. 337.
87. Jane Black, *Absolutism in Renaissance Milan: Plenitude of Power under the Visconti and the Sforza, 1329–1535* (New York, 2009), pp. 108–09, nn. 59–60.