

**STATES OF THE IMAGINATION:
KINGSHIP, CLASS AND RITUAL IN EARLY MODERN FLORENCE**

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Notice 1

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Thesis Summary

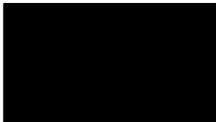
This thesis is a history of artisan festive brigades in Florence known as the *potenze* (lit. ‘the powers’), from the beginning of the ducal state in 1532 until their disappearance in the mid-17th century. It investigates male solidarities, spaces and networks, based on neighbourhood and occupational ties, and shows how these ties both informed, and were shaped by, the approximately 40 festive kingdoms the *potenze* mapped on to the city. The study examines how *potenze* brought these work and neighbourhood identities onto the public stage within a carnivalesque ritual genre, in which they played the lords of the ‘poor’ while the city’s nobility briefly acted as their ‘subjects’. A language of kingship and state was appropriated in order to articulate social grievances, but also to enter into a dialogue with the Medici princes of Florence, whom they expected to act as their patrons and mediate their everyday relationships. In important ways the politics of the festive stage was interwoven with a non-festive world of protest and negotiation.

The second part of the study addresses the transformation of the *potenze* from the late 16th century. It shows how the religious reform movement in Tridentine Italy vigorously opposed carnivalesque ritual, and that this, in tandem with a declining economy, had the effect of delegitimising the festive life and expenditure of these men. These structural shifts underpinned the decision to strip the *potenze* of their processional banners in 1610. As the study tracks the transformation of these brigades into purely devotional groups, dedicated to making pilgrimages to shrines and convents in the Florentine countryside, it analyses the rise of new female *potenze*. Despite implicit resistance, female groups were able to form and seize upon this model of artisan association because, on one hand, the disintegration of the carnivalesque genre made the *potenze* model less aggressively masculine, while, on the other, reformist ideas and initiatives effectively opened up a space in public life for the charitable and devotional activities of lay women.

Declaration of Original Work

This is to certify that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution and to affirm that to the best of the candidate's knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signed:

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the candidate.

David Rosenthal

Acknowledgements

Like many doctoral dissertations, and more than most I suspect, this one took too long to complete and produced too much chaos. Now that it is finished, however, the one task that remains is not a task at all, but a pleasure – thanking those who have helped me get it done.

Firstly, I thank my supervisor and friend Bill Kent at Monash University. It was Bill's empathetic analysis of the society of Renaissance Florence that first brought history properly to life for me. In the centuries that seem to have passed since then, his encouragement and openness, intellectual and personal, have always been inspiring. While the dissertation's deficiencies belong to me alone, its production relied heavily on Bill's sense of Florentine society, of what, archivally and editorially, would work and, not least, of humour.

At the history department at Monash, many of the staff and other postgraduates, past and present, were more than helpful during my candidacy. I'd like to especially thank Cecilia Hewlett, and also warmly acknowledge the help of Peter Howard, Val Campbell, Mark Peel, Natalie Tomas, Nick Eckstein, Wendy Perkins and Justine Heazlewood.

In the Florentine archives, there are so many people from whom tips come flying on a good day it is inevitable I will miss out many who assisted me. But I know the following people made a palpable impact. Michael Rocke, Ilaria Taddei, Kevin Murphy and Lorenz Böninger generously shared ideas and sources. I also benefitted from the archival nous of Bob Carlotti, Tony Molho, Rita Comanducci, Antonio Stopani, Caroline Fisher and Franco Franceschi. Not least, I must acknowledge Gino Corti, for his paleographical expertise as well as his decent rates. Since living in the UK, Alison Brown has read drafts of chapters and has been a constant source of encouragement. I also want to acknowledge the support and friendship of Alastair Dunning, Angeliki Pollali, Fabrizio Nevola, Adam Campbell and Geoff Allen. I also thank my parents, Hazel and Monty Rosenthal.

Most of all I thank my partner Jill Burke. This study would never have been completed without her. She listened to (or at least heard) many rambling monologues on the subject, offered countless useful suggestions and ideas, and helped organise the final text. Our children, Joe and Zac, have kept it all in perspective.

Abbreviations

Archival sources

Archivio di Stato di Firenze*

- CRS: Compagnie religiose soppresse da Pietro Leopoldo
- Capitoli: Capitoli delle compagnie religiose soppresse da Pietro Leopoldo
- CS: Conventi soppresse (Corporazioni religiose soppresse dal governo francese)
- Depos: Depositeria generale, parte antica
- DG: Decima granducale
- Guard.: Guardaroba medica
- MDP: Mediceo del principato
- Mss: Manoscritti
- Otto: Otto di guardia e balia, principato
- Parte: Capitani di Parte, numeri neri
- Parte, nb: Capitani di Parte, numeri bianchi
- Statuti: Statuti delle comunità autonome e soggette

AAF: Archivio Arcivescovile di Firenze

- VP: Visite pastorali
- LC: Libro di cancelleria
- FC: Filza di cancelleria

BLF: Biblioteca Laurenziana di Firenze

BNF: Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze

- FP: Fondo principale
- Magl.: Ms. Magliabecchiana
- Doccia: Conventi Soppresse, A. 5. 1876 ('Memorie del Convento', San Michele alla Doccia)
- 1525 census: Ms. Nuovi acquisti, 987
- 1629 list: Fondo Principale, II. IV. 330, ff. 333-5 (partially published in Bigazzi, *Iscrizione*, 13-17)

BRF: Biblioteca Riccardiana di Firenze

- Ricc.: Ms Riccardiana
- Moren.: Ms Moreniana
- Piccolo diario: Fondo palagi, 70 ('Piccolo diario delle cose della città di Firenze dall'anno 1580 all'anno 30 Aprile, sino al 1589')

Tintori: Istituto Horne, Università di San Onofrio dei Tintori

**All archival references are to the Archivio di Stato di Firenze unless otherwise stated*

Published sources

With the exception of the following frequently-cited primary sources, all citations are given as short titles in notes.

Arditi: Arditi, Bastiano, *Diario di Firenze e di altre parti della cristianità (1574-1579)* (Florence: Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1970).

Ricci: Ricci, Giuliano de', *Cronaca (1532-1606)*, ed. by Giuliana Saporì (Milan: Ricciardi, 1972).

Lapini: Lapini, Agostino, *Diario Fiorentino di Agostino Lapini: Dal 252 al 1596* (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1900).

1588 list: Published by A. M. Biscioni, in L. Lippi, *Il Malmantile Raquisato* (Prato, 1815), 13-14n.

Note on Transcriptions

Original orthography has largely been retained, despite its irregularities and inconsistencies, though square brackets have been used where clarification is required. Modern punctuation has often been introduced for clarity.

All abbreviations have been expanded, except for the contractions in addresses to the grand dukes and to the officials of government magistracies and other bodies:

S.A.(S.): Sua Altezza (Serenissima)

V.A.(S.): Vostra Altezza (Serenissima)

V.S: Vostra Signoria

Introduction

“His Excellency pisses himself laughing when he looks at these huge letters”, wrote Giovanfrancesco Lottini in May, 1545, “...so well formed and well written, and with that signature so finely done that you can’t tell if it says Pierone or Carlo, and whoever doesn’t look carefully is duped”.¹ Lottini, a secretary and humanist-in-waiting at the nascent court of Cosimo de’ Medici, second duke of Tuscany, was with his prince in Volterra. In Florence, at the other end of the letter, was the duke’s majordomo, Pierfrancesco Riccio. Riccio’s task at that moment was to organise an extravagant and unusual public spectacle for the annual feast of the city’s spiritual patron, St John the Baptist, to be held a month later.

The character at the centre of all this mirth, Piero di Giovanni, or Pierone – big Piero – as he was more commonly known, was a man who held a minor ceremonial post at the Palazzo.² He was, in legal terms, a non-citizen, a man who could not hold communal office, one of the *plebe* in the pejorative language commonly used by citizens and nobles. The letter of Pierone was of such interest to Cosimo and Lottini because he would be at the heart of the upcoming feast of the Baptist. Pierone had just been elected emperor of the Prato in the parish of Santa Lucia sul Prato where he lived, a large and overwhelmingly poor parish at the western edge of the city.³ This made him titular lord of the *potenze* (“powers”, in the sense of states), brigades of artisans and labourers who had mapped out Florence into a patchwork of kingdom territories since the late 15th century.

For Cosimo I and his entourage, the joke, clearly enough, was about identity. Emperor Pierone was no emperor, he was a plebeian who could barely write. The comic charge was generated, primarily, from chasmic differences in status – the perceived gap between the real Pierone and his regal mask, and between him and the real princes and emperors of Florence and Europe. Lottini’s contrived confusion between Pierone and Carlo – the latter the name of the Habsburg emperor Charles V, the most powerful man in Europe and the emperor to whom the new Medici dukes were technically vassals – only added piquancy to the comedy of role reversals. It was a status joke Pierone understood very well, or so the receipt of another *potenza*

¹ ‘S. Ex.a. si scompiscia della rissa in veder quei letteroni così ben piegati et ben scritti et con quella sottoscrittone così ben fatta, che non si cognoscie se dice Pierone o Carlo che chi non guarda sottilmente resta gabbato.’ Lottini to Riccio, May 15, 1545. MDP, 1171, f. 386; partially published by Tosi, ‘La festa’, 84.

² Pierone’s patronymic is found in Parte, 17, f. 116v (1559); A Pierone *donzello* is listed in that year’s list of the confraternity of the ‘famigli del palazzo’; Camera del commune, scritture diverse d’amministrazione, 9, f. 110r.

³ Pierone is censused as living in via Palazzuolo in 1551; BNF, F. P., II. I. 120, f. 190r. The familial structure of this household is not detailed in the census, which lists one hearth and eight people, three male and five female.

would suggest, the man accepting a ducal gift for his king, a certain “Francesco, known as the brain, who said he doesn’t know how to write”.⁴ Yet if Pierone’s regal pretensions were privately mocked, they were not simply a joke, or rather they were a joke that had to be taken quite seriously. The letter Pierone sent to Cosimo, written in the days after his election, was one supplication among many the *potenze* had given to Riccio and which had then been sent on to the duke. To these, Riccio was told, Cosimo had “conceded everything they asked”.⁵ But as their demands increased towards the day of San Giovanni to include the right to bear arms, Riccio showed greater caution than he had towards other *potenze* requests. “I will do nothing without the licence of His Excellency,” he wrote, which turned out to be a judicious act of deference to the prince – for Cosimo would explicitly deny what Pierone, for one, had asked for – in addition to mail and helmets, he wanted huge, two-handed swords so his imperial brigade could “make a display”.⁶

The above vignette opens up several of the key questions that drive this study, which aims to set out a history of the *potenze*, focusing on the period from the start of the Medici duchy in 1532 and the heyday of these brigades, through to their disappearance from the public stage in the mid-1600s. Immediately one observes two things: firstly, artisans were looking to assert public identities as festive kings; and secondly, a dialogue existed between these men – through the medium of petition, and soon of performance – with the political centre. What, then, were the connections between festive personae, territories and groupings and the everyday lives, spaces and solidarities of the men who created them? What was the nature of their festive conversations, especially with the prince? And how was that linked to the social and political relations of the quotidian civic world?

Historians of Florence have been aware of the *potenze* for almost a century and a half, ever since Iodoco del Badia published, in 1876, a number of key petitions and clear leads to more material in *Le signorie, o le potenze festeggianti del contado fiorentino* – a short book that remains the starting point for scholars today. Despite this, a rich body of sources for the study of artisan festive culture in early modern Europe has, by and large, languished in the archives. Given the enduring fascination with this sort of ritualised behaviour since the publication of Soviet literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin’s famous study of Rabelais in English in 1968, that fact

⁴ ‘...e perché detto Francesco detto ciervello dise no[n] sapere iscrivere io Piergiovani di Matteo Belli iscrivano del sopradecto re [h]o fatto la presente di mio prop[ri]a mano’. Belli, a weapon-maker, was writing for the king of the Piccino, in 1577; Depos., 984, ins. 53.

⁵ ‘Al Re di Camaldoli, et al Viceimp[eratore] della Porta San Friano, ha concesso tutto quello domandavano, come V.S. vedrà, nel fine della loro supplicationi che si rimanda con questa.’ MDP, 1171, f. 380 (Riccio to Lorenzo Pagni. May 9, 1545). None of these 1545 supplications from the *potenze* appear to have survived.

⁶ ‘Queste potentie et signorie vorrebbero de’ corsaletti et celate per honorare le feste. L’imp[eratore] vorrebbe el med[esimo], et delli spadoni a dua mane per far la mostra... Non ne farò nulla senza licentia di S.E.’; MDP, 376, f. 549r (Riccio to Cosimo I, between May 16 and 18, 1545).

begs for some kind of explanation, not least because it will allow me to set out the limited historiography on the *potenze* and situate my own approach.⁷

For decades now, social historians have been paying attention to “carnavalesque” practises – a term Bakhtin introduced – at public festivities, often during Carnival proper, in cities across 16th-century Europe, practises that were also manifestly present in the case of the Florentine *potenze*. Apart from the burlesquing or inversion of status roles, there was often a ritualised exposure and symbolic redress of social grievances. Potenze kings, for example, often demanded “tribute” from the workshops of their employer “subjects”. In opposition to the Lenten abstinence to come, carnivalesque rituals also commonly involved the representation and indulgence in material or bodily excesses – and we find *potenze* with names like the Lord of Abundance or Prince of Fertility, and plenty of signs of festive banqueting.⁸ The men of the Prato’s choice of an apparently corpulent man, big Piero, as *potenza* emperor in 1545 was, among other things, arguably informed by this ubiquitous trope of carnivalesque corporeality.⁹

While indebted to Bakhtin, historians, interested in specific events and their contexts, have for good reason been sceptical of his interpretation of this “world turned upside down”, a kind of neo-Marxist romanticism that saw carnivalesque laughter as celebrating the “temporary liberation from the prevailing truth of the established order”, a subversion from below of an elite’s official culture that represented the potentially revolutionary impulses of a subaltern class.¹⁰ The rigid division between “popular” and “elite/official” cultures that Bakhtin’s vision in part rests upon has not held up in the face of sustained scholarship. At the same time, the supposed subversiveness of carnivalesque ritual is also seen as deeply problematic – yet this issue, the question of Carnival’s radical promise, continues to focus debate on the subject. On one hand, it has been pointed out that throughout the early modern period tensions between status groups often erupted into violent rebellion (and repression) precisely during Carnival season, such as at Romans in 1580, the subject of a classic study by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, or in the Friuli in 1511, where Edward Muir has examined the factional and status strife that formed the preconditions for a ‘festive’ bloodletting.¹¹ It has also been pointed out that most carnivalesque festivities did not witness any uprisings or transformative political effects whatsoever, and historians have very often seen those events as having the opposite effect, operating as a “safety valve” that allowed tensions to be blown off in a way that reaffirmed the hierarchies and power relations of the social order. This theory draws on the work of the anthropologists Max Gluckman and Victor Turner, and while it jettisons the universalism of their structural-functionalist model – which suggests that ritual inversions are intrinsically

⁷ Bakhtin, *Rabelais*.

⁸ This theme is addressed in Chapter Two.

⁹ These common carnival themes are discussed, with extensive examples and bibliographies, in Burke, *Popular Culture*, ch. 7; Muir, *Ritual*, ch. 3.

¹⁰ Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, 109.

¹¹ Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival in Romans*; Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*. See also Bianco, *1511, la ‘crudel zobia grassa’*.

conservative – it nonetheless tends to put apparently stable or cyclical festivities in implicitly functionalist, and thus quite reductive, terms.¹² They have no discernible political significance except to reproduce the existing status quo, and the question of agency, in particular the agency of their artisan actors, seems to melt away, like a carnival king the morning after.¹³

This influential strand of carnival theory, whose best known exponent is Peter Burke, is arguably one of the factors that has militated against any sustained inquiry into the *potenze*, since ducal Florence never saw carnivalesque festivity transform into rebellion, or artisans and labourers stage anything remotely revolutionary. Because of this, the *potenze* have all too easily fallen victim to more specifically Florentine historiographical biases and agendas. Marcello Fantoni's claim 15 years ago, that "sedimented prejudices" against the duchy and an absence of critical thought had "left the vast arc of time between the principate of Alessandro (1532) to the death of Gian Gastone (1737) an almost completely unexplored terrain", was a little inflated at the time and is certainly no longer true, yet it is fair to say that social analysis, especially in the Anglophone tradition, remains thin on the ground.¹⁴ The overriding concern has been to chart the political and cultural dimensions of Medici state-building after the defeat of the Last Republic. Without seeking to diminish the importance of this work, the focus has been on princely power; the concrete ways in which power relations were actually conducted have rarely been interrogated. Thus the *potenze*, who usually surface in the sources at extraordinary festivities sponsored by the prince, are often seen as little more than an extension of Medici cultural politics and princely aspirations to *potere assoluto*, over the city as a whole and a politically emasculated nobility in particular. They were simply and unproblematically "appendages to court ceremonies", as R. Burr Litchfield has recently put it; or they were "groups of *popolani* to whom were conceded a part in the ritual play of the nobility"; or, for Michel Plaisance, "all initiative – even for their own merriment – was taken away from the bourgeoisie and the common people, even as the number of *potenze* multiplied".¹⁵ Richard Trexler, whose pioneering work inspired this study, sees the *potenze* by the time of the principate essentially as ducal servants, emerging from their neighbourhoods "wearing the trousers of the Medici".¹⁶ Here, too, the question of agency, certainly artisan agency, in festive

¹² Turner, *The Ritual Process*, esp. ch. 2; Gluckman, *Rituals of Rebellion*.

¹³ Burke, *Popular Culture*, 281-6. Muir in effect says something similar, when he compares his countryside uprising to Carnival practices of the city, which he sees as more controlled and temporary, and thus reaffirming existing hierarchies. Muir, *Mad Blood*, 197. Also Stallybrass and White, *The Politics and Poetics*, 'Introduction', esp. 14.

¹⁴ Fantoni, *La corte*, 9.

¹⁵ Litchfield, *Florence Ducal Capital*, par. 325, and see 272; Ciappelli, *Carnevale*, 276; Plaisance, *Florence*, 124. See also Casini, *I gesti*, 247-50, which, while not so dismissive, sees the *potenze* principally in terms of Medicean cultural politics.

¹⁶ Trexler, "The Youth are Coming!", 338-41. As Daniela Lombardi was first to note, this was in the context of a forced reading of the festival sources of 1577; Lombardi, *Povert  maschile*, 118n. See, in general, Trexler, *Public Life*, 399-418, 510-15. Trexler has misread the sources published by Del Badia to say that the emperor of the Prato was 'appointed' by the Medici

time, and by implication beyond it, is closed down, along with the perceived need to probe further into the nature of social relations. Artisan kings mechanically imitate noble or ducal performance, are devoid of strategies of their own, almost appear, as one Florentine put it in 1577, to celebrate the ruling family's dynastic moments "without discourse or judgement, though it's nothing to wonder at since it's the natural inclination [of the *plebe*] to praise who afflicts them".¹⁷

Yet there is a more complicated and interesting story to tell about the *potenze*, and about class relations and the nature of kingship, in early ducal Florence, one which starts with a bottom-up reading of the sources and which builds on an approach to carnivalesque practices set out by the safety valve notion's many discontents. As Chris Humphrey observed in a review of Carnival studies a few years ago, the inadequacy of the revolt/safety valve model becomes apparent in the face of a more thoroughly historicising perspective. In other words, the closer one looks at specific cases and their contexts, the less festive personae and behaviours seem severely bracketed off from normal time, and the more interwoven festive and everyday processes become. Thus, rather than begin with functionalist assumptions about what festivals that did not spark rebellions supposedly prevented from happening, it is more useful to ask what social or political effects those involved sought to produce through the deployment of ritual forms.¹⁸ To put this another way, the festive moment was not so much a world turned upside down as a "world turned upside down", a genre of performance or loose ensemble of cultural scripts to which all participants, artisans and prince alike, referred themselves, a genre which they inhabited but also manipulated. It is a shift in thinking – to what more recent anthropology has called practice theory – that relocates some degree of agency to historical actors.¹⁹

during the duchy (at 514). The emperors, like all *potenze* kings, were elected, but sought legitimation of their status from the Medici.

¹⁷ Arditi, 154. Much of the previously known detail about the *potenze* has in fact come out of an antiquarian tradition, motivated by a desire to celebrate a 'Medieval' or 'Renaissance' past. Del Badia, noted above, belonged to such a movement in the late 19th century, linked to the promotion of Florence's cultural, and briefly its capital, role in Risorgimento Italian nationalism. Pietro Gori, who drew on Del Badia's work to stage live events with '*potenze*' kings in 1902 and 1922, collected his findings in a volume of 1926. The book was dedicated to Mussolini, who pursued a similar cultural politics in the service of a Fascist nationalism, though it does not appear that the *potenze* – unlike the *calcio fiorentino* and *palio* in Siena – were revived again under the Fascist government. Gori, *Le feste*, esp. 314-23; Lasansky, *The Renaissance Perfected*, chs. 1-2, 4. Roberto Ciabani's volume of 1994 celebrating the *potenze* is in the same antiquarian tradition, and draws mainly upon it, and while it is not a reliable source for historians it speaks to the paucity of modern scholarship that Ciabani was the first to bring to light several of the petitions of 1577; Ciabani, *Le potenze*.

¹⁸ Humphrey, *The Politics of Carnival*, chs. 1-2. Along similar lines, see Scott, *Domination*, 172ff. Suggestively heading in this direction is the pioneering work of Natalie Davis; Davis, 'The Reasons for Misrule', in *eadem*, *Society and Culture*, 97-123. See also Muir, *Ritual*, 98-100.

¹⁹ For 'practice theory', see Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*, ch. 3; also her earlier critique of structuralist anthropology, *Eadem*, *Ritual Practice, Ritual Theory*.

This is the framework within which I intend to pose the questions set out at the start of this discussion. That the new dukes, like their Medici predecessors, had a political agenda in opening up the civic stage to artisan kings is not in doubt. But this was not a free lunch for the prince. The relationship between the Medici and these brigades was something closer to an alliance, as Trexler himself once described it.²⁰ As I will establish, Florentine workers creatively appropriated a common vocabulary of kingship and state in order to articulate communities in a public arena, manipulating festive codes to negotiate social demands and relationships, particularly with the prince. And as Cosimo I's unwillingness to allow Pierone's men to carry big swords suggests, the prince never took for granted their smooth incorporation into any Medicean festive program. To be sure, one must be very careful not to overstate the case for the agency or self-determination of the politically and economically marginalised.²¹ Yet it is equally important to understand that the status quo was never a given, as is implied in the safety-valve model, a static state of affairs that revellers returned to after their day of kingship was over. Instead, any orchestration of power relations requires constant maintenance, and is always a work in progress. If hierarchies were never seriously threatened, my analysis of the interpenetration of festive and quotidian politics will suggest that the men of the *potenze* not only voiced the grievances that arose from their everyday relations but sought to shape the pattern of those relations to their own benefit.

The first section of this study tells that story. Chapter One delves into the way artisans organised *potenze*, how these informal brigades were underpinned by, and shaped, male sociabilities, solidarities and spaces of neighbourhood and work identities. The information about individual kings and their officials furnished by the ducal treasury, the Depositeria, and above all the archive of the Capitani di Parte Guelfa – which in the duchy was in charge not only of public ceremony but of public space and works more broadly – is used to draw out the links between the *potenze* and the city's formal lay corporations, the confraternities.²² These sources reveal how many *potenze* officials played leadership or mediating roles within the everyday communities that they looked to give shape to and represent on the festive stage. Used together, the two sets of material offer insights not only into the local politics of community, but also into the criss-crossing networks that characterised artisan Florence in the Cinquecento and which arguably lent cohesion to the civic subculture of the *potenze* – the very existence of which constitutes *prima facie* evidence of a class identity.

²⁰ Trexler, *Public Life*, 515. See also Trexler, 'Follow The Flag,' in *The Workers*, esp. 60, his concluding remarks.

²¹ As discussed in a review of recent work on early modern Italy by Hughes Dayton, 'Rethinking Agency'.

²² For the Parte Guelfa, an aristocratic club that had always staged chivalric spectacles and until the mid-15th century had an important political role in the republic, see Brown, 'The Guelf Party', in *eadem*, *The Medici in Florence*, 103-42. The Parte's expanded role as a ducal magistracy began in 1547, when it absorbed the Ufficiali di Torre, the magistracy responsible for roads, rivers and fortifications.

This analysis sets the scene for Chapter Two. Here, I outline the narrow politics within which the dukes, and their predecessors, patronised the *potenze* as they sought to establish their supremacy over the other families of the republic, but it sets this against the wider drama of deepening status distinctions that in the first instance explains the rise of the worker kings. The dukes looked to present the *potenze* and their patronage of them as one element in the creation of civic peace – as our idea of a status quo might have been framed by contemporaries. Through a close reading of festive and non-festive negotiations, I will establish how that Medicean peace had a properly transactional nature.

The second section of this study addresses a different set of issues, those raised by the demise, or rather transformation, of the *potenze*. At the festivities of July 1610 to mark the birth of an heir to Grand Duke Cosimo II, the *potenze* were stripped of their banners. I will show that behind this act lay a combination of factors that had fatally undermined the carnival genre of the 16th century. Chapter Three examines the penetration of the Catholic Reform movement into the parishes of Florence in the decades after the Council of Trent to show that initiatives to “Christianise” the poor had the effect of delegitimising key elements of the carnivalesque ritual universe, in particular the sacralisation of artisan festive kingship. At the same time – and creating fertile terrain for reformers, who wanted to see festive expenditures transferred to charitable works – I will show how the harsher economic climate of the late 16th and 17th centuries, in particular the transformation of the Florentine textile industry, eroded the occupational identities upon which the *potenze* were largely based. Artisan agency was not extinguished in this process, but was disciplined in new ways, with reformist imperatives to an extent internalised within their communities. The later parts of Chapter Three will discuss the survival of the *potenze* after the confiscation of the flags in 1610, but show how they were mainly confined to just one of their traditional activities, taking gifts in pilgrimage to Marian shrines and Mendicant convents outside the city, and how they gradually became indistinguishable from their confraternal alter-egos. Here, however, we will also see how groups of artisan women took up the model of the reformed *potenze* in the early 17th century and started making their own trips to the same “holy places” in the Florentine *contado*. My analysis will show that artisan women, who were finding work in the textile industry just as men were experiencing endemic unemployment, seized on the space opened up in public life by reformist ideas and initiatives, despite, and in part because of, their marginalisation from official confraternal life.

Chapter Four looks at the last significant appearance of the *potenze*, or rather a representation of them, on the early modern civic stage, briefly revived by Cosimo II for a courtly spectacle that took place on the river Arno in 1619. A coda to Chapter Three and to the study as a whole, this chapter will trace the appearance of unemployed textile workers on the Arno in the 17th century as part of the “public works” projects of the duchy, and show how that informed the river battle between the kings of the weavers and dyers. Here, as working class

Florentines bore the brunt of the city's severe economic problems, we will see how Cosimo II looked to recall the dynamic of exchange between the old artisan kings and the prince in the establishment of a social peace, but that this was now presented as spectacle, generated entirely from within the world of the court.

The social history of ducal Florence still mostly remains to be written, or at least synthesised. While I am confident that the overwhelming majority of the surviving sources directly related to the *potenze* have now been unearthed, I am all too aware of the other archives that could have been systematically exploited to deepen and nuance a study with such broad themes – the large and still largely unexplored archives of the Wool and Silk Guilds, the archive of the Otto di Guardia, the city's main criminal magistracy, or the property and rental records of the Decima Granducale, to name but a few. Faced with the choice of a study with a more limited time frame that reached out laterally to take in some of those sources, and one that follows a narrower archival thread across more than a century, I have pursued the latter course. Yet the rise and fall of the *potenze* seemed to demand such an approach, and it has allowed the fashioning of a narrative that aims to infiltrate a number of seemingly familiar histories with fresh material and questions, even if the resulting arguments have a clear sense of their own provisionality. In other words, it is in a heuristic spirit that I set out what I hope is a compelling story.

Chapter One

‘Under My Potenza’: Networks, Communities, Kingdoms

In 1507, Piero Parenti recorded in his chronicle that on the night of October 8 “a lightning bolt hit the state, on the tower of the Porta al Prato, a region of the walls and our city commonly called [the district] of the emperor, and destroyed a piece of wall”.¹ Parenti’s casual allusion to the potenza emperor of the Prato and his kingdom, centred on the large wedge of open ground on the outskirts of Santa Maria Novella known as the Prato d’Ognissanti, speaks volumes. Though his comment is in fact the earliest datable reference we have to the imperial Prato, it reveals an urban topography already quite deeply inscribed into the Florentine collective consciousness – so much so that Parenti could recall it, no gloss required, as simply another means to orientate potential readers. In subsequent decades chroniclers and diarists would roll off a litany of potenze brigades and their locations as second nature, with the name of at least one kingdom, the Biliemme, becoming the everyday description of that district.² Indeed the period roughly between 1500 and 1600 was the century of the potenze. Albeit without any tidy continuity, during the Cinquecento the number of brigades grew as their “kingdoms” or “states” became ever more integrated into the Florentine urban fabric and into the mental co-ordinates of the city’s inhabitants. This was especially true, naturally enough, for artisans and labourers themselves. In 1610, when Grand Duke Cosimo II called for a census of the kingdoms, 44 groups were able, quickly and sometimes with considerable annotation, to count or estimate the numbers of artisan men, women and children within their territories, offering a total of 49,606 people out of a population of around 70,000.³

The task of this chapter is to map out these coordinates, to identify the spaces, networks and solidarities that underpinned, and in turn were shaped by, this festive subculture, and thus to tease out what the *potenze* bring to our understanding of male artisan urban association more widely.⁴ Arguably the most influential model scholars have used to understand the 16th century

¹ ‘A dì xiii adhora circa vii di nocte cadda una saetta in su la publica in su la torre dalla porta al Prato, regione della mura e nostra città, vulgarmente chiamate dello imperadore, e levatovi un merlo’. BNF, FP, II.V.171, f. 2r. (‘Diario fiorentino del med., [Piero Parenti] dal settembre 7 all’agosto 1518’). My thanks to Jill Burke for sharing this reference.

² During an outbreak of smallpox in 1574 Bastiano Arditì located its victims in “the area of Biliemme, in San Bernaba”. Arditì, 16. The census of 1610 located the Biliemme as being ‘in Biliemme’; Parte 1478, f. 392r. See also Balducci, *Quaderno*, 108, Cerretani, *Ricordi*, 35ff, Coppi, *Cronaca*, 51f. Ricci, 215ff, BRF, *Piccolo diario*, 123ff.

³ Parte, 1478, ff. 291r-92v. Between 1560 and the plague of 1630 the Florentine population trend was upwards: in 1562 it was 59,216, growing to 76,023 in 1622. Del Panta, *Una traccia*, 37.

⁴ There were also about half a dozen potenze, known as signori, outside the city walls, with the contado’s own emperor based 10km to the west of Florence in the commune of Campi. But while countryside examples and comparisons will at times be introduced to

is at core an atomisation thesis, where the pan-urban links once fostered by artisans and labourers are replaced by the increasingly dense and enclosed world of the neighbourhood. This model, powerfully set out a generation ago by Ronald Weissman in his classic study of Florentine confraternities – still one of the only social histories to bridge the faultline between republic and duchy – was not proposed simply as a description of associational trends, but as an argument about socio-political change. Here, the lower classes are stranded in the parishes of the periphery, static and inert, their spatial isolation both a metaphor for, and a cause of their increasingly subordinate, passive and marginal role in respect to the aristocratising and courtly society emerging in the 16th century.⁵ It is certainly true that in the first century of the duchy artisans and labourers became more densely concentrated in the urban periphery, partly as a result of the relative absence of new housing compared to population growth; and it is also true that these “*pendici*”, at the edge of city and civility, became more homogeneously lower class as some wealthier families abandoned the very poorest districts.⁶ Yet in a number of ways the model is problematic. Firstly it harbours the fairly common assumption that neighbourhoods were disempowering traps, “ghettos” as Sam Cohn called them in his geographically determinist explanation of socio-political change in the wake of the Ciompi revolution.⁷ Yet the neighbourhood-based associations of the *potenze* were far from passive, as we will later see, and one could indeed put up the opposite case: that a more intense focus on neighbourhood experience, and with it a sense of collectively claimed space, in fact enhanced the potential for these men, overwhelmingly non-citizens, to assert themselves on both a local and a wider, civic stage.⁸ The more fundamental critique of this model, however, is that it is too static to begin with, taking little account of the quotidian rhythms that brought men out of the familiar streets of the neighbourhood and into equally familiar streets of the city’s commercial centre – rhythms that included, crucially, going to and returning from work, both in the centre itself and in particular workshop districts. In fact, as Richard Trexler and Weissman himself were the first to outline, confraternities based on such craft links sprang up in the 15th century and proliferated

elucidate or nuance major points (primarily from Campi with its relatively rich sources), my focus will be on the urban sphere, which had its own distinctive dynamics of association. The only previous work on the contado brigades, and a useful overview, is Del Badia, *Le Signorie*.

⁵ Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 205-20.

⁶ For social topographies using the census data of 1551, 1562 and 1632, see Litchfield, *Florence Ducal Capital*, paras 170-3, for patricians; paras 278 and 283-9, for artisans with no surname and, overlapping considerably with that category, textile workers. More schematically, see Litchfield, *Dalla repubblica al granducato*, esp., 10-15. For a detailed demography of one such outlying area, drawing the same conclusions, see Diana, ‘Il gonfalone Drago Verde’, 64 and *passim*. For the rough residential topographies of the 15th century, not greatly different, of textile artisans and labourers, see Franceschi, *Oltre*, 105-6, 142-5; Cohn, *Laboring Classes*, chs. 3 and 5. For common perceptions of the city’s *pendici*: Arditi, 16, 62, 143; Eckstein, *The District of the Green Dragon*, 4-9; F. W. Kent, ‘Ties of Neighbourhood and Patronage’, 96.

⁷ Cohn, *The Laboring Classes*, 119-24, 127-8.

⁸ Others have drawn similar conclusions for the Ciompi revolution itself. Trexler, ‘Neighbors and Comrades’; Stella, *La révolte*. On this general theme, see Garrioch and Peel, ‘Introduction’.

in the 16th, joining artisans from across the city in ties of mutual obligation.⁹ As this chapter examines the *potenze*, in concert with confraternities, what will emerge is, to be sure, a city of neighbourhoods. But it will also become clear that the local spaces that men inhabited – and artisans, as we shall see, experienced several, overlapping, forms of neighbourhood – were hardly the only arenas of sociability and solidarity. Indeed, what the evidence suggests is that many, if not most, artisans enjoyed several axes, or foci, of associational life, a range of stronger and weaker contacts, familiarities and loyalties; and that if anything their networks were becoming more multi-stranded in the early ducal city, their degrees of separation fewer. Arguably this was one of the factors that invigorated what, in the end, was an interconnected urban subculture, one in which men could imagine themselves as belonging, among other things, to a citywide class.

1. Outlines: Kingdoms and Neighbourhoods

When Pierone, the Palazzo Vecchio functionary briefly discussed in the Introduction, was made emperor of the Prato on the evening of May 10, 1545, the duke's majordomo Pierfrancesco Riccio hurried off a report of the election to a ducal secretary who was with Cosimo I in Pisa.

Finally the council congregated to the sound of the bell, according to the usual method of Santa Lucia, and with very great favour and universal approval our Pierone was created EMPEROR. And so yesterday evening, at one and a half hours after sunset, the principals among the imperial electors dragged him from the Palace and, when he arrived at the border of the state, he was taken and brought by the crowd to the home of his imperial majesty, with such cries, noise, festivity and happiness that you could not have seen anything better.¹⁰

In his account, Riccio reflexively grasped the two central moments of ritual passage: firstly, the election of Pierone, and secondly, his ceremonial translation across the “border of the state”. With these rites the kingdom was at once conceptually, associatively and territorially reconstructed.

As with the great majority of *potenze* states, the community imagined and enacted by the men of the Prato was one of *vicinato* or *contrada*, of neighbourhood. And neighbourhood

⁹ Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 164n, 201-202; Trexler, *Public Life*, 404-5; more recently, Taddei, “Per la salute”, *passim*. The number of Florentine confraternities more than doubled between 1400 and 1500 – from 69 to 163; *Ibid.*, 144n. A list of 1589, probably reasonably complete, gives a figure of 139: L. Ferrini, ‘Sommario delle Compagnie’, Published in Aranci, *Formazione religiosa*, 335-9.

¹⁰ ‘Onde, finalmente congregato il consiglio per il suono della campana, secondo il solito di sancta Lucia, fu creato con grandissimo favore et plauso universale el nostro Pierone tavolaccino IMPERATORE. Et cosi hierisera a 1½ hora di notte li principali dello imperio electori lo trassono di palazzo, et giunto che fu all’entrare dello stato fu preso et portato di peso all’habitatione di Sua imperatoria Maestà con tanta grida, con tanti romori, con tanta festa et allegrezza che meglio non si potette vedere.’ MDP, 376, f. 200r.

provides us here with a prism through which we can start to address the dynamics of space, territory, and memory that were so crucial to the construction of artisan social identities and their public projection. In most cases we do not know where the exact boundaries of these kingdom neighbourhoods were, nor precisely how they defined their edges – where and who was included and, correspondingly, what belonged to surrounding “jurisdictions”. Yet as the next chapter will discuss, neither was this matter ever fixed in absolute terms for artisans and labourers themselves, but rather was part of the very process of creating and recreating the state. That said, once established, kingdoms on the whole were fairly durable and stable urban spaces, remarkably so when one recalls that *potenze* were informal associations and that their kingdoms were realms that, at least in the first instance, were codified as fictive, belonging only to an ephemeral festive moment.

That geography, or sub-geography, by no means aped the contours of the city’s official neighbourhoods – the ancient jurisdiction of the parish or the *gonfalone*, the political ward that under the republic had been vital to taxation and the selection of office-holding citizens, and was still used in the duchy in population censuses and for the administration of the Decima property tax.¹¹ *Potenze* sometimes made strong identifications between their states and these more formal districts, but from a topographical point of view the connection was largely notional.¹² Kingdoms were, on the whole, smaller, more intimate spaces. Two adjacent territories in Santo Spirito, for example, drew explicit links to the *gonfalone*: the Nebbia, which had its “*residenza*” – the place a *potenza* gathered under its flag and where a wooden stage and throne was erected – at the “corner of via Maggio”, the foot of Ponte Santa Trinita; and the Sferza, based in Piazza San Felice.¹³ The Nebbia was in the *gonfalone* of the Nicchio and it flew the symbol of a “*nicchio marino*”, a seashell, on a white field;¹⁴ the Sferza brigade marked out a territory in the eponymous *gonfalone*, and called itself “the men of the Potenza and Gonfalone of the Sferza”.¹⁵ The Sferza, in fact, is one of only a handful of kingdoms whose borders can be traced with precision – at least when they momentarily crystallised in 1599, during a territorial dispute with one of its neighbours, the monarchy of the Sasso.¹⁶ While the *gonfalone* of the

¹¹ The *gonfaloni* were the main divisions used in the census of 1555, for example: BNF, FP, II, I, 120. For the Decima in the duchy, see Litchfield, *Emergence*, 104-5, 215; For the *gonfalone* during the 15th century republic, see Kent and Kent, *Neighbours and Neighbourhood*; Eckstein, *The District*, ch. 5.

¹² Not unlike the territorial gangs of artisan fist fighters who met to do battle on the bridges of 16th and 17th century Venice, whose sense of neighbourhood was only notionally related to parish and *sestiere*. Davis, *The War of the Fists*, ch.1, esp. 40. Unlike the *potenze*, however, the Venetian bands that formed around various neighbourhood and workplace districts were also roughly assembled into two citywide factions, the Nicolotti and Castellani.

¹³ Parte, 1478, f. 70 (1610). See Appendix for a map of Florence with the meeting places of *potenze* marked out.

¹⁴ Paganone, *Ordini, Feste, et Pompe*, f. 5v.

¹⁵ ‘huomini della Potenza e Gonfalone della Sferza’. Parte, 55, f. 43v (1610). The earliest known reference to the Sferza is 1577. Depos., 984, ins. 68.

¹⁶ The dispute was around the ownership of via delle Caldaie. Parte, 50, f. 184v.

Sferza extended from the back of the Piazza Santo Spirito all the way to the southern walls of the city, the kingdom of the Sferza was a small fraction of that area, a block bounded by via delle Caldaie, Scale (Mazzetta), Romana and San Giovanni (del Campuccio). “Inside the boundaries of these streets should be its dominion, and here it can put up its flag and do the other things that *potenze* usually do”, the Parte ruled, the ensign in question no doubt the “whip” of the *gonfalone*’s name.¹⁷

In linking themselves to the *gonfaloni*, *potenze* appropriated a heavy freight of political history, the resonances of which will be discussed in Chapter Two, yet apart from the Sferza and the Nebbia only one other *potenza* as far as I am aware made an explicit connection of this kind.¹⁸ The parish, on the other hand, was a neighbourhood that had a far greater profile and a firmer topographical outline in the everyday lives and deaths of artisans and labourers. Men habitually identified themselves by their parish of residence. It was here, assuming frequent injunctions were obeyed, that Florentines of all ranks confessed and communed at Easter. The parish also had both the right and duty of burial, which for the destitute was essential and, for the overwhelming majority of lower-class men and women the only affordable, and often the most desirable, option – only the better off could afford to be interred in one of the prestigious mendicant convents.¹⁹ Indeed, if artisans and labourers had always recognised the urban parish as one of the meaningful formulations of neighbourhood to which they belonged, such connections, as we will see below, became deeper in the later 16th century.

Yet, like the *gonfaloni*, the geography of the parish did not usually determine these men’s territorial horizons when they gathered as *potenze*. Like several other brigades, the men of the Sferza might invoke their parish as they presented the kingdom – the “*signoria* of the Sferza in the parish of San Felice in Piazza” had its *residenza* in the *piazza* in front of the parish church.²⁰ The Nebbia on one occasion called itself the “Nebbia and golden seashell in the parish of San Iacopo Sopr’Arno”, and it, too, was based only a few metres from the parish church, on Borgo San Iacopo.²¹ However the Nebbia took in via Maggio, most of which was in the parish of San Felice in Piazza, while that parish street, among others, was completely outside the neighbouring Sferza’s territory. Meanwhile, the large parishes of the outskirts usually contained several kingdoms, neighbourhoods within neighbourhoods. The imperial Prato’s territory took in the church of Santa Lucia sul Prato, which framed one end of the Prato d’Ognissanti. But

¹⁷ ‘e tutto il ristretto di dette strade sia il suo dominio et qui ci possa inalberare l’insegna et fare l’altre cose solite per simile potenze’. Parte, 50, f. 184v. The rare border marker of the *gonfaloni* of Sferza and Drago is still visible on Via S. Agostino. Reproduced in Eckstein, *The District of the Green Dragon*.

¹⁸ This was the Biscia at the northern foot of the Ponte Vecchio in the small *gonfalone* of the Vipera – both words translate as serpent.

¹⁹ Strocchia, *Death and Burial*, 90ff.

²⁰ ‘Il signoria della Sferza nel popolo di San Felice in Piazza’, Parte, 1486, f. 76r (1628)

²¹ “... nebia et nicchio d’oro nela parochia di San Iacopo sopr’Arno”. Parte, 1478, f. 215r (1610).

beyond the borders of Pierone's state – though still part of the parish of Santa Lucia – was the Ponte Nano or Pantano brigade, which marked out a kingdom near the end of via della Scala in a place that it described in 1610 as “the little *piazza* of our count of Pantano”.²²

Like Santa Lucia, Sant' Ambrogio, on the other side of the town, was one of Florence's most populous parishes – and it is in and around that parish that some of the best evidence survives of artisans' attempts to inscribe the territory of their kingdom-neighbourhoods into local and civic memory. The Città Rossa in Piazza Sant' Ambrogio was one of the emergent *potenza* of the late 15th century and, like the imperial Prato, one of the official *armeggerie*, or jousting, brigades of the Cinquecento. The Città Rossa monumentalised its existence by building two stones into the corner of the church, the first put up before 1486, the other, just above it, in 1577 (fig. 1).²³ In the same way, one of the Città Rossa's parish neighbours, the Mela, another of the *armeggerie* brigades, put up its own stone at its streetcorner *residenza* (fig. 2). The Città Rossa's earlier stone – and perhaps the Mela's too – may have dated to 1473, since this was the date scored into a stone that another of its neighbours, the Monteloro, also an *armeggerie* brigade, wrapped around its own streetcorner (fig. 3).²⁴ Streetcorners were the hubs of these and many other kingdoms, and one imagines men mustering under their stone emblems at festive moments. But it is also clear that they could act as boundary markers. The Monteloro wrapped a second stone around the Canto al Monteloro that may display the remains of the word *confine*. Meanwhile, in the 1510s or early 1520s, the Città Rossa complemented its earlier stone – which bears the name of the *potenza* along with its device, a walled city with three towers – with a tabernacle on the opposite wall, the same emblem beneath the figure of the parish's patron saint (figs. 4 and 5).²⁵ In effect the Città Rossa created a threshold where Piazza Sant' Ambrogio meets Borgo La Croce, and it seems quite likely that this marked, or at least came to mark, the boundary between the Rossa and its second parish neighbour, the Piccione, which gathered down Borgo La Croce at the Porta alla Croce gate (fig. 13). Some index of the Rossa's success in chiselling

²² ‘la piazzola di nostro Conte di Pantano’. Parte, 1478, f. 190r (1610). In 1579, the parishioners of Santa Lucia spelt out their parish boundaries as ‘da mezo borgo Ongnisantti inversso el Prato, Palazuolo per insino alla via de Caraii, via della Schala Ripoli, el Prato per insino al ponte alle Mosse fuora della porta al Prato’. CRS, 1770, unpag., btw. ff. 651 and 652. The long via della Scala was known as Pantano da Ripoli from the walls until via Polvorosa, today part of via degli Orti Oricellari.

²³ The latest date for the lower *lapida* is 1486. It appears in the fresco located inside the chapel of the Miracle to the left of the high altar, finished that year by Cosimo Rosselli. Borsook, ‘Cults and Imagery’, 176. Discussed below in Chapter 3.

²⁴ This was in the adjacent parish of San Piero Maggiore. Trexler quite plausibly suggested a date of 1473 for the lower stone of the Città Rossa, since this date was not only carried on the Monteloro's stone but also on a stone plaque on the oratory of the confraternity of San Michele della Pace, also on the Piazza Sant' Ambrogio. I will explore the context for the placing of these early stones in Chapter Three. Trexler, *Public Life*, 400-1.

²⁵ This tabernacle, unquestionably from the Della Robbia workshop, is usually attributed to Giovanni della Robbia. Marquand suggests, based on other work by Giovanni for the church, that it was made in 1513, but the dating remains uncertain. Marquand, *Giovanni della Robbia*, 107-8. See also Burke, ‘Florentine Art’, 87-90.

borders into the urban fabric is provided by an 18th-century plaque placed under the tabernacle, added to the existing ensemble more than a half century after the *potenze* had ceased to exist (fig. 4). It calls on the passer by to stop and remember that Pope Pius VII passed “through these two neighbourhoods” in 1705 and – reprising the gesture of Sant’ Ambrogio above – gave the apostolic benediction to the inhabitants of both sides.²⁶

2. Inside the Kingdom: The Local Arena

Building a kingdom into the city’s fabric played a mnemonic role in the renewal of the territorial community – and at critical moments, such as the election of a new king, a large body of men might participate in reconstituting that identity, transforming the monarch into a charismatic totem as they became his “subjects”. In his account of Pierone’s election as Prato emperor in 1545, Riccio continued that “once in the house, the hand-kissing and the display of reverence lasted a great part of the night, and they rent from him not only his clothes but his very flesh, as he was besieged in this ceremony by more than 2,000 people.”²⁷ Some 65 years later, when one of Pierone’s successors, emperor Alessandro Biliotti, censused all those “under my *potenzia*”, he claimed that every able-bodied adult male in the territory, 866 by his calculation, were his “*uomini da fazione*”, men ready to act for the kingdom.²⁸

But it was a more discrete, if porous, group that actively recreated the *potenza* brigade itself, that orchestrated the kingdom’s ritual and sought to define that male constituency as the king’s extended retinue. The Corvo, at the foot of the Ponte alla Carraia, explained in its census report that “those men of the said *potenza* number 340 in all, and making festivities for the said *potenza* there are 130, and the rest would be very good for other necessary occasions ... and the said men in the said territory of the said lord agree to what was worked out in their presence.”²⁹ That last figure seems roughly indicative. In an incomplete census of the city of 1525 – listing

²⁶ ‘Me ferma passegiero, leggi, per queste due contrade passò l’immortal Pio VII P. O. M L’Anno MDCCV Il Di VIII Maggio. E Comparti Ai devoti ed umiliati Abitenti l’apostolica Benedizione’.

²⁷ ‘Posto in casa il bacia mani et il far di R[everen]tia durò per gran pezzo della notte che gl’hebbono a consumar non solo panni, ma le carni proprie, essendo assediato da questo cerimonia in numero di più che 2 mille persone.’ MDP, 376, f. 202v.

²⁸ ‘Fassi fede per me Alessandro d’Andrea Billiotti al presente imperatore de la potentia del Prato chome sotto la mia potezia c’è la pie isscite anime. E prima: fanciuli maschi e femine da anni 12 in giù, 1877, done maritate e vedove, 972, uomini da fazione, 866, vechi decrepiti, 193’ Parte, 1478, f. 189r. The Cornacchia also used the same terms: ‘Homini che sono sottoposti al marchese della Cornachia da fatione sono in tutto numero 300 in circha’. *Ibid.*, f. 157r

²⁹ “e quali huomini di detta potenza sono numero 340 in tutto, e da e per festegiare per detta potenza a ariveranno numero 130, in restante saranno buonissimi a altro ochasione ochorenti e detti huomini in detto tiritoro di detta signore conforme a che s’è visto a loro presenza.’ Parte 1478, f. 194r.

16 *potenze* in the quarters of Santa Croce and Santo Spirito – the numbers cited range from 50 to 120, the average about 80.³⁰ It was a group of these kinds of dimensions that gathered to elect or depose a king – the “council” of the Prato, or the “approximately 150 men” who, in 1577, elected from among themselves the king and officials of the Graticola, based in Piazza San Lorenzo.³¹ These were the men who might be willing to make a contribution towards a kingdom’s festive expenses. In 1559, the king of the Camaldoli or Colomba spoke of the “men of the king”, numbering 146, each of whom agreed to pay towards a “a most worthy triumph” for the San Giovanni celebrations of that year.³²

To examine these *potenze* solidarities is to begin to look at the dynamics of male artisan association and to put some detail inside the bare outlines of the territories sketched above. Neighbourhood was a social and physical landscape punctuated and connected by places of traffic and convergence. The streetcorners and *piazze*, often in front of churches, at which *potenze* made their “*residenze*”, were, to be sure, strategically chosen. They were where a king could be seen and, in turn, visually command several streets, something patrician palace-builders well understood, and often they were points of passage in civic processional topographies.³³ But in the first instance they were junctions in an everyday ecology of the street. They were where men “hung out” (*piazzeggiare*): avoid the streetcorners and talk in *piazza* if you do not want to be overheard, one 14th-century chronicler advised.³⁴ Dice and other gambling games were also commonly played on streetcorners, an everyday activity if a little overemphasised in the sources due to the frequent prohibitions against it.³⁵ It was sometimes at these places, especially streetcorners, that certain locales stand out as significant in the forging of local networks. Bakeries, for example, were not only numerous, but spread widely and reasonably evenly throughout the city.³⁶ They acted as points of confluence and it is no surprise to find that bakers themselves could become mediating figures, link-men in a local arena. Lorenzo Ciabani said in 1610 that he was “baker at the Vacca [and] archduke of the *potenza* of the Vacca” just north of the Mercato Vecchio, the bakery itself named as the *residenza* of the

³⁰ BNF, NA, 987, unpag. The dating of this census as March-April 1525 is based on the fact that the writer identifies Giuliano di Piero Pitti as *gonfaloniere*. In addition, a few brigades in 1610 appear to have understood the census to only include the *potenza per se* rather than the entire population of the territory, and gave similar kinds of numbers: the Catena counted only 64 men, the Graticola 74 ‘sotto detto regimento’. Parte, 1478, ff. 161r, 169r.

³¹ Paganone, *Ordini, feste, et pompe*, f. 3r.

³² For the 1559 list, Parte, nb, 340, unpag..

³³ See Casini, *I gesti*, 223-46; Testaverde, ‘La decorazione’.

³⁴ Paolo da Certaldo, ‘Libro di buoni costumi’, 374. Discussed in Murphy, ‘Piazza Santa Trinita’, ch. 1. Murphy also analyses in more depth the *piazza* as a space of sociability. See particularly, Benedetto Dei’s late 15th century list of *piazza* activities – gambling, dancing, jousting, stone fighting, and so on. Dei, *Cronica*, 79.

³⁵ On gambling in *piazza* and the 14th and 15th century provisions against it: *ibid.*; Taddei, ‘Gioco d’azzardo’; Zorzi, ‘Battagliole e giochi’. More concerted government attempts to stop or at least rigorously limit streetcorner and *piazza* gambling from the second half of the 16th century are discussed in Chapter Three.

³⁶ Litchfield, *Florence Ducal Capital*, par. 237.

brigade.³⁷ The 1610 king of the Sferza was also a baker, as was possibly Simone Caluri, the king of the Graticola in 1577.³⁸ In the *potenza* of the Catena, which met at the eponymous streetcorner, the brigade's flagbearer that year – a central *potenza* figure who probably retained that crucial symbol of corporate identity between outings – declared himself to be “Vincentio di Piero Papini, baker at the Catena”.³⁹

More vital than bakeries, however, were taverns. In the Sferza-Terra Rossa border dispute of 1599, the Parte, after it had heard “both sides together with their procurators”, ruled that the Sferza's territory “should begin at the Dei palace on the street of the Schale and run to the house of Iacopo de' Medici on the *piazza* San Felice, taking in all the *piazza* and then turning up via Romana until the tavern of the Buca, then turning along via San Giovanni until the corner of via delle Caldaie and following the said via delle Caldaie until it ends up back at the Canto of the Dei.”⁴⁰ Here, Piazza San Felice, where the Sferza gathered, was joined to places that implicitly formed an itinerary of the neighbourhood. There will be more to say in the following chapter about palaces, which were key sites for artisans in the ritualisation of festive contract. Taverns, meanwhile, held a prominent place in homosocial culture. Often located at streetcorners, they were reflexively linked to them in the social imagination – do not be caught “at the streetcorners or at the tavern,” one neighbourhood confraternity warned its members who were claiming aid for sickness.⁴¹ The tavern provided, or at least was perceived to provide, a low-risk, public space for transgressive activities. Particularly, taverns stand out as sites for gambling and for the pursuit and practice of sodomy, intrinsic to Florentine male culture, and often an exchange between males who shared the same neighbourhood.⁴² Moreover, they were places where, as

³⁷ ‘... Lorenzo di Salvatore Ciabani fornaio alla Vacha, Arciduca della potenza della Vacha. Mi trovo sotto el mio arciducato della Vacha ...’ Parte, 1478, f. 166r.

³⁸ For Iacopo di Raffaello Cini of the Sferza, *Ibid.*, f. 211r, 234r. The Graticola boss of 1577 was Simone di Giovanni Caluri, and a Simone di Giovanni, a baker, appears in the parish confraternity of San Lorenzo, the Concezione e SS Sacramento in S Lorenzo, from 1570-4. CRS 636, Part 1, f. 136r.

³⁹ ‘Vincentio di Piero Papini, fornaio alla Catena’. Parte, 1478, ff. 161r. In 1610, a baker, Constanzo di Zanobi, was also flagbearer of the Spada, based at the parish church of San Paolo in Santa Maria Novella. *Ibid.*, ff. 196r, 250r; his trade is nominated in the confraternal sources for San Paolo, CRS, 120, A. XCIX, no.2, 59v (1609).

⁴⁰ ‘Udito le dette parte insieme con il loro procuratori ... dichiarorno che il Dominio del Signore dell Sferza sia et essere debba et cominci dal palazzo di Dei sopra la strada dell’ Schale et arrivi sino all’ Casa di Iacopo de Medici su la piazza di S Felici, e tutta la piazza volti per la strada romana sino all’osteria dell Buca et volti per via San Giovanni sino al canto dell’ via delle Caldaie et seguito per la detta via delle Caldaie sino al cominciato canto di Dei.’ Parte, 50, f. 184v.

⁴¹ ‘Et che qualunque di detta compagnia ragionassi d’essa in su canti o alle taverne caggia in pena di soldi dua per volta, et lo scrivano che a quel tempo sarà sia tenuto porlo a specchio.’ Capitoli, 45, f. 46 (S Michele della Pace, SS Sacramento di Sant’ Ambrogio, 1560).

⁴² Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, ch. 5; for taverns: 159-61, on neighbourhoods, esp. 134. Harsher ducal penalties for sodomy introduced in 1542 were only briefly enforced and it appears the ducal authorities continued to treat it with relative indulgence. *Ibid.*, 232-5.

cases of industrial agitation in the 15th century attest, artisans met to turn solidarity into organisation.⁴³

Two *potenze* named taverns as their *residenze*. The Biliemme made its *residenza* at the old Cella di Ciardo at the corner of via Ariento and San Antonino in San Lorenzo; the Spalla was based at the Trave Torta tavern at the southern foot of the Ponte alla Carraia.⁴⁴ Many others were also located precisely where *potenze* met – such as the Golden Flask at the Canto al Monteloro, or the inn at the Convertite, the streetcorner of the convent for converted prostitutes and the *residenza* of the Sferza’s rival, who was sometimes known as the monarch of the “Terra Rossa at the Convertite”.⁴⁵ One contemporary wrote how, during the San Giovanni celebrations of 1588, “the Marquis of the Nespola had a fine stage made in the little *piazza* of the tavern of the Drago”, at the southern foot of the Ponte Vecchio, and on at least one occasion, in 1577, the king of the Nespola was the Drago’s tavernkeeper.⁴⁶ Indeed, *potenze* were seen by many as creatures of the tavern – in part due to the kinds of festive revelries I shall examine in the next chapter. In the census of 1525, inns were listed among many other categories that the compiler thought defined each quarter’s assets, such as churches, hospitals, apothecaries, major lineages, *piazze* and, indeed, bakeries: the taxonomy that seemed natural to him was to place taverns directly after *potenze*.⁴⁷

The familiarities, often friendships, of these local social worlds, ties that the significant rate of plebeian neighbourhood endogamy suggests intersected with relationships of *parentado*, brought men of many different trades together as a *potenza*.⁴⁸ In 1610, the baker Papini at the Canto alla Catena, mentioned above, carried the flag of a brigade ruled by a barrelmaker, and its

⁴³ For example, in 1508 the Wool Guild said that the wool trimmers met in taverns ‘to conspire against the guild’ and fix prices. See Trexler, *Public Life*, 414; Taddei, ‘Per la salute,’ 143-4. See also Cohn, *The Laboring Classes*, 168-70; Franceschi, *Oltre il ‘tumulto’*, 320ff. In 1443, German wool weavers who later would be central to the Biliemme and Camaldoli *potenze*, conspired against the Wool Guild, organised by the Camaldoli German confraternity of Santa Caterina, which was known to have met in taverns. *Ibid.*, 325; Franceschi, ‘Tedeschi e Arte della Lana’, 275-6. The link between gambling and taverns was clear in the mind of legislators who wanted to forbid Florentines ‘a giuocare a giuoco di sorte alcuna in alcuna Taverna della Città di Fiorenze, nè in su i muricciuoli fuora or su le tavole di esse Taverne’: Cantini, *Legislazione*, vol. 5, 239 (Dec 14, 1565).

⁴⁴ Parte, 1478, f. 70.

⁴⁵ The brigade’s description of itself in 1610 was “Sasso di Terra Rossa dalle Convertite”: Parte, 1478, f. 219r. For the Golden Flask at the Canto al Monteloro, the tavern at the Convertite and others at places where *potenze* had their *residenzie*, including the Porta San Frediano (Vice-imperatore), Canto della Macine (Macine), Porta San Gallo (Gallo), see Parte, nb, 340, unpag (1559, september 19). The *potenza* of the Covone shared the Canto alla Paglia with the Osteria del Montone; Coppi, *Cronaca*, 89 (1548).

⁴⁶ ‘...in su la Piazzola dell’Osteria del Drago, il Marchese dell Nespola aveva fatto fare un bel palco...’ BRF, Piccolo diario, f. 123. For the Nespola king in 1577, Parte, 738, f. 186.

⁴⁷ BNF, NA, 987, unpag.

⁴⁸ The rate of neighbourhood endogamy for the *popolo minuto* (neighbourhood defined as parish), in the decades up until 1530, was, with variations depending on trade, around 50 per cent. Cohn, *The Laboring Classes*, ch. 3. Given the evidence of the *potenze* and local solidarities presented here it seems unlikely that this figure decreased dramatically.

leadership including a watchmaker, a wool weaver and a wool-stretcher.⁴⁹ The Nespola at the Drago tavern at various times included a mattress-maker, butcher, painter, barber, flour-vendor and smith.⁵⁰ Most neighbourhood *potenze* were, in fact, mixed-trade associations. However, in the periphery, neighbourhood ties sometimes overlapped very closely with occupational solidarities, underpinning several *potenze* that defined themselves as textile brigades

Strong associations of textile workers in the Florentine *pendici* were no novelty in the 16th century – such local alliances were fundamental, in the first instance, to citywide plebeian organisation during the revolutionary upheavals of the 1370s, when wool workers demanded and briefly gained a place at the corporatist, guild-based table of communal government.⁵¹ The major concentrations were in Sant’Ambrogio, the Camaldoli (San Frediano/Santa Maria in Verzaia), San Lorenzo, and Santa Lucia sul Prato/Ognissanti. In fact, cloth workers had become significantly more concentrated in these same districts by the 16th century, one of the key factors producing a more socio-topographically divided city.⁵² Furthermore, the density of textile labour in the *pendici* also increased in the first 40 years of the duchy, as the wool sector (and probably also silk) expanded and brought an influx of migrant workers to Florence.⁵³ Yet if the overwhelming majority of cloth workers lived in the periphery, only one trade group, weavers, formed what might properly be understood as neighbourhood *potenze*. The many phases of cloth production, controlled by the city-centre *botteghe* of the merchants, entailed a division of labour mapped to a wide urban geography. Preparatory work on the raw material was carried out by groups of labourers, *lavoranti*, in the *botteghe* themselves. Then, in the “putting-out” system, small, notionally independent, *maestri*, such as weavers, often employing their own apprentice or *lavorante*, carried out the finishing stages. Many of these groups operated in fairly distinct workshop districts. Weavers, however, mainly ran their looms at home: living and work space coalesced.⁵⁴

A large proportion of 16th and early 17th century weavers lived in exceedingly tight clusters. More than half of Florence’s master silk weavers – and there were around 600 male masters in

⁴⁹ Parte, 1478, ff. 161r, 225r

⁵⁰ For the Nespola’s personnel, Parte, 738, f. 186 (1577); Parte, 1478, ff. 213r, 240r (1610).

⁵¹ Trexler, ‘Neighbors and Comrades’; Stella, *La révolte*.

⁵² For residential clusters and the trend towards greater topographical concentrations of textile workers through the 15th century, see Franceschi, *Oltre il Tumulto*, 142-145; Cohn, *The Laboring Classes*, chs. 3 and 5. For the later period, Litchfield, *Florence Ducal Capital*, pars. 283-9. For the *gonfalone* of the Drago Verde and the Camaldoli in particular, see, for the 15th century, Eckstein, *The District*, ch. 2, esp. 32-34; and for the 16th century, Diana, ‘Il gonfalone’.

⁵³ Carmona, ‘Sull’ economia’, 38; Malanima, *La decadenza*, 81-2. Although production figures for the 16th century are not available, the general trend, based on matriculation, is one of growth; Morelli, *La seta fiorentina*, 3-5. In the early 17th century, the silk sector eclipsed wool, as will be discussed in Chapter Three.

⁵⁴ Malanima, *La decadenza*, 205ff; Franceschi, *Oltre il Tumulto*, ch. 2; De Roover, ‘A Florentine Firm’.

the 1580s (as well as their families and apprentices)⁵⁵ – were packed into the sides of the Prato d’Ognissanti and a few surrounding streets in the parish of Santa Lucia sul Prato.⁵⁶ Alessandro Biliotti, Prato emperor in 1610, was a silk weaver, as was at least one of the three other Prato officials that year.⁵⁷ The Parte, over generalising but not too greatly, identified the imperial *potenza* as “all weavers of silk”.⁵⁸ In wool, the principal residential clusters faced each other across the Arno: the Camaldoli, where several streets were almost exclusively inhabited by weavers, and the northwest of San Lorenzo around the church of San Barnaba. Considerably more than 500 male master wool weavers were divided about equally between these two districts alone in the 1570s.⁵⁹ The Colomba in Camaldoli *potenza* and its neighbour, the Vice-emperor “of San Frediano” or “in Camaldoli”, at the Porta San Frediano, were “all weavers of wool cloth”. So, too, was the Biliemme north of the river: the brigade of the Cella di Ciardo tavern were, in Giuliano de’Ricci’s words, the “weavers in via Porciaia [via San Antonino] and the other streets above San Barnaba towards the Fortezza.”⁶⁰ While led by and largely comprising weavers, not every man in these *potenze* was of the trade (we find a tailor acting as chancellor to the Camaldoli’s wool-weaver king in 1610, and in 1559 one of the brigade’s men was, predictably enough, a local baker), and certainly not every subject within the jurisdictions they claimed.⁶¹ But it was the craft-neighbourhood nexus that brought these kingdoms into

⁵⁵ A mass confraternal meeting of the silk weavers confraternity of S Croce, in 1588, counted 600 men. CRS, 677, no. 6, f. 9r.

⁵⁶ Litchfield, *Florence Ducal Capital*, par. 284; Bettarini and Ciapetti, ‘L’Arte della seta’ – this 1663 census puts 66 per cent of silk weavers in the Santa Maria Novella quarter, overwhelmingly in Santa Lucia sul Prato. It seems that the workers of the silk industry supplanted the once significant concentration of wool labour in this district. The residential trend of wool workers away from this district, the *gonfalone* of Unicornio, as away from Santa Maria Novella more generally in the 15th century, can be extrapolated from Franceschi’s figures; this took place at the same time as silk was becoming an important force in Florentine textiles. Franceschi, *Oltre il tumulto*, 143; *Idem*, ‘Un’industria “nuova”’.

⁵⁷ For Alessandro di Andrea Biliotti as emperor, ASF, Parte, 1478, ff. 189r, 284r. His identity as a weaver is confirmed through confraternal sources, with his earliest appearance in a list of 1579 for the parish company of Santa Lucia sul Prato, published in Aranci, *Formazione religiosa*, 376-378. *Potenza* chancellor Francesco di Domenico Nacherelli was a member, with Biliotti, of the city’s silkweavers confraternity of Santa Croce; CRS, 677, no. 6, ff. 17r-18v, 45v.

⁵⁸ Parte 1478, f. 292r-v

⁵⁹ In the Camaldoli: Gusciana, Campuccio, Leone, Camaldoli, and the part of via Chiara (Serragli) around via Campuccio. Diana, ‘Il gonfalone’, 76. It was *only* under the rubrics of Camaldoli and San Barnaba that one Wool Guild census later estimated weaver numbers in the city in 1662. ASF, *Miscellanea medicea*, 311, ins. 8, cited in Brown and Goodman, ‘Women and Industry’, 79. The minimum of 500 is suggested by the men of each area who formed a citywide wool weavers’ confraternity in 1576, discussed below. A 1604 Wool Guild census put the total numbers of master weavers in the city at 878, though by this time wool output was half of its peak, around 1570. The census is published in Carmona, ‘Sull’ economia’, 43-6.

⁶⁰ For the Parte’s description, Parte 1478, f. 292r-v. The Vice-imperatore’s cited self descriptions, Depos., 987, ins. 53; Parte, 1486, f. 62r. For the quoted description of the Biliemme: Ricci, 218.

⁶¹ For the leaderships and key officials of all three wool-weaver brigades in 1610, Parte, 1478, ff. 178r, 200r, 202r, 232r, 239r, 256r.

being and sustained them – weavers and neighbours who drank together, sometimes sought each other out as loan guarantors, intermarried, and, as we shall now see, were brothers together in various confraternities.⁶²

3. Festive lords, Spiritual Brothers: Confraternal Connections

“*Faciemus honorem et regnabit cum fraternitate sua*. This means: we will honour the king and he will reign with his company and fraternity. The founders of this holy and devout company recognise that it is derived from the King of the Macina and decree that he must always be honoured.”⁶³ With these 1485 statutes, the neighbourhood brigade at the Canto alla Macina streetcorner in San Lorenzo tried to institutionalise itself within the framework of a lay confraternity, the Standard Company of the Resurrezione, which met in the Armenian church of San Basilio at the same corner. Unearthed by Richard Trexler a generation ago, this document represents the earliest absolute evidence of a relationship between confraternities and *potenza*, emerging at precisely the moment when the latter were becoming firmly defined identities on the local and civic stage.⁶⁴

While confraternal practice varied from group to group, and hardly remained static amidst the social, political and religious transformations of the 16th century, in its statutes the Resurrezione assembled the corporate scaffolding that remained critical to confraternal experience. Around a devotional focus, usually the feast day of its saint “advocate”, though in this case Christ himself, the members gathered to become symbolic kin through their participation in a lay ideal of sacred Christian community, inspired by the model of conventual brotherhood offered by the Mendicant orders, particularly the Franciscans. At Easter, the members of the Resurrezione had the church decorated, held mass and together became the

⁶² A very high rate of intra-craft loan guarantees for weavers has been found for the 15th century, 70 per cent, and Franceschi has reasonably inferred that these were largely on a neighbourhood basis. Franceschi, *Oltre il Tumulto*, 307-8. On the trade dimension of marriage, research for the 16th and 17th centuries remains thin. However, a *sondage* based on a ducal dowry program for artisans from 1596-1602 reveals that around 70 per cent of grooms and father-in-laws worked in the same sector, such as textiles, and of those 20 per cent were of the same trade. Fubini Leuzzi, ‘*Condurre a onore*’, 209-11.

⁶³ ‘*Faciemus honorem et regnabit cum fraternitate sua*. Vuol dire: faremo honore al re e regnerà colla sua compagnia. Avendo considerato gli edificatori di questa sancta e divota compagnia che essendo derivata dal Re di macina deiberorno senpre dovergli fare honore.’ Capitoli, 100, f. 8r.

⁶⁴ First discussed in Trexler, *Public Life*, 403-8. The earliest documented connection between a confraternity and a carnivalesque festive association – which was later a *potenza* – dates to the 1330s, and is between the Dyers and the dyers’ confraternity of San Onofrio dei Tintori, In 1333, the Dyers elected a king and celebrated the feast of Sant’Onofrio on the Corso dei Tintori, where the city’s dyeing workshops were heavily concentrated and where the confraternity had founded an oratory, possibly by 1280. See Trexler, *Public Life*, 220, 415n; Taddei, “Per la salute”, 131.

“children of your father in heaven”,⁶⁵ though, like many confraternities, they also met twice monthly, on Sundays, and at the major feasts of the Virgin, the supreme heavenly intercessor whose cult was a vital element of lay corporate devotion.⁶⁶ Each member of the confraternity paid a small tax which guaranteed proper Christian burial, often in a corporate grave within a church, where a confraternity, as well as, or instead of, its own oratory, might also hold patronage rights to a chapel. As crucial as burial itself, the confraternity offered its members remembrance in death, and so potentially salvation, through the masses it commissioned for their souls in Purgatory. Usually linked to the confraternity’s principal feast day – for the Resurrezione the Monday after Easter – the living and dead were joined when the brothers gathered to remember all the souls of the company’s deceased.⁶⁷ In return for their dues members thus received spiritual and material benefits – the Resurrezione also directed money to a fund for the “poor”, which for the most part meant a confraternity’s own members who had become sick or impoverished. Though members to a greater or lesser extent paid for these benefits, this collectivist mechanism of exchange was seen to express a charitable ethos, one that bound the body of the membership, the company’s *corpo*, in holy union and peace – in short, cementing spiritual brotherhood. As the butchers’ confraternity of Sant’ Antonio put it in a statute setting up visits to the sick and dying, an almost ubiquitous confraternal practice – “Just as the soul is that which gives life, so charity is that which gives soul and life to the mystical body of this confraternity.”⁶⁸

For the episcopal authorities, whose approval was required before a confraternity could be legally incorporated, the jousts, militia-like displays, stone fights and drinking that Florentines mostly knew *potenze* for had little to do with the spiritual ideals the confraternity represented – and the Resurrezione’s chapter that dealt with the king was struck out.⁶⁹ Yet if *potenze* were not the stuff of ecclesiastically endorsed religion, we should not conclude, with Trexler, that the Resurrezione represented “little more than an attempt to incorporate a fraternity whose activity

⁶⁵ ‘Fate sacrificio e orate senza intermissione acciò siate figliuli del vostro padre el quale è in cielo. E pero per questo osservare vogliamo che ogni anno, cioè el dì dell otava di pasqua de resurrezio, si faccia la nostra festa della resurectione.’ Capitoli, 100, f. 20v.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 4v. The cult of the Madonna was fostered especially within the lauds-singing or *laudesi* companies, and many established themselves around Marian shrines, most famously the company of Orsanmichele. See, esp., Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, chs. 1-2; Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, chs. 3 and 6.

⁶⁷ Capitoli, 100, f. 22r. On taxes, ff. 19r-20v.

⁶⁸ ‘Considerando li fondatori di questa nostra Compagnia come l’anima quella che da la vita, così la Carità è quella che da anima e vita di questo corpo mistico di questa confraternità.’ Capitoli, 623, capitolo 5, unpag. (S Antonio detto dei Macellari, 1581). See especially here, Weissman, ‘Brothers and Strangers’. Weissman points out the tension between charitable ideals that demanded Christians give charity based on need and to the ‘poor’ in general, rather than to kin or neighbours, the usual focus of confraternal charity when indeed it was not simply spread among the membership. While this is true, it risks missing the point that for the artisans who formed many of these associations, poverty was also a sincere assessment of their condition.

⁶⁹ The archbishop’s vicar ran a pen through it and added: ‘Questo capitolo non è approvato’. Capitoli, 100, f. 8v.

was more festive than pious”.⁷⁰ The Macina’s most high-profile activity had been the procession of a float in the city’s annual San Giovanni cavalcade, very probably a moving *sacra rappresentazione* of Christ’s resurrection that gave the confraternity its name.⁷¹ Meanwhile at the popular confraternal gathering in February for the Purification of the Virgin, or *candellaia*, when all paid-up members received a candle according to status, the king’s candle was to be of equal weight to those of the captains.⁷² Indeed, artisans built their kingdoms out of a common vocabulary of community, where sacred places, objects and signs were imminent and natural, as well as deployed as a legitimising force. The tabernacles of the Città Rossa and Biliemme, for example, sought to bind the subjects of these kingdoms under the intercessory canopy of Madonna and saint exactly as did such sacred figures for confraternities. As I will explore in full in Chapter Three, it was sometimes as confraternities but primarily as *potenze* that artisans made short pilgrimages to Marian shrines and other “pious places” close to the city. Such objects and rituals shaped a vision of the kingdom as a sanctified polity. Indeed, *potenze* bosses consistently spoke in the collective voice as “the sacred crown” of the kingdom, which was no more than to appropriate the traditional mythology of Christian kingship.⁷³ Whatever the view from the Episcopal palace, mobilising the sacred was as subject to a local, and ultimately civic, politics of community as it was to abstract ecclesiastical prescription.

In another, closely connected, sense, *potenze* and confraternity drew, again in different ways, on a shared vocabulary, one which framed community as polity. If artisans explicitly appropriated a language of state when they became *potenze*, they also regarded the confraternity as a microcosm of the imagined commune. “Not only other companies, but republics and great cities have many times changed their statutes and ordinances, have been led and governed by various constitutions,” wrote the city’s principal silk-weaving confraternity in the mid-17th century, drawing the old analogy as it revised its regulations.⁷⁴ Both kingdom and confraternity, in short, projected the image of a micro-polity governed by a self-constituting body of men, and both claimed their organisational legitimacy through a constitutional scaffolding that derived from republican, ultimately guild, government.⁷⁵ In 1577, the Graticola *potenza* stressed that Simone Caluri “was elected King of the Graticola by *squittino* [electoral scrutiny], and the

⁷⁰ For Trexler’s discussion, see *Public Life*, 406-8, the quoted phrase is on 407.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 403.

⁷² Capitoli, 100, ff. 23v, 28r-v.

⁷³ For example: Depos., 987, ins. 53, 77; Parte 1478, ff. 164r, 173r.

⁷⁴ ‘... et hanno fatto non solo l’altre Compagnie, ma le Repubbliche, e le grande Città, più volte mutato Capitoli et ordinazione, essendo retta, e governata con varie costituzioni.’ Capitoli, 190 f. 6. (Santa Croce, detta dei tessitori di seta, 1647). Similarly, see Capitoli, 828, f. 1r (Assunta e Pace Sacramento in San Piero Gattolini, 1610).

⁷⁵ The organisational correspondences between the ‘ritual republic’ of the confraternity and the commune are discussed in detail by Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 58-63. The silk weavers confraternity, just cited, reflected republican governmental models to the point that its captains also called in a ‘*pratica*’, a consultative committee, for important decisions. Capitoli, 190, ff. 32, 46.

decision was won and confirmed by every black bean, with great favour and to the pleasure of everyone. Afterwards, the counsellors and other officials were elected in the same way, in the manner suitable for the regime of such a kingdom.”⁷⁶ Confraternities adhered more closely to standard republican mechanisms, as there the scrutiny was a vote taken by the body of paid-up members (*corpo*) to select candidates for the electoral purses, from which there was a random sortition (*tratte*) of new officials every few months. For *potenze*, the *squittino* appeared to signify a more straightforward electoral vote, so that the king was seen to emerge directly from the acclamation of the assembled men – a practice that echoed the *parlamento*, the extraordinary (and much manipulated) republican constitutional procedure in which all citizens were called by the bells of the Palazzo to ratify or to change a regime. As Bernardo di Marco stressed in 1559, the bells were rung and he was “by the will of the entire land of Camaldoli, according to the procedure (*ordine*), created their king.”⁷⁷ The Resurrezione in fact inverted the usual confraternal protocols for the election of the Macina monarch, so that, following a *tratte* of 16 candidates from a *borsa* containing “all the men of our company”, the process culminated with an open *squittino*.⁷⁸

Yet for all that *potenze* and confraternities were socially entwined, and for all that their visions of community intersected, linking the two formally was not only problematic because such bodies faced episcopal censure, but because, as the Resurrezione’s almost unique statutes indicate, legally incorporating the regal model strained at normative confraternal structures and made it difficult to locate authority.⁷⁹ The king, the brothers said, was “not an official and has no authority in the company” but at the same time was physically seated “between captains and counsellors” and could be called upon for advice “like the counsellors”.⁸⁰ Ultimately, this combination of factors meant that strong, mutually sustaining relationships nonetheless remained provisional, and therefore flexible, allowing *potenze* to remain firmly hinged to informal yet powerful solidarities of place, or place and occupation, rather than to the trajectory and net of obligations of any specific brotherhood. As already observed, many *potenze* states

⁷⁶ ‘Fu per squittino eletto Re della Graticola Simone di Gio: Caluri, & per partito di tutto favore fu vinto, e confermato, con gran favore, & contento di tutti. dopo questo furono nel medesimo modo eletti, & vinti li consiglieri, & altri ufitali, secondo che conviene per reggimento di un tal regno.’ Paganone, *Ordini, feste, et pompe*, f. 3r

⁷⁷ ‘Bernardo di Marco di volontà di tutto il Paese di Chamaldoli secondo l’ordine essendo stato creato loro Re’; Parte, 708, f. 48.

⁷⁸ The way candidates were to be put to the *squittino* in the Resurrezione was possibly a recipe for disaster. With the 16 names voted on in a first-past-the-post system, there was every chance that, in the absence of popular candidates, the Macina could end up saddled with a king elected by only a small percentage of the membership.

⁷⁹ Capitoli 100, f. 9r.

⁸⁰ ‘El re si fa perpetua memoria che dal re di Macina è derivata detta compagnia ma nonchè sia ufficiale di detta compagnia nè alcuna autorità se non ne quanto sarà dichiarato...’. ‘el re dovessi essere a sedere nel seggio de capitani tra e capitani e consiglieri e deba tenere silentio al desco ma rispondere quando sarà chiamato e consigliare e capitani un luogo di consigliere come e consiglieri’. Capitoli, 100, ff. 3r, 9r.

were immensely durable – and the confraternal evidence reinforces how kingdom was a supple idea that could be continually re-appropriated, even as a *potenza*'s institutional links (if it had any) underwent considerable transformation.

A local alliance, for example, continued to gather at the Canto alla Macina, a streetcorner furnished with both bakery and tavern, and claim its neighbourhood “dominion” under that name until at least 1628.⁸¹ However any deep associational ties between Macina and Resurrezione – which relocated a few streets away from the Canto alla Macina, possibly forced out of San Basilio during the 1529-1530 siege – had evaporated by the turn of the 17th century, and probably well before.⁸² Neither the Macina king of 1610, his flagbearer or two counsellors, nor even their family names, appear in the company's *corpo* in the late 1610s and 1620s.⁸³ The *potenza* of the Spada at San Paolo, meanwhile, makes its first, late, appearance in the sources in 1610. The converse of the Macina, the Spada probably emerged out of the associational framework already provided by the parish confraternity of the Holy Sacrament of San Paolo, founded before 1570. The two were deeply enmeshed – at least three of the four men who formed the Spada's leadership in 1610 were confraternal members; the *potenza*'s counsellor, for one, had been a prominent figure in San Paolo since the 1580s.⁸⁴ However by 1610, San Paolo was having trouble maintaining membership, and in 1623 it joined with the citywide bakers confraternity of San Lorenzo, which more or less took over the confraternity and its oratory.⁸⁵ The neighbourhood identity and associational character of the confraternity changed radically; the parish saint was ultimately dumped as its heavenly advocate and it was even deemed necessary to stipulate in the amalgamation contract that non-bakers could not be thrown out.

⁸¹ Parte, 1486, f. 57r (1628); Parte, 1478, f. 171r (1610). For the tavern at the Macina in 1559, see above and Parte, 427, f. 273r (1598). A bakery on the streetcorner is noted in Parte, 702, f. 340r (1554).

⁸² The confraternity moved to the nearby Campaccio (via Santa Reparata), probably evicted during the siege, as another company, also based in San Basilio, records: ‘Fumo cavati del nostro luogo di Santo Basilio dal Canto alla Macine rispetto alla guerra che venne alla nostra città di Firenze in sino l'anno mccccxxx.’ Capitoli, 209, unpag. (San Donato de' Vecchietti, 1575). The displacement of confraternities and the expropriation of their property during the crisis of 1529-1530 was not uncommon. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 191-3.

⁸³ For the Resurrezione's *corpo* in 1619 (19 men) and 1625 (21 men), Capitoli, 100, ff. 47r, 50r. The Macina's 1610 leadership: Parte, 1478, ff. 171r, 242r

⁸⁴ Only a few members' names are available in a summary and incomplete book of accounts and decisions dating from 1570. Piero Gallancini, counsellor of the Spada *potenza* in 1610, first appears in San Paolo in 1583 as guarantor for the *carmalingo*. Among other roles, he was *carmalingo* himself in 1606 and reviewed the *carmalingo*'s accounts in 1610, joined that year by Francesco Zaballi, who was Spada chancellor. Parte, 1478, ff. 23r, 55v, 61r. The membership of *potenza* flagbearer, the baker Gostantino di Zanobi Graneti, is revealed because he was fined in 1609 for addressing a confraternal meeting without the permission of the captains. *Ibid.*, f. 59v (1609). For the Spada: Parte, ff. 196r, 250r.

⁸⁵ San Paolo briefly suspended its statutes in 1610 because there were insufficient brothers and the same day, May 16, attempted to revive the company with the enrolment of nine new men, including a chaplain of the parish church. For this and the amalgamation contract, CRS, 120, no. 2, ff. 60v, 68r-69v. San Lorenzo had previously met in San Piero Scheraggio. For its earlier statutes, BLF, Ms. Antinori, 24 (1561).

None of this, however, had a permanent affect on local men organising as the Spada, which appears in a petition as late as 1628 and in a government list of the city's *potenze* one year later.⁸⁶

In this context, the two principal kingdoms of wool weavers, the Biliemme and Camaldoli, stand out as an example of how artisans could mobilise and remobilise the kingdom as a means of shaping a neighbourhood-community, sometimes amidst significant social and institutional transformation. The tabernacle erected by the Biliemme *potenza* in 1522, begins to tell this story. Below the Madonna, an inscription reads: “the men of the realm of Biliemme had this pious tabernacle made and placed in via Santa Caterina MDXXII”⁸⁷ (figs 6 and 7). However, via Santa Caterina was also commonly known as via Tedesca, the street of the Germans. German-speaking migrants, including many wool weavers, had settled here, in the San Barnaba district as well as in the Camaldoli, during the 15th century; indeed, artisans from Brabant, Flanders and Holland dominated wool weaving in Florence in the middle decades of the Quattrocento.⁸⁸ The tabernacle reveals itself as intimately linked to the German community in San Lorenzo through the presence of Santa Barbara and Santa Caterina, large, full-length figures whose names, unlike those of the inner group of saints, are loudly broadcast. Santa Caterina was the patron saint of two confraternal brotherhoods founded by Germans in the first half of the 15th century – one in the Camaldoli; the other, also dedicated to the Virgin, nearby in the church of San Lorenzo. St Barbara, meanwhile, was the patron saint of the principal German confraternity in the city, its chapel in the church of the Annunziata in the same quarter.⁸⁹ A tabernacle of the Virgin and these same two saints, no longer extant, was also put up before 1524 at the edge of the Camaldoli area, on the streetcorner where Borgo della Stella meets via de' Serragli.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Parte, 1486, f. 71r (1628); BNF, FP, II. IV. 330, ff. 333-335.

⁸⁷ The full inscription reads: ‘Questo devoto tabernacolo hanno fatto fare gli uomini del reame di Beliemme posto in via Santa Caterina MDXXII’. The tabernacle, is attributed to Giovanni della Robbia. Marquand, *Giovanni della Robbia*, 155.

⁸⁸ On German wool weaver migration, Franceschi, *Oltre il Tumulto*, 120-32; *Idem*, ‘Tedeschi e Arte della Lana’. On German migration more widely, Böninger, *Die deutsche*, esp. ch. 2. On the larger picture of artisan urban migration, see esp. Clarke, ‘The Identity of the Expatriate’; Comba, ed., *Strutture familiari*; Rosetti, ed., *Dentro la Città*; and for silk weavers in Venice, Mola, *La comunità*.

⁸⁹ Santa Barbara met at the church of the Santissima Annunziata from 1443. Santa Caterina in San Lorenzo was founded in 1441. The other Santa Caterina was founded in San Salvatore in Camaldoli in 1420, moving to the Carmine from 1435 after a split along the geographical lines of high and low Germany, the latter in effect the Netherlands. Those who remained in San Salvatore formed the confraternity of San Cornelio that year. On the German confraternities, see Böninger, *Die deutsche*, chs. 4-5; *Idem*, ‘Gli artigiani stranieri’.

⁹⁰ Vasari, *Le vite*, 4, 117. According to Vasari, the tabernacle was by Raffaellino del Garbo (1466-1524). See also Burke, *Changing Patrons*, 48. The early “Camaldoli” *potenza*, first known documentary traces of which date from May Day 1489, may also have been an association associated with German migrants. Was it this brigade the Camaldolese friars referred to when they spoke of presenting an “emperor of these Germans” with 2 *lire* for May Day 1500, an emperor very probably connected to the confraternity of San Cornelio? CS, 87, 10, f. 127r. My thanks to Lorenz Böninger for sharing this reference. This German *potenza* may

The Biliemme tabernacle was, and I believe still is, the largest street tabernacle in Florence, and no doubt was in part responsible for imprinting the name of the kingdom so deeply into the urban geography of the 16th and 17th centuries. The *potenze* had been active on the civic stage during San Giovanni of 1522, and, as I discuss in chapter 2, the politics of civic festivity were part of the context for the tabernacle's creation – yet in the first instance what appeared to drive the Germans to put up such a striking monument was the plague. An outbreak had been threatening since the summer, and, when it struck in November, its entry was widely blamed on a lone German on his way home from Rome. This man, who died shortly afterwards, was said to have headed to his house in the “*marmerehole* of these Germans”, just off via Santa Caterina. From there plague spread mainly “around San Barnaba among the Germans”, killing around 40 people. The reaction of the authorities was to quarantine briefly several streets in the area, which both isolated and stigmatised the German community.⁹¹ The tabernacle, with a pair of typical plague saints, Sebastian and Roch, at the base of the frame, might be seen as response to the trauma of these events, the Germans appealing to the Madonna as an intercessor with God, who could help expiate the sin that had brought the plague upon them as well as ward against its future ravages. And in fact, plague continued to take lives in the city after the quarantine, returning in force at the end of the Florentine year, in March, striking hard in the “impoverished places” of the outskirts.⁹²

Yet why appeal to the Virgin as a *potenza* group, the Biliemme? One reason perhaps was that *potenze* kingdoms were rooted in an idea of urban territory, and plague was understood to be a disease transmitted through the air, spreading in this way between neighbours and infiltrating whole districts. However, there were arguably more compelling motives. The kingdom was a mechanism through which these men could take their migrant solidarities and insert them into wider communities. To begin with, the neighbourhood-community that the realm of the Biliemme looked to give shape to was hardly uniformly German. Moreover, to act as the Biliemme was to participate in what by the early 16th century had become a distinct artisan civic subculture: no matter where they were from, when men gathered as a *potenza* they became more Florentine. The events surrounding the plague lent all of those factors a

also have been an earlier incarnation of the Vice-emperor's brigade, though this *potenza* remains indistinct from its neighbour in the sources until the latter half of the Cinquecento. The earliest known reference to a ‘Vice-imperadore di Camaldoli’ is the 1525 census, though no Colomba or Camaldoli appears here. BNF, NA, 987, unpag. I also note that a Swiss member of the Company of the Virgin and Santa Caterina in San Lorenzo appears in the confraternity's 15th-century records with the image of a crown against his name. Böninger, *Die deutsche*, 187.

⁹¹ Cerretani, *Ricordi*, 417; Cambi, *Istorie*, 216-20. This Marmerehole was later known as via Chiara. On the tabernacle's connection to the plague, see also Burke, ‘Florentine Art’, 87-90. More generally on street tabernacles, quite often connected to the plague, see Strocchia, ‘Theaters of Everyday Life’, 74-6.

⁹² Cambi, *Istorie*, 224-30; Cerretani, *Ricordi*, 423-8. The words immediately above the inscription attesting to the fact the tabernacle was built by the men of the Biliemme read: ‘Hail the Virgin, the ruling mother of the earth. Hail the hope, grace, life, salvation of man’.

heightened importance, and it was in this context that the Germans raised a considerable sum of money and commissioned Giovanni della Robbia – also a subject of the Biliemme, his workshop a few steps away – to create a giant tabernacle that might define and unify the neighbourhood under the sign of the kingdom and at the same time forcefully assert it within the jostling world of *potenze* states.⁹³ At the same time, the Biliemme was keen to incorporate its kingdom within a wider local and civic tapestry. The German saints Barbara and Caterina may visually dominate the tabernacle, yet their position is also deferential, not only in respect to the Madonna but to the entire inner group, which includes San Lorenzo, the saint of that large parish, and San Giovanni Battista, the spiritual advocate of the entire city. The Biliemme, it appears, enjoined their Madonna not only to intercede with God, but to mediate between men.

By the time the Biliemme put up its tabernacle, the German artisan community was in stark decline – something that perhaps furnished yet another, deeper, motive to create a permanent trace of themselves in San Barnaba. Even by the start of the 16th century few new German-speaking artisans were arriving in Florence, and Germans had fallen from being more than half of all wool weavers to one-quarter and probably less.⁹⁴ In the decades before and after the Biliemme put up its tabernacle, two of the four German confraternities in Florence vanished. *Santa Caterina in San Lorenzo*, an association of cobblers, weavers and others, negotiated an amalgamation with a confraternity that described its members as the “Italian shoemakers of Florence”, a deal formalised in 1514 with new Italian rather than Flemish statutes and the almost complete marginalisation of its old patron saint.⁹⁵ In 1557, *Santa Caterina* across the Arno simply collapsed, absorbed into an Italian confraternity of weavers in the Camaldoli, which took over the Germans’ chapel in the Carmine.⁹⁶ According to the friars there, by mid-century the Germans were “extinct or had left”.⁹⁷

However, immigration into these districts did not end there. By the end of the 15th century, about 20 percent of wool weavers were from small centres in Tuscany and other Italian towns,

⁹³ The Della Robbia workshop had been on the corner of via Guelfa and via Santa Caterina since 1446. Based on other Giovanni della Robbia commissions, the tabernacle probably cost in the order of 44 florins, well over half a year’s income for a weaver. Burke, ‘Florentine Art’, 89.

⁹⁴ Franceschi, *Oltre il tumulto*, 120.

⁹⁵ The confraternity of SS Crespino and Crespignano, detta dei Calzolari, in San Lorenzo continued ‘a osservare gli infrascripti oblighi et ordini vechi di detta compagnia de tedeschi’, including a mass on the feast day of Santa Caterina. The amalgamation contract also made ‘maestro Leonardo tedesco’ a captain for life. Capitoli, 850, ff. 1r-2r, 3v. See also Böninger, *Die deutsche*, 223f. As for San Cornelio, it was still in San Salvatore in the mid-1520s, but, with that church abandoned in 1550, it moved north of the river to the Annunziata with Santa Barbara, though it still owned property in the Camaldoli in 1561. BNF, NA, 987, unpag.; DG, 3780, f. 116r.

⁹⁶ Capitoli, 608, ff. 28r-30r (S Maria della Pietà o del Chiodo, 1566). Before the merger Santa Maria had met in via di Camaldoli. There were no Germans among the five men delegated to negotiate for the confraternity with the Carmine friars in 1566, who described themselves as ‘moderni operai di detta compagnia’. All were weavers, from Ferrara, Pontremoli, Parma, Montopoli and Mulazzo.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Böninger, ‘Gli artigiani stanieri’, 126n.

compared to almost zero previously.⁹⁸ By the mid-Cinquecento the percentage would have been higher, a stream of migrants arriving in the Florentine outskirts, particularly San Barnaba and the Camaldoli, during the wool boom of the 1550s and 1560s.⁹⁹ In short, 30 or so years after the Biliemme put up their tabernacle this was a kingdom of a somewhat different stamp – still one with a major clustering of wool weavers and a significant migrant population, but now overwhelmingly Italian. As seems true for the earlier incarnation of the *potenza*, migrants were again near the centre of things. The Biliemme's king of 1577, Filippo di Orlando, was from Marradi in the Tuscan Romagna; in 1610 its king was from the Rigo River area in the south of Tuscany while his "captain of standard" or flagbearer was from Perugia.¹⁰⁰ From the other side of the river – where the same transformations were taking place – there survives a list of 146 men whom the king of Camaldoli in 1559 counted as his adherents. Fifty-five of these men, 38 per cent, described themselves as having a place of origin other than Florence. Ferrara, Lucca and Genoa stand out among the cities outside ducal Tuscany. All were typical weaver provenances, as were the small towns in the ducal state from which so many of the brigade's men originated, from Montopoli and Mulazzo in the west to Santa Sofia and Modigliana in the east.¹⁰¹ In 1577, the Camaldoli's king, Francesco di Bernardo, was from Montopoli, about half way along the Arno valley towards Pisa, while his viceroy, Domenico Zaghi, was from Ferrara, the two places most frequently named in the brigade's 1559 list.¹⁰² If the old Biliemme had

⁹⁸ Franceschi, *Oltre il tumulto*, 121.

⁹⁹ The rate of non-Florentine apprentices in wool was around 90 per cent across the 16th century: Marcello, 'Andare a bottega'. Weaver apprentice numbers in Florence rose and fell broadly in line with production and might be taken as a fair indication of textile immigration trends overall. Carmona has them at 79 in 1552, climbing steadily to 181 in 1559 and then around double this from 1560 through 1575, with the highest number, 439, in 1562. By 1587, they had dropped back to 114. Carmona, 'Sull'economia,' 38. Also, Malanima, *La decadenza*, 81-82; Goldthwaite, 'The Florentine Wool Industry', 543.

¹⁰⁰ Depos., 987, ins. 53; Parte, 1478, ff. 178r, 256r.

¹⁰¹ Parte, nb, 340, unpag. Overall, the most common origins of the 55 declared non-Florentines were Ferrara and Montopoli (5 each) and Lucca, Genoa and Cavanella (3 each). Other major places outside the *stato fiorentino* include Siena, Faenza, Perugia, Venice, Vincenza, Parma and Bologna. There were two Genoese confraternities in the Camaldoli district by the later 16th century. One, in existence by 1525, was dedicated to San Bastiano in the church of San Frediano; before 1589 it moved to the Carmine. Another, dedicated to San Giorgio, was also in the Carmine before 1589. BNF, NA, 987, unpag.; Aranci, *Formazione*, 336-7. The census data of 1551 and 1561, though patchy, similarly indicates that the majority of migrants were from Tuscany and elsewhere in Italy; weavers, the most common occupation given, mainly appear in the Biliemme and Camadoli districts. Litchfield, *Florence Ducal Capital*, par. 279.

¹⁰² It is possible that both the 1577 Camaldoli leaders mentioned were already adherents in 1559, but the general absence of patronymics in the 1559 list makes this uncertain – there were in fact two men named "Francesco da Montopoli" that year. Among the other six men who played some official role in the 1577 brigade, another was from Ferrara, two from Siena and one from the Mugello. Meanwhile, the Vice-emperor, the Camaldoli king's neighbour, was a weaver from Pistoia. Parte, 739, f. 176; Depos., 987, ins. 53. In the 1610 sources, the Biliemme flagbearer identifies himself as Perugian; one of the Camaldoli leadership group was a weaver from Santa Sofia, as was one of the men of the Vice-imperatore; another of the latter group was from Faenza. Parte, 1478, ff. 178r, 200r, 203r, 232r, 239r, 256r.

allowed a specific migrant group to reach out to form wider neighbourhood and occupational bonds, and take their place within artisan Florence, it seems the later *potenza* remained a powerful vehicle for a very disparate body of newcomers to build local ties in the first place, and then do much the same thing.

Meanwhile, the men of the later Biliemme also became brothers together in a local devotional confraternity that called itself the Company of the Assumption in via Tedesca. An account book dating from 1600 reveals that the 1577 king, Filippo di Orlando, was an Assunta member, while at least four of eight 1610 leadership figures were brothers, including the brigade's treasurer, general and Perugian flagbearer.¹⁰³ In the confraternity's surviving statutes, written in 1575, the brothers began by remembering, though with no details, that the Company of the Assumption had been founded by wool weavers back in 1522.¹⁰⁴ This may have been the case – a formal corporation may have emerged out of the same impulses that drew men together as the Biliemme *potenza*. Yet whether this declaration of origins was entirely accurate or not, in making it, these Italians – who drank in the nearby Cella di Ciardo tavern, and who met as confraternal brothers on the street of the tabernacle – suggest how the giant Madonna put up by Germans 50 years earlier, the date of 1522 beneath her feet, had itself become a point of reference for a neighbourhood in flux, an object around which artisan migrants created and recreated community.

From the later 16th century until *potenze* vanished in the early to mid 1600s, the evidence suggests that their rapport with confraternities did become less mutable, and that increasingly they were anchored to specific lay sodalities. Confraternities only gradually regrouped after 1530 – following the despoliation of property during the devastating siege, and the suppressions that took place both before and after the defeat of the republic – and as old associations recovered a degree of stability so, too, did new ones emerge.¹⁰⁵ Many of these were explicitly or *de facto* artisan organisations. On one hand, as Chapter Two will explore, this was no more than to codify a new ethos of hierarchy and separation which, in part, informed the rise of the *potenza* in the first place. But while a number of older brotherhoods, such as the Resurrezione, were predominantly artisan and associations of locale, few had formalised themselves as neighbourhood corporations. Now, prominent among the new or refounded artisan confraternities were parish societies – at least 19 by 1589 and 24, representing more than one-third of Florentine parishes, by the early 1600s. Strongly encouraged by Catholic reformers, these new societies, dedicated to the Holy Sacrament, often processed the host around parish

¹⁰³ For the first mention of Filippo di Orlando, and among the 1610 leaders Bartolo Pieralli, Michele di Piero, Niccolò di Battista and Raffaello Rossellino, CRS, 171, No. 18, ff. 2r, 6r-v, 10r, 63r. Rossellino did not in fact become an Assunta brother until 1611. For the Biliemme *potenza*; Depos., 984, ins. 53 (1577); Parte, 1478, ff. 178r-179r, 256r (1610).

¹⁰⁴ CRS, Capitoli, 827, f. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 173-194.

boundaries, and in close collaboration with the local church, took on formal parish responsibilities, such as taking the sacrament to the sick and organising burials.¹⁰⁶

Along with such locally based confraternities as the Assunta in via Tedesca, it is unsurprising to find links between these parish organisations and neighbourhood *potenze*. As observed above, the Spada probably emerged out of the organisational matrix of the Holy Sacrament of San Paolo. This may also have been true for the *potenza* of the Sferza, first documented in 1577, and the Holy Sacrament of San Felice in Piazza, a 1560 restyling of an older confraternity. In any event, the two were deeply intermeshed by the beginning of the Seicento.¹⁰⁷ Indeed the gravitational pull between parish companies and *potenze* appears to have been inexorable. Neither the king of the Nebbia in 1577 and 1588, nor the carpenter who was his counsellor or an apothecary associated with the brigade, appear anywhere in the early records of the Holy Sacrament of San Iacopo Sopr'Arno.¹⁰⁸ However, by 1610 the two were entwined. The Nebbia king and his two key officials that year were all members of this parish sodality: Giovanni Bolani, a confraternal veteran, was simultaneously *proveditore* (provisioner) of both in 1610, while Mariotto Marchi, a smith at the foot of the Ponte Santa Trinita and the Nebbia's *carmalingo*, was San Iacopo's *carmalingo* in 1607 and held many other key roles besides.¹⁰⁹ In Santa Lucia sul Prato, the company of Santa Lucia dei Bianchi was already playing a parish role by the mid-Cinquecento, maintaining the parish sacrament in its oratory next to the church. However the confraternity appeared to be in a dire state in the first years of the duchy. The Prato emperor elected in 1545, Pierone, was still incumbent when, in 1551, he spoke out against it, calling for the sacrament to be returned to its correct place in the church, "and not where it presently is, in a certain company where [mass] is almost never celebrated and

¹⁰⁶ Parish confraternities will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, in the context of the Catholic reform movement and its effects on the *potenze*. In general, see Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 205-20, where he counts 24 parish societies, the earliest from 1535. For 1589: Aranci, *Formazione*, 333-9. See, too, Black, 'Confraternities and the Parish'.

¹⁰⁷ The confraternity of San Silvestro and S Felice became a parish sacramental confraternity in 1560, when the nuns of San Piero Martire took over San Felice, but it emerged out of a group that had existed before 1530. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 190n, 208, 211-212. From 1560 it met in a new oratory on the corner of via dei Preti and Piazza San Felice. See, CRS, 1880, Part A, unpag. Evidence for the associational links comes from ritual practices, not the matching of names, and will be addressed in Chapter Three, as will the reasonably firm connection between the Città Rossa and San Michele della Pace, which became a sacramental parish society in 1560.

¹⁰⁸ Respectively Niccolò Pagni, Rafaello di Matteo and Francesco di Matteo Borgharsi. Parte, 738, f. 187; for Pagni in 1588, Parte, 45, f. 59r. San Iacopo has continuous records of company decisions from 1575, and these include a complete *tratte* of office-holders until 1587. While there is no continuous membership lists we note that the confraternity selected a new governor and two counsellors every four months. The *potenze* men are absent here and also in a list of 12 men assigned to revise the confraternity's statutes in 1589. CRS, 1257, no. 3, ff. 99v-100r. Even if members, which appears unlikely, their profile was nil.

¹⁰⁹ For Bolani, Marchi and the king, the hatmaker Giovanni Pasquale, also in 1607, *Ibid.*, no. 4, 11r, 19r and unpag. For the Nebbia in 1610, Parte, 1478, ff. 215r, 261r.

is [the sacrament] hardly ever used for the cure of souls”.¹¹⁰ However, the confraternity’s problems, as well as the local factionalism lurking within Pierone’s attack, were ultimately resolved. The mechanics are unknown, but by the end of the 1570s the two had converged, and the confraternity – which, as one would expect, was packed with weavers – was reinvigorated in 1582 as the Holy Sacrament of Santa Lucia.¹¹¹ The 1610 Prato emperor, Alessandro Biliotti, is first revealed as a young captain in a list of the company’s *corpo* in 1579. In subsequent decades, both he and other members of the extended Biliotti weaving family played a central role in Santa Lucia’s affairs, while at least two of the three other 1610 Prato *potenza* officials were Alessandro’s long-standing confraternal brothers.¹¹²

None of this is to say that a close identification between a specific neighbourhood confraternity and *potenza* meant they comprised identical bodies of men: the relationship always remained fluid. If a parish confraternity was in some cases dominated by one brigade, within it can be found men from other *potenze* of the parish – Matteo Manetti, for example, the 1610 counsellor of the “little *piazza*” kingdom of Ponte Nano, the emperor’s neighbour and a brigade also largely comprised of silk weavers, later appears as provisioner in the Holy Sacrament of Santa Lucia.¹¹³ In other words, men created imaginary realms based on a very strong sense of immediate locale but at the same time formed associations within larger neighbourhood spheres. Indeed, though the sources are fragmentary, they indicate that many artisans embedded themselves in a veritable web of associations both within and outside their immediate *vicinato*, ties that connected men from a cluster of nearby *potenze* directly, or at one remove. The wool labourer Baccio Lapi, chancellor of the Macina in 1610, joined the Assunta

¹¹⁰ “... et il santissimo sacramento stia nel suo solito loco, acciò dal popolo secondo il suo potere fabricatoli in santa Lucia, et non dove egli sta in una certa compagnia ove quasi mai si celebra et pocho vi si capita a custodirlo.” CRS, 1770, Part A, f. 357v. The story of Pierone and the other emperors’ parish role is addressed in Chapter Two.

¹¹¹ In their new statutes of 1582, the company conceded it had been ‘non molta frequentata rispetto alla disunione de popoli, cioè huomini di detta compagnia’. This preamble is published in Aranci, *Formazione*, 380-381. The list of the confraternity’s *corpo* in 1579 shows that 38 of 49 men were weavers. *Ibid.*, 376-378.

¹¹² For Alessandro di Andrea Biliotti, *Ibid.* (1579) and CRS, 1770, Part A, ff. 360r-364r (1585), 286r-287v (1599), 284r-v (1600), 288r (1602). In fact, all three were probably members of the confraternity, judging from the fragmentary sources. Frederigo di Dioguardi Massafirri appears with Biliotti in 1599, as does the father of Matteo di Piero Carmignani; Francesco di Domenico Nacherelli, whose father appears in 1585, is only sourced in 1626, when he paid the confraternity to bury his son. CRS, 1774, no. 13, unpag. (*Entrata*, August 2, 1626). For the *potenza* in 1610: Parte, 1478, ff. 189r, 284r. The Biliotti weavers of Santa Lucia were not, or at least only remotely, related to the old, wealthy and noble Biliotti family of Santo Spirito.

¹¹³ Parte, 1478, ff. 190r, 252r. CRS, 1774, no.13, unpag. (*Uscita*, July 3, 1633). Four of the six 1610 officials of this *potenza*, including the counsellor Matteo Nannetti, can be identified as silk weavers. CRS, 674, no. 2, unpag. (1627); no. 3, unpag. (for Michele Salucci, 1624) – Santa Croce detta dei tessitori di seta. For the men in *potenze* guise, with trades for the other two, Parte, 1478, ff. 190r, 252r. This pattern was with little doubt also true elsewhere: The membership of the Holy Sacrament of Sant’Ambrogio, San Michele della Pace, probably included men from the Piccione as well as the Città Rossa. This is discussed in Chapter Three.

in via Tedesca in 1601, and thus became a brother of more or less the entire Biliemme leadership.¹¹⁴ The 1577 Biliemme king, Filippo di Orlando, was not only a confraternal brother of the Macina's Baccio Lapi in the Assunta, he was also a member of the confraternity of the parish, the Concezione or Holy Sacrament in San Lorenzo, and was buried in 1609 in the Concezione's tomb in that church.¹¹⁵ Here, Filippo was a brother of Simone Caluri, the baker king of the neighbouring Graticola, elected at the same moment in 1577. In the better sourced generation of *potenze* in 1610 we also find in the Concezione men of two other Biliemme neighbours, a prominent "subject" of the Guelfa on the eponymous street "at San Barnaba" and the chancellor of the Ponticello in Gualfonda (via Valfonda), the latter group lying outside even the expanse of San Lorenzo, in the parish and quarter of Santa Maria Novella.¹¹⁶ To thicken still further the associative weave, we can point to another 1610 figure in the Guelfa *potenza*, its counsellor Francesco Lachi, who turns up in the documentary scraps left by yet another San Lorenzo confraternity, Santa Concordia, which met in the church of San Barnaba on via Guelfa and may have been closely linked to this brigade. Back in the mid-1580s, Francesco had been Santa Concordia's syndic and procurator and he undoubtedly remained a regular official – his brother Giovanni, meanwhile, was, at the very least, a member of the confraternity of the Concezione.¹¹⁷

4. Beyond the Neighbourhood: The Republics of Trade

Beyond the topographies of neighbourhood, or clusters of neighbourhoods, artisans' central associations were occupational. To be sure, there were a few non-trade confraternities that drew in men from across the city. Despite the apparent presence of its 1577 king, the Concezione and Holy Sacrament in San Lorenzo was not, in fact, the institutional anchor for the Graticola. Indeed, as a confraternity sponsored by the canons of this rather exceptional parish church – the oldest in the city, and the place where the Medici princes and their forebears were interred – it appeared to attract its membership from a wide geography, a fact that made its governors anxious to "consider the proximity (*vicinanza*) to the church" when selecting men to process the

¹¹⁴ Parte, 1478, ff. 171r, 242r; CRS, 171, no. 18, f. 5v.

¹¹⁵ CRS, 636, Part 1 (no. 58), 97v, 141v, Filippo entered the confraternity in 1567, reappearing in 1571-4. There is a gap in the membership rolls from 1577 to 1608. In 1609 Filippo was 'sepelito ne la nostra sepoltura'. *Ibid.*, unpag. The confraternity was active by 1559.

¹¹⁶ For Simone di Giovanni of the Graticola, *Ibid.*, f. 136 (1571-1574). Raffaello Persi of the Guelfa, in 1611. *Ibid.*, Part 2, (no. 59), f. 96v; Ottaviano Bachani of the Ponticello in 1613, *Ibid.*, f. 138v. For these *potenze*, Parte, 1478, ff. 177r, 251r (Guelfa), 198r, 253r (Ponticello).

¹¹⁷ CRS, 666, no. 2., f. 59v (*pigionale*, 1585). The Concordia dates from 1437 – Capitoli, 194. For Giovanni in the Concezione, CRS, 636, Part 2 (no. 59), f. 179v (1616).

parish sacrament.¹¹⁸ One can point with more detail to San Lorenzo in Piano: it was positioned beside the church of the Santissima Annunziata, the city's most potent Marian shrine, and was itself the keeper of a venerated crucifix held to date from the *bianchi* penitential processions of 1399. Among its membership can be found the officials of the Monteloro of 1610, the Mela and even the Spiga in Piazza del Grano.¹¹⁹ Sodalities like these are not to be discounted if we are to glimpse how the subculture of the *potenze* was shaped in, as it in turn gave shape to, a more interconnected urban world than is often allowed by scholars for artisans and labourers. Nonetheless, when it came to both transcending local spheres and building conduits between them, the most powerful vehicle was occupational solidarity.

As we have seen, weavers such as those of the Biliemme and Camaldoli kingdoms, ties of trade – at least in the first instance – were articulated in the neighbourhood itself. However, the lives of most artisans and labourers followed a different rhythm, one that carried them on most days to a distinct workplace. Apart from weavers, the principal stages of textile production took place in workshop enclaves. In Santa Croce, a *potenza* calling itself simply the Dyers made its *residenza* at the Canto agli Alberti, the corner of the Corso dei Tintori and the heart of the dyeing district, which continued down on to the Lungarno.¹²⁰ The bulk of the purgers' workshops, where the woven wool was washed and carded, were also on this short stretch of the river, and the *potenza* of the Purgers mustered close by in Piazza d'Arno (Piazza Mentana).¹²¹ The city's biggest textile group, meanwhile, formed one of several *potenze* that massed in the dense commercial and manufacturing heart of the city. The Woolbeaters – the Ciompi of another era – were the labourers who carried out the initial treatment of the fleece in the

¹¹⁸ 'Guardando la vicinanza alla Chiesa'. Capitoli, 586, f. 43 (1658), and f. 57 for its foundation by 'i preti di San Lorenzo'. No certain links can be made between the Graticola's six leadership figures in 1610 and the Concezione's membership data of 1608-20. Of course the Graticola may have been anchored to another sodality as yet uncovered or whose documentation is lost. Place of residence is not given in the Concezione's membership lists, but I note that one member was the probable father of the king of the Scodellini in Piazza San Simone in Santa Croce, Tomaso di Francesco Calici. CRS, 636, Part 2, (no. 59), f. 99v (Francesco di Lorenzo Calici, 1611). Parte, 1478, ff. 156r, 226r.

¹¹⁹ CRS, 1292, no. 35, ff. 67 (Rafaello Tarchi, 1623), 69 (Pasquino Bartolini, 1612), 31 and 80 (Cosimo di Domenico Matteini, 1612, also noting that his brother, Francesco, was a member). Parte, 1478, ff. 149r, 151r, 159r, 221r, 227r, 229r. The *bianchi* companies are discussed in Chapter Three.

¹²⁰ In 1561, all but two of 42 dyers' workshops, wool and silk, were in Santa Croce. Battara, 'Botteghe e pigioni', 17. The precise streets are indicated, for 1480, in Bianchi, 'Le botteghe fiorentine'. The dyers were not noted specifically as a *potenza* until 1577. Depos., 984, ins. 53.

¹²¹ The Purgers' self-description in 1610, also the earliest designation of its *residenza*. Parte, 1478, ff. 70, 218r. The earliest known reference to the *potenza* of the 'Cardo' in Santa Croce is, however, from the 1520s, and it appears as such again in 1545 and 1577: BNF, NA, 987, unpag; Otto, 40, f. 18v; Depos., 984, ins. 68. While these zones changed little over time, the evidence indicates that purging became increasingly concentrated here – all workshops were in Santa Croce by 1561, while several had once been in Santo Spirito: Battara, 'Botteghe e pigioni,' 16; Bianchi, 'Le botteghe fiorentine'. This may be linked to the disappearance of merchant *botteghe* themselves from the Oltrarno by the beginning of the 16th century – the old via Maggio cluster was very nearby. See Bianchi and Grossi, 'Botteghe, economia e spazio urbano', 37, 53.

botteghe of the wool merchants. While there were about 150 dyers and the same number of purgers at the turn of the Seicento, at least 800 woolbeaters streamed daily from periphery to centre for work, at other times converging on the guild church of Orsanmichele as the “sacred crown and republic of the Woolbeaters”, a “community” they defined topographically according to the two principal zones in which the *botteghe* were concentrated.¹²² Other groups of artisans also carved out workplace kingdoms in the centre, where their shops or stalls tended to cluster. The Diamante at the eponymous street corner off Piazza della Signoria, widely known as the haberdashers, wrote in 1610 that there were 450 “*sottoposti* to the aforesaid duchy, encompassed within its borders, which number 60 shops of many sorts of artisans and, added to this, all the haberdashers found in the said area, which number 30 shops ... and there are 15 houses”.¹²³ In a similar vein, the Dovizia in the Mercato Vecchio was dominated by a single trade group yet embraced the various food sellers of the central market. The Dovizia, known as butchers’ brigade, not only gathered the butchers of the Mercato under its flag but, in 1610, claimed all 86 “butchers of the city of Florence”. At the same time the butchers claimed 150 men in all, with grocers, such as “Antonio, grocer, one of the subjects of the Mercato,” comprising the main subordinate wing of the brigade.¹²⁴

Workshop *potenze* were informed by a sociability every bit as rich as that of the neighbourhood, and one that shared some of the same characteristics. “Women do not go near such places willingly,” the Piovano Arlotto observed of those thoroughly masculine spaces while telling a story in which workers near the Piazza della Signoria raced from their shops,

¹²² ‘E poi sempre comunità si ritrova essere di numero 800 in circha e tuti sono al ruolo de la sagra corona e republica di batilani come apare a libro di deto re sengnato a da carte A 137 per insino a 142... si trova in nel convento di San Piero numero 456 e da la banda si San Brancrazio son numero 344’. Parte, 1478, f. 164r (1610). The two areas represent the extremes of the *botteghe*. To the east, San Piero either refers to San Piero Scheraggio or, further out, San Piero Maggiore, though the Wool Guild usually included this in *convento* of San Martino, the biggest cluster of workshops, around the oratory of the Buonuomini of San Martino. San Pancrazio was the western extreme, where there was a cluster in via della Vigna Nuova. Battara, ‘Botteghe e pigioni,’ 11; Malanima, *La decadenza*, 126-127; Franceschi, *Oltre il tumulto*, 38-39. The 1610 number of 800 roughly corresponds to the Wool Guild estimates of 1604 of 855 men (with another 358 children). Giuliano de’ Ricci’s impression in 1577 was of 1,000 men, though considering the decline of the wool industry in the subsequent decades his estimate may even have been modest. Carmona, ‘Sull’economia’, 43; Ricci, 221. Woolbeater was the generic name for most *bottega* labour.

¹²³ ‘Nota di tutti i sudditi che sono sottoposti al sopradetto ducato, il quale si restringe nelli sua Confini numero 60 Botteghe di più sorte di artisti, e di più se gli agrege tutti li merciai che sono trov[at]i del detto ristretto che sono in numero 30 botteghe, che in tutto sono numero 90 botteghe in circha, e nel detto ristretto vi sono numero 15 case.’ Parte, 1478, f. 188r.

¹²⁴ ‘Nota delli Macelari della Città di Fiorenza...’ The Dovizia’s *signore* and three titled officials were all butchers. ‘Antonio di ... ortolano, uno dei sudetti del mercato’ accompanied them as grocer representative to receive the ducal gift at the Parte’s palace. Parte, 1478, ff. 180r, 257r. The Parte, meanwhile, recognised the brigade that year as ‘macellari e ortolani’. *Ibid.*, f. 70. The earliest known reference to the Dovizia is 1559. Parte, 17, f. 115v. It is described as comprising butchers in 1577 and 1588. Ricci, 222; 1588 list.

tools of their trade in hand, to witness the host being raised at a nearby church.¹²⁵ As well as their spiritual yearnings, men satisfied urges to gamble and drink in taverns in the workplace district, while the workshops themselves, as moralists feared, featured prominently in the urban geography of sodomy.¹²⁶ Moreover, for many, informal sociabilities were inextricably fused with, and strengthened by, bonds of confraternal brotherhood. The relationship is especially striking in the case of textiles, where the workshop *potenze* were – at least as corporate bodies – indistinguishable from craft sodalities. In 1610, the Woolbeaters stressed in its census report that its 800 men could be found “as appears in the book of the said king, from sheet 137 until 142”, a unique reference to a written *potenza* membership roll, which one suspects was either a festive refashioning of a confraternal matriculation list or simply the same document put another way.¹²⁷ And, indeed, as public identities the elision of the Woolbeaters and the confraternity of Santa Maria degli Angeli, as of the Dyers/San Onofrio and the Purgers/San Andrea, was clear to contemporaries due to their use of the same flags: the woolbeaters’ city centre republic gathered under the identical symbols, the tools of the trade, that its confraternity displayed outside its oratory and upon its street tabernacle in the outskirts of San Lorenzo (figs 8 and 9).¹²⁸

There is little question that occupational identity became increasingly vital in the 16th century, in the way ducal subjects were officially apprehended – in the census of 1551, 46 per cent of artisan family heads have nominated trades; in 1632, this had jumped to 81 per cent¹²⁹ – but also in the way artisans identified themselves and forged associations with each other. Craft confraternities provide the most telling index of this trend. The *potenze* of the Dyers, Purgers and Woolbeaters had, in fact, always been embedded within a confraternal matrix. San Onofrio, its oratory on the Corso dei Tintori, was one of the oldest confraternities in Florence, founded in

¹²⁵ The church was San Romolo, no longer extant. Folena, ed., *Motti*, 81; also discussed in Franceschi, ‘Bottega come spazio’, 77. In this context, I also note that in the conservatories for orphaned girls that were established in several north Italian towns in the 16th century, girls were specifically prohibited from entering shops by themselves to collect alms for the institution. Terpstra, ‘Making a Living,’ 1069.

¹²⁶ Franceschi, ‘Bottega come spazio’; Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships*, 158. On workshop culture, see also Davis, *Shipbuilders*, esp. ch. 3.

¹²⁷ ‘E poi sempre comunità si ritrova essere di numero 800 in circha e tuti sono al ruolo de la sagra corona e republica di batilani come apare a libro di deto re sengnato a da carte A 137 per insino A 142 e di tanto e nela verità come dito libro.’ Parte, 1478, f. 164r

¹²⁸ That it was the same banner is evident from supplications for flags after 1610, to be discussed in Chapter Three. The records of Santa Maria degli Angeli are lost – its statutes are summarised in Passerini, *Storia degli stabilimenti*, 108-9. The Purgers and San Andrea used a carding comb on a red shield; described in various redactions of San Andrea’s statutes, eg. Capitoli, 843, f. 29v (1515). The same symbols also appear outside San Andrea’s former oratory on Borgo la Croce but are badly eroded. The Dyers symbol was, according to one account, a red field with dyeing tools, while another, unattributed, source says it was a cauldron with wooden implements inside. The common factor in both cases was the poles used to stir the cloth, the two ‘pilli’ as the confraternity of San Onofrio dei Tintori described its corporate symbol. Solerti, *Musica, ballo*, 146; BRF, Ricc., 1947, ff. 3-4; Tintori, D.I.1, f. 56r.

¹²⁹ Litchfield, *Florence Ducal Capital*, par. 275.

1280 and unmistakably linked to earlier incarnations of the 16th-century Dyers *potenza*.¹³⁰ San Andrea (1455) and Santa Maria degli Angeli (1489), plus the confraternity of the woolshearers (1494), which appears sporadically as a workshop *potenza* from the late 1500s, were part of a new movement to incorporate trade ties in the Quattrocento, when at least 15 craft confraternities were established.¹³¹ In the 16th century such societies further proliferated, with at least eight founded before 1550 and 11 in the latter half of the century.¹³² As one might expect, other workplace *potenze* were, or became, enmeshed with formal sodalities. The Diamante, noted above, was linked to, if not founded by, the haberdashers' confraternity of San Donato, established before 1575.¹³³ The Dovizia, in existence by 1559, was the associative core out of which the citywide butchers' confraternity of San Antonio Abate emerged in the 1570s.¹³⁴ Indeed, the butchers decided to go it alone as a *potenza* sometime between 1610 and 1620, abandoning the Mercato Vecchio and the Dovizia to the grocers; their separate *potenza*/confraternity referred to itself, like the textile workshop brigades, simply by trade.¹³⁵ Pioneered by textile groups, the strength of the occupational sodalities derived from a combination of compulsory membership, which they sought and sometimes realised with the backing (and provision for enforcement) of guild and duke, and, with this, an extensive regime of taxation and benefits.¹³⁶ Discussing their origins in 1581, the butchers of San Antonio

¹³⁰ Passerini, *Storia degli stabilimenti*, 99-100. San Onofrio's earliest extant statutes date from 1338. Tintori, N. 6. 29. According to Giovanni Villani, a group of 520 artisans from the Corso dei Tintori celebrated the feast of San Onofrio on June 11, 1333, led by a king. A brigade on the Corso for San Onofrio appears again in 1391 and in 1463. Villani, *Cronica*, X, 219; Molho and Sznura, *Alle bocche*, 104; Trexler, *Public Life*, 220, 415n. These connections will be further discussed in Chapter Three.

¹³¹ The woolshearers, or Cimatori, are listed as such in 1588 and as the 'Signor delle Forbici, dalle Farine, o dai Cimatori' in 1629. 1588 list; BNF, 1629 list. For the 15th-century trade confraternities, especially of textiles, see Taddei, 'Per la salute'.

¹³² Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 164n, 201-202.

¹³³ Capitoli, 209 (1575). Discussed in Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 202.

¹³⁴ San Antonio's 1581 statutes were a second redaction, but make it clear that the original statutes were presented to the same Duke Francesco for approval, dating them after 1574. CRS, Capitoli, 623, unpag.

¹³⁵ The 'Dovizia delli ortolani di mercato vecchio' was the main Mercato group from 1621 at the latest. Parte, 1484, 18r. For the cited description, Parte, 1486, f. 39r (1627). The Becchai or Macellari appear in the Parte sources both before and after 1621, and in the 1629 government list of *potenze* the 'Dovizia in Mercato Vecchio' and the 'Signor de' Macellari' are separate brigades. In 1629, a statute of San Antonio names a certain Giovambattista Salucci and a Tomaso di Vincentio Brandi. Salucci, a butcher at the Ponte alla Carraia, was 1626 king of the Butchers' *potenza*, while Tomaso's brother and probably business partner, Simone di Vincentio Brandi, was *caporale* of the old Dovizia back in 1610. Capitoli, 623, unpag; Parte, 1486, f. 14r (Salucci, 1626); Parte, 1478, ff. 180r, 257r (Dovizia, 1610).

¹³⁶ Taddei, 'Per la salute'; Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 202-3. Weissman reads the attempts to establish compulsory membership as essentially an imposition from above, a forced reading of his own evidence, which points up the fact that it was usually requested from below. In case of wool weavers, discussed below and in Chapter Two, compulsory membership was in fact disallowed by the Wool Guild. This is hardly to deny, however, that oversight of these worker organisations was an issue for ducal authorities.

explained that there had been a “company of standard, such that there was a sufficient number of men of the trade, not just to render fitting praise to God, but to practise many works of charity, such as giving dowries to the girls and benefits to the sick, and similar works; and they convinced the others that such holy works should be carried out”.¹³⁷ Social insurance made this institutional model immensely attractive to a section of the population that was highly sensitive to economic fluctuations and epidemic.¹³⁸ Giuliano de’ Ricci marvelled at the Woolbeaters *potenza*, drawing no distinction between it and the confraternity of Santa Maria degli Angeli. “With very fine regulations,” he said, “they draw much use, help and subvention in their old age, sickness, when their wives give birth, and their daughters marry”.¹³⁹

The growing number of craft organisations broadens out our picture of artisan association in the 16th century. What it suggests is that *both* neighbourhood alliances and geographically wider occupational ties were becoming increasingly robust and organised elements of an artisan man’s social world. In textiles, for instance, workshop *potenze* may have shared a single banner with their confraternal counterparts, but as associations the rapport between the two remained fluid. Some brothers in the confraternity might choose to gather in what were essentially mixed-trade local *potenze*. Donato di Bastiano Penneccchini, a woolbeater, was king of the Città Rossa in 1600.¹⁴⁰ In 1610, a wool purger and brother in the purgers’ confraternity of San Andrea, Domenico Cappelli, was king of the Olmo in San Niccolò oltr’Arno.¹⁴¹ A wool worker’s choice of whether to unite himself to his craft *potenza* or privilege his neighbourhood must have been partly conditioned by residence itself. Many wool purgers appeared to live in Santa Croce, in or

¹³⁷ ‘...Compagnia di stendardo dove ci era sì tale e sì sufficiente numero e huomini di quel exercito non meno in render quelle lodi convenevoli a Dio, quanto poi in esercitarsi in tante opere e di carità come in dar dote a fanciulle, dar benefitii a infermi e in simili opere così tali dando anima ad altri di doversi exercitare in queste sì sancte opere.’ Capitoli, 623, unpag.

¹³⁸ Artisans occasionally argued in other, financially weakened, confraternities, that they should be turned into exclusively trade groups or merge with existing corporations, something that appears to have happened in the increasingly difficult economic climate of the 17th century. The bakers’ confraternity of San Lorenzo, as discussed above, took over the weakened parish society of the Holy Sacrament of San Paolo in the 1620s. The Resurrezione, which declared itself to be ‘in basso stato’ in 1672, unable to pay statutory benefits, fought off calls by some members to amalgamate with the bakers of San Lorenzo. In 1680, it banned its brothers from talking about mergers with San Lorenzo, resisted other moves to allow only apothecaries to enter, and limited the numbers from any one trade to 10 men. Capitoli, 100, ff. 52v-57r. San Giobbe at the Annunziata contained a significant proportion of hosiers from the early 16th century, and in 1648 this craft contingent tried to deny membership to anybody outside the trade. The move was defeated with, again, a limit set on members of any one craft. Capitoli, 357, ff. 32r-33r.

¹³⁹ Ricci, 222.

¹⁴⁰ Parte, 769, f. 384v; 428, f. 4r (for Donato’s family name).

¹⁴¹ Cappelli inscribed daughters from 1603 in the confraternal dowry fund, the main source for members of San Andrea. Parte 1478, ff. 216r, 247r; CRS, 25, AXIV, unpag. For the Purgers *potenza* itself, we find the son of the 1610 *potenza* captain, Bartolomeo di Giovanbatista Mazzi (1641), while 1610 *potenza* flagbearer, Iacopo Bossi, appears as confraternal scribe in 1638. *Ibid.*; CRS, 20, Part 1, unpag. Parte, 1478, ff. 218r, 224r.

near the workshop district, something that was also true for the dyers.¹⁴² In 1610, almost all the men who led the Dyers appear as members of San Onofrio, which as a major confraternity in that district also performed one of the central functions of a parish confraternity, administering the sacrament to the gravely ill of San Iacopo fra i fossi.¹⁴³ At that same moment, dyers who sometimes sat with these men as confraternal captains, or on other committees, led neighbourhood brigades: one was king of the nearby Mela and another was his counsellor, while a further two San Onofrio brothers played the same roles in Piazza San Simone's *potenza* of the Scodellini.¹⁴⁴

Other trade confraternities, meanwhile, connected men who shared no special collective sites of work and largely positioned themselves within neighbourhood *potenze* – such as San Lorenzo of the bakers, in existence by 1529, or San Martino of the tavernkeepers, founded in 1542, although a *potenza* of Tavernkeepers and two of Bakers, all undoubtedly anchored in those confraternities, do emerge in the sources in the early 17th century.¹⁴⁵ Weavers, too, seemingly atomised in their *pendici* territories, forged pan-urban occupational bonds in the form of the confraternity. As early as 1405, when silk was becoming an important player in the Florentine economy, master silk weavers, with throwsters in a minor role, founded what remained the

¹⁴² Unfortunately the available residential data for the purgers dates from 1427, though we might assume a substantial continuity into the 16th century, as was the case for weavers and dyers. At that point Santa Croce was the purgers' second quarter of residence. The major centre, with more than double as many men, 52, was in fact Santo Spirito. Franceschi, *Oltre il tumulto*, 105-106. In 1561, the only house owned by San Andrea, apart from Borgo la Croce where the confraternity had its oratory and hospice, was in Borgo San Niccolò in Santo Spirito, where the Olmo had its *residenza*; DG, 3780, f. 5r; 3783, f. 157v-58r. For dyers, Litchfield, *Florence Ducal Capital*, par. 284.

¹⁴³ For the Dyers' *potenza*, Parte, 1478, ff. 163r, 222r-v. For the first notice I have found of the dyers' leaders in San Onofrio: Piero di Baccio Fedi (1604), Agostino di Sabatino (1602), Iacopo di Mariotto Rondini (1602), Giulio Carletti (1602), Lessandro di Pasquino Savelli (1603); all in Tintori, N.6.32, ff. 3r-v, 6r – Capitoli 1604. Vincentio di Biagio Tanucci (1609); Tintori, A.IX.1, unpag – Tratte, 1576-1655). The roles of these men is discussed in detail in the section 5 of this chapter. For the Dyers' sacramental duties, Tintori, N.6.32, f. 22v.

¹⁴⁴ Tomasso Calici, king of the Scodellini in 1610, was a San Onofrio sick visitor in the same period in 1612 that Lessandro Savelli of the Dyers *potenza* was a confraternal captain. The four captains and four visitors comprised the governing committee of San Onofrio. Tintori, A. IX. 1 (*tratte*, 1576-1655) – and for 1610 Mela king, Bartolomeo Cutini (drawn for office, for example, in 1611, 1616 and 1623); Scodellini counsellor, Piero Cresci (seated for office, 1601). A 1606 discussion on the annual *palio* involved Savelli and Giulio Carletti, plus Battista Golpi, a Mela counsellor. *Ibid.*, A. IV. 4, f. 46v. This meeting is discussed in Chapter Three. For these *potenze*: Parte, 1478, ff. 156r, 226r (Scodellini); ff. 149r, 229r (Mela).

¹⁴⁵ For San Lorenzo in 1529, see Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 202; for their 1561 statutes, BLF, Ms Antinori, 24. San Martino refers in later statutes to its foundation. Capitoli, 197, f. 1 (1681). The Tavernkeepers, 'li huomini, osti e potentia loro', appear in 1612, requesting their flag from the Parte, as well as in the 1629 government list of *potenze*: Parte, 1479, f. 352r; 1629 list. A *signore* of the Garzoni (or shop boys/labourers) of the Bakers appears in 1607, while in the 1629 list there is a 'Duca del Forno, sua Provincia e Vassalli' as well as a 'Signor de' Fornai', possibly signifying two groups representing workshop divisions. Parte, 54, f. 10r; 1629 list.

city's principal silk-worker organisation, with as many as 600 male members in the late 1500s.¹⁴⁶ The 1610 Prato emperor, Alessandro Biliotti, was a veteran and high-profile brother of Santa Croce, on its inner decision-making bodies and one of four assessors of the membership during a scrutiny in 1588.¹⁴⁷ Despite the limited confraternal records, we can be reasonably confident that most of the men of the Prato *potenza*, the parish confraternity of Santa Lucia and the silk-weaving district at large, were also Santa Croce members.¹⁴⁸ Among the neighbouring Ponte Nano weavers, 1610 *potenza* counsellor Matteo Manetti is later recorded as playing the same role there, *proveditore*, as he did in the Holy Sacrament of Santa Lucia.¹⁴⁹ Over in San Lorenzo, meanwhile, Francesco Lachi of the Guelfa *potenza*, the *proveditore* of the local confraternity of Santa Concordia in the 1580s, was also a silk weaver and member of Santa Croce; indeed, Lachi worked with Alessandro Biliotti to help organise Santa Croce's 1588 scrutiny.¹⁵⁰

As both their neighbourhood clusters and their *potenze* suggest, it was weavers above all who had to overcome local particularisms in order to establish cross-city links. The silk weavers of the Santa Croce confraternity divided themselves by quarter, and at some point codified in statute the numerical weight – and the hubris – of the imperial weavers of the Prato, giving them the loudest (though not an unassailable) voice in the *corpo*.¹⁵¹ Unfortunately, Santa Croce's early records are lost, and with them any real trace of the negotiated parochialisms that almost certainly marked the formation and trajectory of this major citywide corporation. However, the wool weavers of San Barnaba and the Camaldoli reveal how the politics of urban geography was a central issue. The difficult birth and subsequent struggles of their confraternity, one of the

¹⁴⁶ Capitoli, 190, f. 9 (1647). The confraternity had an altar and tomb in San Marco that was maintained throughout our period but by the early 16th century the weavers had moved from their original meeting site and hospital beside that church. *Ibid.*, f. 39. The new site and probably their hospital, which had been on via San Gallo, were also on the via Larga north of the old Medici palace. CRS, 673, Part B, f. 7r. See also Del Badia, *La compagnia*. On silk, Franceschi, 'Un' industria 'nuova'.

¹⁴⁷ For the 1610 Prato men: Parte, 1478, ff. 189r, 244r. For Biliotti in the Council of 40 and as *accoppiatore*, CRS, 677, ff. 17v-18r. He was also called upon in 1586 to represent the quarter of Santa Maria Novella in the 20-man consultative *pratica*. *Ibid.*, f. 6r.

¹⁴⁸ One other Prato official, chancellor Francesco Nacherelli, appears in the confraternity's limited records. *Ibid.*, f. 45r-v (1594).

¹⁴⁹ Parte, 1478, ff. 190r, 252r; CRS, 674, no. 2, unpag (1627). Another Ponte Nano man who can be traced in Santa Croce is counsellor Michele Salucci. *Ibid.*, no. 3, unpag (1624).

¹⁵⁰ Lachi was appointed *sindaco*, an organisational role which involved burning the old name tickets and preparing new electoral bags. Parte, 1478, ff. 173r, 255r; CRS, 677, Part 1, f. 16r. Two other Guelfa men can also be found: Raffaleo Persi, who probably preceded Nannetti as Santa Croce *proveditore*. CRS, 674, no. 3, unpag. (1624, 1627); and the brigade's *maestro di campo*, Miniato Velli. *Ibid* (1624).

¹⁵¹ On decisions on election to office or dowries, a *corpo* of 45 was called, for buying or selling property a *corpo* of 100. In these bodies Santa Maria Novella fielded 18 and 41, San Giovanni 13 and 20, Santo Spirito 9 and 20 and Santa Croce 5 and 10. Visitors to the sick or dying also tended to those in their own districts, going in the 'borse dei quartieri'. Santa Maria Novella had 4, and the other quarters 3, 2 and 2 respectively. Capitoli, 190, ff. 17, 28-32 (1647).

new craft corporations of the later 16th century, is, on one hand, a story peculiar to weavers. However, it also draws out more generally both the intensity of neighbourhood experience and the new drive to join in greater occupational unity.

One reason the master wool weavers gave to explain the difficulty of obtaining consensus was the presence of so many foreigners in the trade, lamenting about “how difficult a thing it is for so many people ... from different towns and nations, as there has always been, and are, in our trade, to come together in communal concord”.¹⁵² Yet bridging the Arno was clearly at the heart of the matter. Indeed, the evidence here lends support to my earlier suggestion that a powerful sense of place, of urban homeland, had developed in each district, shaped and amplified by the Biliemme and Camaldoli kingdoms, in part to gel together such disparate bodies of migrants in the first place. Ironically this now militated against wider unities. Nonetheless, in March 1576, in separate neighbourhood ballots, 221 weavers in San Barnaba and 256 in the Camaldoli established the company of San Giovanni Evangelista and its right to tax members, to be collected separately on a local basis and by local men.¹⁵³ Another three years went by before they had resolved the dilemma of where to meet, finally buying a property in 1579 on via della Scala in Santa Maria Novella, not only outside their own two districts but in a different quarter altogether. As the weavers later revealed: “The men who made the purchase elected the said place for the greatest comfort of one and the other *membro*, because our *Membro* is divided into two parts ... and one part did not want to go to the Camaldoli and the other did not want to come to San Bernaba.”¹⁵⁴

While the hurdles of incorporation emphasise neighbourhood loyalties, later events bring into focus how vital the investment in craft solidarity was to these men. By the turn of the Seicento, the confraternity had grown to around 700 members, and with weavers spilling onto the street it had begun to build extensions to the oratory. But its neighbour, the hospital and monastery of San Paolo, had also grown in the intervening years – in 1592 it became the city’s major refuge for convalescents, and it also wanted more space. In 1606, the dispute came to a head. The weavers, “with much shouting and general tumult,” met to oppose San Paolo’s attempts to make them sell up and leave.¹⁵⁵ Because of the initial difficulties in finding a site, “changing it today, returning to the most convenient neighbourhood, be it the one or the other, would give rise to controversy and the danger of deflecting the company’s purpose and causing

¹⁵² ‘Quanto che è cosa difficile il convenire di commun concordia in un consiglio medesimo et in una istessa volontà, tante e tante persone e massime vulgari e di diversi paesi e nationi, come sono state sempre, e sono, in questo nostro mestiero’. Capitoli, 799, f. 2r (S Michele Arcangelo e S Giovanni Evangelista dei tessitore di lana, 1576).

¹⁵³ Capitoli, 799, ff. 2v-3r; on taxes, 15r, 48r. (S Giovanni Evangelista e S Michele Arcangelo, detta la Compagnia dei tessitore di panni lani, 1576).

¹⁵⁴ ‘Item, dicono che gli’ huomini fatti sopra tal compera elesseuo detto luogo per piu commodità dell’ uno et dell altro membro, perchè essendo il nostro membro diviso in dua parte, cioè uno in Camaldoli, et l’altro in San Bernaba, l’uno non voleva andare in Camaldoli et l’altro non voleva venire in S Bernaba’. Parte, 1474, f. 576r (1606).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 573r.

disunity”.¹⁵⁶ They had gained ducal approval for the initial purchase, placed huge financial pressure on the membership to buy it, and needed it “to say divine offices, disperse many alms and carry out other pious works”.¹⁵⁷ It was impossible, the weavers told ducal authorities, “to persuade such a large number of people to abandon their nest and go somewhere foreign”.¹⁵⁸

5. Movers and Mediators

It was inherent to the cultural logic of *potenze* that their leaders should, in several senses, be mediators. Enacting the community of the kingdom was in some sense to create that community, a process that took place, as the following chapter will explore, through the person of the king and the gestures of kingship. That rhetoric also provided a language of foreign relations with which claims could be made and relationships contracted in the external world, with other *potenze*, and with social elites and the prince, the powers of the real polity that artisans fictively inverted. Those at the heart of this process thus positioned themselves both as brokers within a community and actors for it, an assertion at the same time of their own status. It is perhaps little surprise, then, to find these roles reflected in more everyday, communities. The men who, in 1576, acted to unite the wool weavers in a holy republic of trade, were the same figures who, little more than a year later, were among the leaders of the kingdoms of the Biliemme and the Camaldoli. Domenico Zaghi, the Camaldoli viceroy of 1577, was one of San Giovanni Evangelista’s six “founder” brothers; Cosimo Pieralli, secretary of the Biliemme, was the man who compiled the new confraternity’s statutes.¹⁵⁹ Unfortunately, little material survives to flesh out the social profiles and roles of the other leadership men in these two *potenze*, but the following three, quite diverse, vignettes suggest how the case of the wool weavers was part of a wider pattern.

The *contado* empire of Campi, the best documented of the countryside kingdoms, can usefully be introduced here. Campi was an agricultural commune of eight parishes, the heart of which was the parish of Santo Stefano and its village or *castello* where the baptismal parish church of the commune, the *pieve*, was located. The local government body, the 12-man general council of the commune, met next door, the seal of office handed over from one group of

¹⁵⁶ “... mutandosi hoggi sito che tornassi per la vicinata più comodo, o agl’ uni o agl’ altri, ci nasceria fra loro controversia con pericolo di sviare et disunire la compagnia.” *Ibid.*, f. 574r.

¹⁵⁷ “... dire i divini ufizzi e dispersano tante limosine e altre hopere pie’.” *Ibid.*, f. 571.

¹⁵⁸ “... si reputa impossibile il persuadere a così gran numero di popoli che lasci il proprio nido per entrare in uno straniero.” *Ibid.*, f. 575r. In 1583, the confraternity said the building had cost 1,500 *lire* to buy and that only paid 500 *lire* had been paid. It received guild permission to raise taxes that year because it was struggling to service the debt as well as fulfil its regular obligations. Capitoli, 799, f. 55v.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, ff. 2v-3r; Depos., 984, ins. 53.

incumbents to the next every six months “inside the *pieve* or in the house of the commune”.¹⁶⁰ In this precinct of temporal and sacred power was also the brotherhood of the Misericordia, which had an altar in the *pieve* and was essentially a parallel body to the commune, partially – and uniquely among the district’s confraternities – funded by it through the intervention of the general council. The council was the bridge between the roughly 3,000 inhabitants of this agricultural subject commune and the Florentine authorities – with the *podestà*, the on-site citizen representative and local judge, and directly with the ducal government, to which the general council pressed its needs in legislation; the confraternity, meanwhile, was in charge, at least from 1560, of the commune’s four-bed hospice and in each parish it distributed dowries and other alms to those whom it nominated as “*miserabile* and in need”.¹⁶¹

While neither the surviving records of commune nor confraternity provide anything like complete rolls of office-holders, perceptible nonetheless are loose, changing, but overlapping networks of men who led empire, communal council and confraternity over almost a half century. Piero Bargioni, Campi emperor in 1533, was an artisan who later is recorded as also owning a patch of productive land in his home parish of San Lorenzo – one of the commune’s six parishes – which made him one of a small minority of families in this district of share-croppers to own property.¹⁶² A matter of days after he became emperor, Piero was drawn for the general council of the commune, and late in his six-month incumbency he was one of two men from the council authorised to draw up new legislation. In the Misericordia, meanwhile, he can be found as an office-holder in the 1560s and 1570s, along with another member of the Bargioni family, holding, among other posts, the role of guarantor (*mallevadore*) for the confraternity’s *proveditore* – the guarantor a crucial figure, trusted and in possession of a degree of economic wherewithal, that confraternal members elected to financial office were obliged to find.¹⁶³ The

¹⁶⁰ ‘Quali Gonfalonieri pennonieri sindachi et octo consiglieri sieno tenuti et debbino venire ... nella *pieve* di S. Stefano overo nella casa del comune di Campi’: Statuti, 115, f. 9r.

¹⁶¹ The population of Campi is based on the census of 1551. BNF, Magl., II, I, 120, f. 12v. For the commune passing a proportion of fines to the Misericordia, from 1503, the earliest notice of the confraternity’s existence, see Statuti, 114, f. 53r; 115, ff. 11r-12r. When the Misericordia took over the running of the hospital in 1560, which had long been claimed by the commune, this may not have been the first time, since the confraternity said it had been united with the hospital in 1526. CRS, 1485, MCXXX, Part 2, unpag. (Entrata/Uscita, 1560). On Misericordia dowries and alms, Capitoli, 231, ch. 2

¹⁶² Bargioni became a property owner from 1560 at the latest, and in the 1570 Decima is listed as having two pieces of land producing 8 *staia* of grain (135kg) for which he was taxed at 6 *lire*. DG, 5242, f 48v. Of 763 property owners in Campi in 1551, 153 were ecclesiastical bodies, 175 local *contadini* and 435 were Florentine citizens. The citizens owned 71.5 per cent of all property compared to the peasants’ 5.1 per cent. Conti, *La formazione*, 2, 409. See also Mazzi, *Gli uomini e le cose*, ch. 1.

¹⁶³ Piero appears as a Campi legislator on October 26, 1533, towards the end of his term, which began May 1; the *potenze* were in motion some time by April 23 at the latest, when they appeared for the celebrations for the entry into Florence of Margherita of Austria, Duke Alessandro’s future spouse. Statuti 115, f. 25v; Cambi, *Istorie*, 23, 129. In the Misericordia, Piero was guarantor for the *proveditore* in 1560 and one of the bearers of the dead in 1575 and

emperor of 1577, Benino di Bartolo Benini, was a miller in the parish of San Martino, his mill, on the Bisenzio river, owned by the family for at least two generations and recorded in the name of his father from the 1530s.¹⁶⁴ In 1576 and in 1577, at the same time as he was emperor, Benini was one of the two auditors of the Misericordia's accounts, a sensitive role that was exercised along with the chancellor of the commune and sometimes the *podestà* himself. It was the same position his father had held at the point records begin in the late 1550s.¹⁶⁵ Meanwhile, a butcher who obtained a wooden platform from a tavernkeeper to use as a dais for Benini – for the “emperor and his *carmalingo* and *proveditore*” – was also a regular Misericordia auditor from the 1550s, and shortly after the 1577 festivities ended he was elected scribe and one of 12 men with the task of bearing the company's dead brothers and sisters to the local cemetery. Moreover, both he and his brother had held other key posts in the Misericordia from the 1550s through 1570s, such as *proveditore*, *carmalingo*, guarantor for other *carmalinghi*, and seats on the 12-man governing council.¹⁶⁶ Within this charmed circle we might also pick out the Chaini family. In 1559, Antonio di Maso Chaini testified to Piero Bargioni's election in 1533, saying that he had been one of eight other *contado* kings – clearly of a contiguous territory – to recognise the emperor.¹⁶⁷ Antonio was a Misericordia auditor in 1562 and 1571, his son Giovanni was one of its governors in 1576 and his father, Maso, had been on the communal council in 1536.¹⁶⁸

Unlike the *contado* communes, there were of course no polities as such dividing up urban space – there were only the kingdoms of the *potenze*. Analogous nonetheless is the case of Campi's city counterpart, the empire of the Prato. Here, the leading figures of the imaginary state were the same men who consistently acted as the representatives of the parish of Santa Lucia. In 1551, Prato emperor Pierone appears as chief parish procurator in a dispute over the administering of the sacraments that began in 1547 and blew up regularly until the early 1600s,

1576, as was a certain Giovanni Bargioni in 1577: CRS, 1485, MCXXX, Part 2, ff. 16r, 38r, 39v.

¹⁶⁴ Bartolo di Benino Benini owned the mill and two small pieces of productive land (9 *staia* in total) with his uncle Andrea in 1536, but by 1570 he owned, by himself, just the mill. DG, 5241, f. 196r; 5242, f. 381v.

¹⁶⁵ Offices usually changed in September and auditors were elected at the beginning of the year to do the accounts at its end, so Benino's appointment in 1576 ended in September, 1577, after that year's festivities had ended. His father was in the same post 1558-59. CRS, 1485, MCXXX, Part 2, Ent/Usc, 1558, 1559, 1575, 1576. A Piero di Battista Benini appears on the Misericordia's governing Twelve in 1572. *Ibid.*, f. 33r.

¹⁶⁶ The butcher, Mariotto di Rafaello, was auditor four times between 1559 and 1570, a member of the governing Twelve in 1560 and 1574, *carmalingo* in 1565, and guarantor for the *carmalingo* in 1577. CRS, 1485, MCXXX, Part 2, f. 16r, 37r, 40v; Entrata/Uscita, 1560, 1564, 1567, 1568, 1570. His brother, Michele, also a butcher, was, among other things, *proveditore* in 1555 and 1556. CRS, 1485, MCXXX, Part 2, ff. 12v-13r.

¹⁶⁷ Del Badia, *Le signorie*, 27.

¹⁶⁸ CRS, 1485, MCXXX, Part 2, f. 39v; Ent/Usc, 1562, 1571. Statuti, 115, f. 26r. Antonio Chaini's testimony was corroborated by a smith, Berto di Bartolo, who was on the general Council of the Commune in 1540. Del Badia, *Le signorie*, 27; Statuti, 115, f. 31r.

a case I will return to in detail in Chapter Two.¹⁶⁹ As observed earlier, the *potenza* of the Prato and the parish sacramental society of Santa Lucia were enmeshed by the 1570s, and from this point the principal parish procurators came out of the confraternity. The 1610 emperor Alessandro Biliotti was made chief procurator by his confraternal brothers in 1585 and held that role until at least 1602, and it seems likely, given the pattern, that Alessandro's imperial predecessor, the 1577 emperor who simply called himself Vincenzo in festive petition, was one of the two confraternal men called Vincenzo – the only members by that name – who were listed as procurators in 1579.¹⁷⁰ In the case of Alessandro, at least 13 members of the Biliotti weaving clan were at the confraternal meetings that chose and re-confirmed him and several other silk weavers (including one of his sons, Andrea, in 1600¹⁷¹) as the “syndics, procurators and parishioners of the church of Santa Lucia”.¹⁷² The family's obvious status is further suggested by another of Alessandro's sons, Michele, who stands out as the biggest almsgiver to the Holy Sacrament of Santa Lucia from when records begin in 1614, a regular donor at Friday mass in the parish church over several years.¹⁷³ Moreover, there is a striking continuity between the roles *potenze* bosses played in the local arena and in the wider world of silk weaving: Alessandro Biliotti became one of the procurators for the citywide craft confraternity of Santa Croce in 1588, and at some point before 1594 he was joined as a procurator by Francesco Nacherelli, his future *potenza* chancellor as well as his brother in the parish society of Santa Lucia.¹⁷⁴

The leaders of the Dyers *potenza* held the same kind of roles, here within the world of their trade, as did the men of the Prato and Campi empires. Dyeing was a major business, closer in nature to the merchant-manufacturers' own enterprises than the small concerns of other textile artisans. Indeed, dyeing workshops could be as costly to establish as city-centre *botteghe* and

¹⁶⁹ CRS, 1770, Part A, ff. 357v-358r.

¹⁷⁰ For the emperor of 1577, the two possible candidates, both weavers, are: Vincenzo di Matteo, also confraternal *carmalingo* in 1579, and Vincenzo Grazzini, the *proveditore*. As I note in Chapter Two, the most likely man is Grazzini. The 1579 membership list is published in Aranci, *Formazione religiose*, 376-8. For the emperor: Depos, 987, no. 53.

¹⁷¹ CRS, 1770, Part A, f. 284r (1600).

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, ff. 360r-364r (1585), 286r-287v (1599). There were six Biliotti in 1585 and eight in 1599, with only one man appearing twice. Alessandro's electors also included others from the 1610 *potenza* leadership group, or their close kin. The 1610 officials: chief secretary Frederigo di Dioguardi Massafirri, counsellor Matteo di Piero Carmignani, chancellor Francescho di Domenico Nacherelli. Frederigo appears in the confraternal documentation, with Biliotti, in 1599, as does Piero Carmignani. Nacherelli, whose father appears in 1585, emerges himself in the fragmentary sources in 1626. CRS, 1774, no. 13, unpag. (Entrata, August 2, 1626). For the *potenza*: Parte, 1478, ff. 189r, 244r.

¹⁷³ Michele Biliotti gave between 2 lire and 4 lire a month, from 1617 to 1621. CRS, 1774, no. 13, unpag. (entrata).

¹⁷⁴ CRS, 677, no. 6, ff. 17r-18v, 45v. I note that one of the 1577 imperial candidates, Vincenzo Grazzini, was Biliotti's immediate predecessor as a procurator of Santa Croce, and was elected to revise that corporation's statutes in 1587. He was also one of four men assigned to rewrite Santa Lucia's statutes in 1582. *Ibid.*, ff. 7r, 15r; CRS, 1769, no.1, unpag.

cloth merchants were often directly involved, putting up capital and forming partnerships with master dyers, themselves sometimes substantial artisans.¹⁷⁵ The craft corporation of San Onofrio reflects the unique status of dyeing within the cloth industry. This “*università*”, a term mostly associated with guilds, almost paralleled the Wool Guild itself.¹⁷⁶ A number of patrician family names appear in the *corpo*, lineages whose members had held the priorate in the Republic and became part of a self-fashioning nobility under the duchy. Prominent above all were the Alberti, an old, local textile family and the original donors of land for the hospital of San Onofrio – “someone of the Alberti house” was always to hold office as a *maestro* of the confraternity.¹⁷⁷ A special committee that, after 35 years of intermittent debate, pushed through a reform of San Onofrio’s statutes in 1604 included Cavaliere Lodovico Alberti, a knight of Malta, one of the most exclusive orders of European nobility, Ottaviano de’ Medici and Filippo Gherardi, “an old member of the house”. Like those at the apex of the Wool Guild, these men, “*maestri e gentiluomini*”,¹⁷⁸ were part of a patrician elite – they invested in dyeing works, and they sat on this committee with other wealthy ‘*maestri*’ whose families owned workshops.

Unlike the Wool Guild, however, San Onofrio as an organisation embraced, and shaped, the entire dyeing community, and confraternal offices were shared equally between *maestri* and *lavoranti*, the labourers who worked in the shops.¹⁷⁹ When the grand lord of the Dyers censured those “under my lordship and potentate” in 1610, in the first instance it was the labourers he counted, for it was this body of men who comprised the *potenza*.¹⁸⁰ In other words, the inversions of the festive genre took place, to begin with, within the microcosm of the trade itself. Every 1610 *potenza* official who can be located in San Onofrio was inscribed as a *lavorante*, and they and a sizeable number of their close kin belonged to the more restricted office-holding circles of the confraternity, regularly sitting as *lavoranti*.¹⁸¹ More specifically, the

¹⁷⁵ See Franceschi, *Oltre il tumulto*, 49-50; De Roover, ‘A Florentine Firm’, 99. De Roover offers the example of two members of the Medici family putting up 800 florins in 1508 and forming a partnership with a master dyer, who acted as managing partner. Dyers also paid the highest shop rents in the city. Battara, ‘Botteghe e pigioni,’ 10.

¹⁷⁶ Unlike other textile confraternities, San Onofrio was never subject to Wool Guild approval or interference. Taddei, ‘Per la salute’, 132.

¹⁷⁷ ‘Alcuno della casa degli Alberti possino sempre risedere per quelli uffizi’. Tintori, N. 6. 32, f. 9r-v. The other major lineages included the Medici, Gherardi, Corsi and Venturi. They all appear in a 1604 list of San Onofrio’s *corpo*, as do several members of other established families who, though in the Republican priorate, failed to make it to the Senate and the noble Order of Santo Stefano under the duchy – for example, the Deti and Guidacci. *Ibid.*, ff. 1v-6r. For these families, see Litchfield’s tabulation of patrician houses. Litchfield, *Emergence*, 362-82.

¹⁷⁸ Tintori, A. III. 1, ff. 42r, 100r (*ricordanze*, 1606-1707)

¹⁷⁹ The dyers also divided themselves, though with equal shares of offices, according to different dyes used and thus cloths produced, between the Arte Maggiore and Arte di Guado – the former used more expensively produced shades of red and purple, the latter woad and indigo for blue cloth.

¹⁸⁰ ‘Sotto lla mia signoria e potentato.’ Parte, 1478, f. 163r.

¹⁸¹ For the Dyers *potenza* in 1610, Parte, 1478, f. 163r, 222r. Only 60 men were placed in the electoral bags after a scrutiny. Tintori, N.6.32, f. 31r (Capitoli, 1604).

evidence places these men in a mediating position between the *lavoranti* and the big *maestri*-employers and patrician crust of the dyeing business. Two *lavoranti* also sat on the statute reform committee that completed its work in 1604. Mariotto Rondinino had been one of the *statutari* since the committee was set up in 1567. His son, Iacopo, a *potenza* counsellor in 1610, was a confraternal captain in, among other years, 1602, when the captains joined the *statutari* to thrash out the final reform.¹⁸² Sitting with him in 1602 was Agostino di Sabatino, the first king of the Dyers in 1610, as well as another of the *potenza*'s counsellors.¹⁸³ In 1610, the kingship of the Dyers transferred from Agostino to Piero di Baccio Fedi. Piero's father was a captain in 1603, along with the *carmalingo* of the *potenza*, both closely involved in the critical phase of reform.¹⁸⁴

Moreover, the status of the *potenza* leadership circle in the confraternity of San Onofrio finds parallels in the dyeing workshops. When the confraternity redecorated its oratory in 1617, with stone ornamentation around the crucifix and Virgin, the captains ordered contributions towards the cost from individual *maestri* and from the *lavoranti* on a collective workshop basis. *Potenza* counsellor Iacopo Rondinino appears as the head of one shop of labourers, washers and carders, and "he promises for them, as the principal" the 14 *lire* owed.¹⁸⁵ This business was owned by Giuliano Dardinelli, a member of whose family was, along with Iacopo's father, one of the *statutari* of 1604.¹⁸⁶ The Dyers *potenza* chancellor, Iacopo's close relative Bastiano Rondinino, had the same position in a similar shop owned by the Wool Guild, and as "their carder" he pledged money for the altar on behalf of its labourers.¹⁸⁷ Promising 21 *lire* for the labourers of another dyeing workshop, meanwhile, was their "principal", Giovanni di Baccio Fedi, almost certainly the brother of 1610 *potenza* king Piero di Baccio.¹⁸⁸

Discernible, then, are relatively narrow circles of men who wielded influence, controlled spiritual and material resources and held mediatory power within artisan social culture, circles that threw up the leaders of the *potenze* and which, as the general council of Campi put it in

¹⁸² For Mariotto and Iacopo Rondinini, *Ibid.*, N.6.32, ff. 2v, 3r.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, for Agostino and Dyers *potenza* counsellor Giulio Carletti.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.* f. 3v. The *carmalingo* was Lessando di Pasquino Savelli. Furthermore, a relative of Vincentio di Biagio Tannuci, 'uno di detti vasali' of Piero Fedi and the man who wrote a receipt for the ducal gift that year, was Fiorindo di Biagio Tannuci, one of the *lavorante* on the original reform committee of 1567. *Ibid.*, f. 2v. The changeover of Dyers leadership will be examined in Chapter Two.

¹⁸⁵ 'Per loro promette come principale Iacopo di Rondinino.' Tintori, A.III.1, ff. 113v-114v (*Ricordanze*, 1606-1707).

¹⁸⁶ Agnolo Dardinelli; *Ibid.*, f. 42r.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, ff. 113v-114v.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* The shop was formerly owned by Ruberto Rovai – a member of whose family, Niccolò, was, again, on the 1604 reform committee. One of the counsellors of the Scodellini, the dyer Piero Cresci, was the 'principale' who handled the collection for the *lavoranti* of another shop; while the king of the Scodellini, Tomasso Calici, donated in his own name as a shop *maestro*, though he was a *lavorante* when he had been king in 1610. For the Scodellini, Parte, 1478, ff. 156r, 226r. Calici was seated as a *lavorante* in 1608 and 1612; Tintori, A.IX.1, unpag. (*Tratte*, 1576-1655).

1559, in reference to the men dominating communal office, often comprised of “family and friends”.¹⁸⁹ Indeed, while republican electoral ideals always remained an essential legitimising framework, an ‘oligarchy’ sometimes cornered the leadership of a *potenza* over a significant period, more easily indeed than they might in the statutory context of the confraternity. Meanwhile, consistently re-elected or simply remaining in that role were men such as Pierone, Prato emperor from 1545 to at least 1559; Piero Fedi, still king of the Dyers in 1614; Iacopo Bossi, flagbearer of the Purgers in 1610 and again in 1617; and Niccolò Pagni, recorded as king of the Nebbia in both 1577 and 1588.¹⁹⁰ What the vignettes above also suggest is that this stratum of artisans and labourers tended to be relatively – and this is duly stressed – economically better established.¹⁹¹ Confraternities, for one, visibly marked out richer from poorer brothers. The “poor” of the company who received welfare were denied office, and it is unlikely that deeply impoverished men would pass scrutinies for office in the first place. Once in the office-holding group, a brother could still be excluded if he fell into debt, placed in the book of the dead in some cases.¹⁹² To be sure, the membrane separating a hand to mouth existence and some small degree of security was permeable – the Holy Sacrament of San Iacopo sopr’Arno, linked to the Nebbia, had to declare regular debt amnesties – yet by and large it seems that *potenze* leaders fell into the latter category.¹⁹³ After all, there was little point in electing an utterly impoverished king. Carnavalesque conventions demanded the king play a substantial part in defraying the costs of festivity. When a brother of the Resurrezione was elected king of the Macina he had to pay 20 *lire* to the “barony for the *fiesta* of the king” or

¹⁸⁹ Statuti, 115, f. 43r.

¹⁹⁰ Parte, 17, 115v-116v (Pierone); 1480, f. 512r (Fedi); 1478, ff. 218r, 224r and 1482, f. 145r (Bossi); 45, f. 59r; 738, f. 186 (Pagni).

¹⁹¹ It is difficult to get precise or useful data on the wealth of artisans and labourers in ducal Florence. Tax records, the Decima, which replaced the Catasto in 1495, only refer to landed income and the property-owning profile of artisans and labourers in the city was very low. In the census of 1561, 77 per cent of non-patricians and 83 per cent of men without surnames rented. Litchfield, *Florence Ducal Capital*, paras. 183, 303. A search, for example, for Prato or Ponte Nano officials or any members of their families in the Decima survey of the *gonfalone* of Unicornio in 1618 produced no result: DG, 3613, 3614. In the case of shops, the 1480 *catasto* shows that artisan ownership was very rare, mainly wealthier *artefici* in the city centre, some of them, such as *linaiuoli*, better described as merchants; a very few shoemakers and bakers also owned their own shops. Bianchi and Grossi, ‘Botteghe, economia e spazio urbano,’ 34-5. As with residential property, concentration of ownership of shops probably increased in the 16th century, in line with wider economic trends. In 1561, only 6 per cent of shopkeepers owned their shops; Litchfield, *Florence Ducal Capital*, para. 250. In Santo Spirito, to give one example, only two of 26 bakers owned their premises; DG, 3784, ff. 5v (no. 52), 10v (no. 117).

¹⁹² The butchers of San Antonio said in 1629 that ‘havendo debito lire quattro per conto della tassolina, devino andar a specchio et al libro de’ morti, come mai non fussero stati di nostra compagnia’; Capitoli, 623, unpag.

¹⁹³ San Iacopo’s 1589 statutes denied office to anybody owing 7 *lire*, but amnesties once a year from 1586 through 1589 if brothers paid just 13 *soldi*, while in 1597 brothers owing 2 *lire* were invited to pay half and lose office for four months. Capitoli, 171, f. 13; CRS 1257, I.IV, no.3, 80v, 85v, 93v, 100r, unpag (Feb 2, 1597).

another individual went to the vote.¹⁹⁴ In 1559, Camaldoli king Bernardo di Marco furnished a “banquet for everybody, as is usual,” and when it came to paying for the brigade’s San Giovanni float, he said that while the men of the *potenza* had collectively agreed to put about 150 *lire* towards it, he himself had stumped up the majority of the cost.¹⁹⁵ These amounts were by no means insubstantial. A master wool weaver received on average around 1 *lira* a day in the mid-16th century, closer to 2 *lire* a century later (about the same or even a little less in real terms, as wages lagged behind the prices revolution). A master builder may have received up to double this, an unskilled manual labourer about two-thirds.¹⁹⁶

One other factor structuring the leadership group of a *potenza*, and the alliances made by it, stands out – the ability to command the written word. Illiteracy, it must be stressed, presented no real bar to a man’s becoming a substantial figure within artisan society, either in his everyday community or his festive one. At best, 30 per cent of men could write, and fewer were able to do more than sign their name.¹⁹⁷ Both kings of the Dyers in 1610 were illiterate. So, too, was Giovambattista Salucci, a master butcher at the Ponte alla Carraia, king of the Butchers in 1626 and one of four men elected “with full authority and *balia*” by his craft corporation of San Antonio in 1629 to revise and strengthen confraternal taxation.¹⁹⁸ To be sure, in some cases literacy may have played a role in conferring authority. In a handful of *potenze*, such as the Prato or Nespola in 1610, every official could write. Yet in a few other brigades that year, no-one with a title could: in the Vagliati near Piazza Santa Maria Novella, neither the duke, his counsellor, or the counsellor’s son who acted as flagbearer, was able to sign his name, and the brigade’s “general” was functionally illiterate – he was French and knew no other language.¹⁹⁹ That said, nobody was in any doubt that the written word was crucial. Without it, receipts, testimony and petitions could not be composed, read, or even acknowledged with a signature. And, as we shall see in the following chapter, the petition, or *supplica*, was one of the central

¹⁹⁴ ‘E chi rifiutassi paghi L. venti alla barona per la festa del re, e ricimetersi da capo nel medesimo modo gli altri quindici’. Capitoli, 100, f. 9r. On the convention that festive expenses were put up by the leaders of festive brigades, with examples dating from the early 1400s, Franceschi, ‘La mémoire des laborateurs’, 1166.

¹⁹⁵ ‘Et havendo egli (come è il solito) fatto un convito a tutti’; Parte, 708, f. 48; Parte, nb, 340, unpag.

¹⁹⁶ For weavers in the 16th century, see De Roover, ‘A Florentine Firm,’ 98. For the later estimate, Malanima, *La decadenza*, 217. For builders and others, see Licita and Vanzulli, ‘Grano, Carestie, Banditismo,’ 336-7; Goldthwaite, *The Economy*, 336; Goldthwaite, ‘The Florentine Wool Industry’.

¹⁹⁷ For this figure, see, among others, Brucker; ‘Florentine Voices from the Catasto’. For similar estimates for north Italian towns more widely, Grendler, *Schooling*, 45-46, 71-74. Robert Black’s analysis of the 1427 Florentine *catasto* does not yield clear numbers for artisan literacy as a whole, but he points out that textile workers were among the least literate in society, followed by occupations such as servants, shoemakers, builders, bakers, carpenters and cleaners. Black, ‘Literacy in Florence’. General patterns of literacy, and in particular the difficulties in estimating its diffusion, are discussed in Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe*, chs. 6-7.

¹⁹⁸ Parte, 1486, f. 14r; Capitoli, 623, unpag.

¹⁹⁹ Parte, 1478, ff. 198, 258. Overall, 17 of the 1610 kings could write, 25 could not.

mechanisms through which artisans transmitted their grievances and needs to government, through which they looked to shape their relationship with the prince. Thus men who could write were an important and enabling resource, opening up another dimension of representation to lower-class Florentines. As one typical receipt for Cosimo II's payouts to the *potenze* in 1610 reads: "I, Domenicho di Iacopo Elmi, at the behest and in the presence of the said Lord Grand Monarch [of the Città Rossa], and being his secretary, did this receipt in my own hand, because he said he does not know how to write."²⁰⁰ The wording is formulaic, yet potent, placing the writer, here with a title in the brigade, at the hub of a charged act of exchange.

An important resource, but also a readily available one. There was, it appears, little need to go to notaries or professional scribes for simple transactions.²⁰¹ In the context of their confraternal lives, indeed, artisans were used to having to ensure their associations had access to literate men. In a few cases, a portion of the highest offices in confraternities were reserved for brothers who could read and write. San Antonio of the Butchers ruled that at least one of its four captains had to be able to read. In 1625 the Resurrezione split the electoral bags for its two captains, "because it was not very decent that the person elected as first captain could not read and write, and, having to say the holy office, had to call on people who were not part of the *corpo* of the company, many times children, in order to satisfy our obligation."²⁰² Almost universally, illiterate men were excluded, necessarily, from positions such as *proveditore* or *carmalingo*, with the brothers filling these purchasing, organisational, record-keeping and statute-writing posts acknowledged as crucial and sometimes re-elected for years on end. "The *proveditore* is the right arm of our company, the *scrivano* the left", as the Resurrezione had put it back in 1580 (though clearly it was having difficulty getting good candidates for these posts 40 years later), while the brotherhood of San Antonio ruled that the sensitive roles of

²⁰⁰ 'Io Domenico di Iacopo Elmi, a preghii e in presenza del detto Signore Gran Monarcha, e suo sigretario, [h]o fatto la presente sottoscrizione di mia mano proprio per che disse di non saper iscrivere.' Parte, 1478, f. 147r.

²⁰¹ This is not to say that cash did not sometimes change hands for the writing of letter. In 1577, the Camadoli king's expenses list records that he spent 6 soldi 8 denari for a petition ('supriga'); Parte, 739, f. 176. On notaries, which of course artisans used in many contexts, see Nussdorfer, 'Writing and the Power of Speech'. Literacy and the rise of the professional scribe in 16th-century Venice is discussed in De Vivo, *Information and Communication*, ch. 4.1; for Florence this entire area remains under-researched.

²⁰² 'Havendo considerato molto bene che era cosa non molto decente che fussi eletto per il primo capitano persona che non sapeva nè leggere nè scrivere e molti volti havendo da dire il santo uffitio faceva di bisogno chiamare gente non attenti al corpo di compagnia e molti volti fanciulli volendo satisfare al obligo nostro'. Capitoli, 100, f. 49r. A blanket literacy veto on the highest offices was, however, untenable, as the Holy Sacrament of San Iacopo Sopr' Arno indicates: the brothers accepted that the governor had to be able to read, but between 1589 and 1606 they kept restricting then re-opening the office of counsellor to illiterate men. Finally it was left open because 'alla compagnia ne torna danno grande, attesoche dett' huomini che non sanno leggere l'abbandonano et non vogliono pagare le loro tasse nè manco vogliono essere festaioli poioche non hanno a godere tale uffitio.' Capitoli, 171, ff. 13 (1589), 90 (1606); CRS, 1257, no. 3, unpag. (August 30, 1592).

proveditore and *carmalingo* should be filled by men “who are of a mature age, exemplary and upright people, people chosen from the best and most able of our company, and who know how to write”.²⁰³ It was sometimes such men who acted as scribes for the illiterate king of a *potenza*. As secretary of the Biliemme in 1577, Cosimo Pieralli, statute writer for the new wool weavers’ confraternity of San Giovanni Evangelista, penned a receipt for Duke Francesco’s gift to Biliemme king Filippo di Orlando. As pointed out earlier, the mattress-maker Giovanbattista Bolani was *proveditore* of the Holy Sacrament of San Iacopo Sopr’Arno almost continually from 1584, and, in 1610, held that title in both the confraternity and its closely linked *potenza*, the Nebbia. It was Bolani who wrote the receipt for the Nebbia king, a hat maker, a role he may well have played many times before for his other illiterate brothers.²⁰⁴

But the *potenze* attest to the fact that writers could also be found beyond the obvious circles of confraternal administrators. Even in cases where a brigade was firmly anchored to a specific sodality, other men, perhaps more tightly linked to the leadership cohort, were also available. Bastiano Rondinino, head of the *lavoranti* in one workshop and part of that prominent family of dyers-labourers, wrote a receipt as chancellor to the first king of the Dyers in 1610, though he had no profile whatsoever in San Onofrio. Vincentio Tanucci, a *lavorante* in San Onofrio, but never with any writing role, did the same for Agostino’s successor, Piero Fedi. In fact, Tanucci, who described himself only as “one of the vassals” of the king, was one of many men who held no title in a brigade. Some of these non-officials were nonetheless clearly among the core group of a *potenza*, verifying receipts or census reports. But most, like Tanucci, simply came to write for someone else, either as a brigade’s principal writer or just to scrawl a testimonial line for another man.²⁰⁵ About 50 men, or one-fifth of those listed in the brigades in 1610, fall into this category, ‘subjects’ of the kingdom who could do the job. Some of the wool weavers in the *potenza* of the Camaldoli looked outside the craft to other, almost certainly local, contacts, perhaps because they had no choice: the treasurer had a carpenter write for him, and the king’s receipt writer, who in fact held the title of chancellor, was a tailor.²⁰⁶ Others approached men

²⁰³ ‘Perchè il proveditore è il braccio destro della nostra compagnia e lo scrivano il sinistro.’ Capitoli, 100, f. 34v. ‘Che sieno di età matura, persone exemplari di buon costumi, persone scelte del meglio e più sufficienti di nostra compagnia e che sappino scrivere’. Capitoli 623, ch. 2 (1581). For very similar examples: Capitoli 190, 46 (Santa Croce, silk weavers) detta dei tessitori di seta); Capitoli 843, f. 8r (S Andrea, purgers).

²⁰⁴ For the Nebbia of 1610, Parte, 1478, ff. 215r, 261r. For Giovanbattista Bolani as *proveditore*; CRS, 1257, no.3, f. 68r (1584). The hatmaker king, Giovanni di Pasquale, appears only once, in 1607 (Ibid, no. 4, unpag), though from the mid-1590s a full *tratte* of officials is recorded only sporadically; lists of members involved in various rituals are similarly sparse. Giovanni appears to have joined the confraternity later, not appearing for example in a list of 68 brothers receiving candles at the Purification in 1603. *Ibid.*, no.3, unpag. The receipt writer, and chancellor, for the Spada in 1610 was Francesco Zaballi, who as noted earlier was one of two men reviewing the *carmalingo*’s accounts in SS Sacramento di S Paolo e S Antonio, a task he shared with Piero Gallancini, Spada *potenza* counsellor and confraternal veteran in key administrative roles. CRS, 120, no.2, ff. 23r, 55v, 61r; Parte, 1478, ff. 196r, 250r.

²⁰⁵ Parte, 1478, f. 222v; Tintori, A.IV.4, f. 58v (Partiti, 1600-30).

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, ff. 202r, 203r, 239r.

who were obviously well known in a neighbourhood arena and tended to be literate. Ottavio del Mazza, who called himself the “apothecary at the Macina”, affirmed, without title, the census report for the king of that streetcorner brigade.²⁰⁷ Similarly, a priest wrote the census for the illiterate king of the Piccino, a brass-worker at the Canto del Giglio, where the brigade had its *residenza*.²⁰⁸

Curious though it might seem, when the *potenze* showed up to collect the ducal gift in 1610, no brigade used one person to write for all its illiterate. Indeed, in some cases each man brought his own writer with him, either a titled official or more often somebody else whom he knew, and all of them appear together on the same piece of paper.²⁰⁹ In part, no doubt, this was because men saw the testimonial act as belonging to an established relationship of trust. But it also seems that a strategy of association – networking – was taking place through the medium of testimony, the pen a means by which useful men could be brought into the orbit of the leadership, asked to take a stake, or a larger stake, in the kingdom-community because of the other kinds of resources they represented. The Macina king, for example, had no need to ask the apothecary on the streetcorner to write his census – in fact, his receipt writer and chancellor was another man.²¹⁰ But the apothecary was a figure who supplied wax to men in both their confraternal and *potenza* guises, and whose shop, as the Venetian evidence suggests, would have been a centre of sociability, conversation and the sharing of news for men from all social levels.²¹¹

In this context, the sources also allow us to pick out the figure of the tavernkeeper – usually literate, a link-man for a local and wider arena, and a highly desirable person to have involved in a *potenza*. In 1577, the duke of the Guelfa brigade brought the tavernkeeper at San Andrea, beside the quite distant Mercato Vecchio, to write for him.²¹² In fact this *potenza* king was unable to write for himself, but in 1610, we find that while the grocer king of the Gatta could write, including the harder task of the receipt itself, as could almost all of his officials, his illiterate viceroy asked a tavernkeeper to sign for him.²¹³ The same year, the Spalla king, a miller, called upon the tavernkeeper Chimenti Maroni, who also had no title in the brigade, to do both his census and receipt, though other officials were capable of writing.²¹⁴ Maroni, almost

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 171r. Similarly, a *speziale* came to sign for the counsellor of the Nebbia, an illiterate carpenter, in 1577. Parte, 738, no.186.

²⁰⁸ Parte, 1478, f. 165r.

²⁰⁹ In the Woolbeaters, for example, Andrea di Domenico detto Rocco was ‘scribe general’ and wrote the king’s receipt, but another writer was brought to sign for one Woolbeater counsellor, while a third wrote for two other counsellors of the *potenza*. Parte, 1478, ff. 164r, 237r. See also, the Cornacchia and Olmo, *Ibid.*, ff. 157r, 223r, 216r, 247r.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*; ff. 171r, 242r.

²¹¹ De Vivo, ‘Pharmacies as Centres of Communication’.

²¹² Depos., 987, ins. 63.

²¹³ Parte, 1478, ff. 208r, 231r. In one case, a king writes for an illiterate official, the king of the Ponte Nano for his counsellor, a weaver. *Ibid.*, f. 252r.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, ff. 205r, 206r, 236r.

certainly the *oste* at the Trave Torta where the Spalla met, also declared himself a “member” of the Camporeggi in via San Gallo in the north of the city, one of two tavernkeepers whom that brigade’s king asked to affirm his census.²¹⁵ Maroni, in fact, was one of only nine men – out of 259 who turned up at the palace of the Parte on July 17, 1610 – to have a stated role in more than one *potenza*. Another was also one of those sought-after tavernkeepers, and he was both secretary of the Mela and a counsellor for the Rondine, kingdoms with a common border.²¹⁶ Only one of the men whose name is linked to multiple *potenze* was illiterate. Yet Martino Landini, who turns up as a counsellor in three brigades, was also a good man to involve in the business of a *potenza* – he was head of a family of minor Florentine painters who designed flags for artisan associations.²¹⁷

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This chapter has set out the spaces and solidarities that underpinned the kingdoms of the *potenze* kingdoms, and shown a city of micro-communities based on ties of neighbourhood and occupation. It has also made clear that these communities were not isolated, but connected by men who often had a number of informal and institutional allegiances and were embedded in complex, overlapping networks of sociability, men who were linked directly or at one remove with many others of similar status across Florence. As each brigade established its kingdom territory, claimed the constituency it purported to represent, these wider familiarities arguably greased the wheels of the ritual relations through which they collectively redefined the city under an artisan emperor. Now I turn to the larger political and social world in which artisans made these kingdoms, before tackling the festive moment itself. It was only in the heat of that moment that these ritual communities, narrower and wider, took proper shape on the civic stage, and when the movers and mediators discussed here sought to assert themselves upon it.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 175r.

²¹⁶ Almost all the rest of the crossover men were, perhaps unsurprisingly, writers, in three cases for officials in neighbouring brigades. The king of the Mela, a dyer, wrote for another one of the Rondine men; the scribe and receipt writer of the Catena wrote the women and children section of the census for the Monteloro, as well as signing for the captain of the slightly more distant Purgers; and the scribe of the Consuma, who wrote for two men there, also wrote for a counsellor of the Sferza. Parte, 1478, ff. 149r, 161r, 152r, 153r, 206r, 211r, 218r, 221r, 224r, 225r, 228r, 229r, 234r, 235r. In the other case, Michele Dadari, ‘generale’ of the Biliemme wrote for the Vice-Emperor in the Camaldoli, a man to whom he was probably connected through the wool weavers’ confraternity of San Giovanni Evangelista. *Ibid.*, 200r, 256r.

²¹⁷ Martino di Zanobi was first counsellor in the Vagliati, second counsellor in its neighbour the Corvo, and a counsellor in the Cornacchia. His son, Polito, also illiterate, was flagbearer of the Vagliate. Parte, 1478, ff. 157r, 192r, 194r, 241r, 223r, 258r. Another son of Martino, Anibale Landini, appears in the records of the Resurrezione in 1615, hired to make a flag of the crucified Christ; CRS, 1700, R.1., f. 24v.

Chapter Two

“Peace and war, war and peace”: Ritual, Identity, Contract

Even before the advent of the duchy, and certainly after it, there is little doubt that the most significant appearances of the *potenze* on the Florentine civic stage were intimately bound up with Medicean dynastic-statist agendas. And at all these *fieste*, one of the most persistent themes was that of peace and peace-making. In 1545, the enthusiastic Medicean Niccolò Martelli wrote to a friend that Cosimo I had ordered special celebrations for that year’s feast of the city’s patron, San Giovanni, because of the “peace made and the wedding that is being prepared between the two greatest temporal rulers,” between the French king and the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.¹ Another Florentine that year wrote that the festivities were “in veneration of our protector and advocate St John the Baptist, the world being much at peace.”² The eventual Valois-Habsburg peace of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559, which firmly established Habsburg supremacy on the peninsula, inspired something of a rerun. As the Parte put it, the “supreme emperor of the games” had been “set up in the present circumstances extremely happily during this time of peace.”³ Charles V, the “duke of Italy” as one citizen described him in the early 1540s, had underwritten hereditary Medici rule in Florence in 1532, while the treaty of 1559 affirmed Florentine rule over recently conquered Siena.⁴ The European peace thus acted to secure the new Medicean dynasty within the Habsburg imperium, and marking it at the feast of the commune’s own self-renewal turned it into a celebration of the *pax medicea* at home – the analogy between micro and macrocosm made easier by the fact that contemporaries readily saw in the *potenze* states, under their emperor, a reflection of the European imperial system, of “true and essential things” as the Parte put it.⁵ In 1545, one of the floats paraded by Florence’s citizen youth confraternities featured a child holding an olive branch while crushing weapons under his foot.⁶ The festivities of 1577, meanwhile, were for the birth of an heir to Duke Francesco de’ Medici, and so explicitly celebrated

¹ Martelli, *Il primo libro delle lettere*, 58v.

² Coppi, ed., *Cronaca*, 51. As signs of a peace deal became public in late 1544, the same chronicler remarked that Florence closed its shops and held a day of *fiesta*, ‘come se fussi il giorno di Pasqua’. *Ibid.*, 43-4.

³ ‘Et considerantes quod summus ludicrus Imperator in praesentiarum constitutis faustissime huius paci tempore’; Parte, 17, f. 116r.

⁴ Coppi, ed., *Cronaca*, 15 (1542). The political history of early ducal Tuscany is expansively covered in Diaz, *Il granducato*, Parts I and II.

⁵ Del Badia, *Le signorie*, 29-30.

⁶ The Company of San Bastiano; Coppi, ed., *Cronaca fiorentina*, 52. For the duchy, including a brief look at their processional life, Eisenbichler, *The Boys*, 169ff; Polizzotto, *Children of the Promise*, ch. 4. On the emergence of the youth confraternities in the 15th century, Taddei, *Fanciulli e giovani*, esp. Ch. 4.

the renewal of the dynastic state – the moment when both duke and duchy were reproduced. Once again, civic and Medicean time were opportunistically grafted together: the child was born in late May, and at special *feste* staged at San Giovanni a month later, one of the youth companies linked the ducal birth to that of Christ and to the contemporaneous rule of Augustus, both figured as bringers of a new peace, and to that effect paraded a temple of peace through the city.⁷

Peace, in fact, was a central element of Medici propaganda in the family's quest to establish and legitimise its political authority. From the iconography of festive ephemera, to more permanent artistic programs to humanist apologia, the Medici sought to create a master narrative for the new principate that figured them, notably Cosimo I, as saviours who had finally healed the republic of the corrosive strife between its citizen factions and families. Medicean symbolism presented Cosimo as a Mars who had laid aside war and created peace, a Moses who had rescued his people and transported them to a new Jerusalem, and above all an Augustus who had ushered in a new golden age of justice and peace.⁸ “Caesar Augustus, having enhanced and ornamented Rome with many buildings, is glorified with the saying that he found a city of bricks and left it marble,” announces the cover of a book of deliberations by the Otto di Pratica of the mid-1540s, before adding to that famous line from Suetonius: “Duke Cosimo, having found his city full of confusion and prey to enemies, not only saved it, but made it more ornate and secure, and left it gold”.⁹ This was not characterised so much as a reversal of republican history, but its apotheosis. Deep continuities were asserted with the city's republican, and more specifically Medicean, past, the new duchy restoring the previous Augustan golden age under Lorenzo de' Medici, a topos that emerged during Lorenzo's lifetime and assumed the aura of myth during the wars of Italy.¹⁰

The *potenze* seem to slide neatly into this Medicean cultural politics. As Cosimo I pursued the establishment of a Florentine, and Tuscan, cultural repertoire as part of his wider state-building efforts, public festivity became a powerful sign of a past properly realised, codified and contained – as is well illustrated by the ‘canon’ of civic ritual painted into the Sala di Gualdrada in the Palazzo

⁷ Company of San Francesco: Dini, *Descrizione del'ordine*, unpag.

⁸ Both Alessandro and Cosimo were painted as post-conflict Mars at peace; Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny*, ch. 10; for Cosimo's public identification, starting with his marriage to Eleanora of Toledo in 1539, with Augustus, and through Virgil to the Augustan golden age, *Ibid*; ch. 11. For the iconography of abundance, linked to Cosimo through the figure of Saturn and the mythological golden age, see Edelstein, ‘La fecundissima Signora Duchesa’. See, too, Richelson, *Studies in the Personal Imagery*, *passim*; Casini, *I gesti del principe*, 215-75. For Moses and Cosimo I, Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino's Chapel*, ch. 12. Also Foster, ‘Metaphors of Rule’. On humanists, see Von Albertini, *Firenze*, ch. 4.

⁹ ‘Havendo Cesare Augusto acresciuto et ornato Roma di molto edifiti si gloriava dicendo have(r) trovato una città di mattoni et lasciarla di marmo; havendo il Duca Cosimo trovato la città sua piena di confusione et preda da nimici non solo la salva ma l'ha fatta più ornata et più sicura et lasceralla d'oro’. Pratica segreta, 158 (Deliberazione e partiti degli Otto di Pratica, 1544-7)

¹⁰ The topos of continuity or culmination in Medicean visual propaganda, especially notable in the program for the Sala Grande in the Palazzo Vecchio, finished 1565, is set out by Vasari himself in his *Ragionamenti*. See the discussions in Tinagli, ‘The Identity of the Prince’; Najemy, ‘Florentine Politics’, 51-4; Williams, ‘The Sala Grande’; Veen, ‘Republicanism in the Visual Propaganda’; Starn and Partridge, *Arts of Power*, ch. 3.

Vecchio where one panel depicts a joust against a Saracen dummy, a form of *armeggeria* that became closely associated with the *potenze* in the 16th century.¹¹ In 1559, the Parte expounded on how the *potenze* had been “set up since ancient times to the end that only that in public occasions of enjoyment and gladness, public spectacles and games, especially jousting, might happen though the men of the said *potenze* and their lords, so that in the state might be entertained in a manner similar to the customs of the Roman state, in which, as Maro [Virgil] testifies, the celebration of the triumphal public games resounded with joy”.¹² In other words, the *potenze* evoked the Augustan era and, in a Virgilian trope appropriated wholesale by Cosimo I, the reign of Saturn, the mythical golden age of peace and abundance that Augustus himself was said to have restored. For some, the mock kingship of artisans spoke directly to the Roman feast of Saturnalia, which was rooted in that mythology, a festival where slaves and masters briefly swapped roles.¹³ At the same time, Florentines readily saw in the *potenze* the revival of a more recent, Florentine, golden age. “A beautiful festivity is being prepared in Florence for this San Giovanni,” wrote one official in 1545, “and they’re doing all those ancient things, like the *armeggerie* of the *potenze*”,¹⁴ while in 1577 the chronicler Giuliano de’Ricci remarked that Duke Francesco, in favouring the *potenze*, was “imitating the praiseworthy customs of his ancestors”.¹⁵ It was widely held that this kind of festivity could be tracked back to one particular ancestor, Lorenzo, who in the 16th century was credited with bringing classicising *feste* to the civic stage and indeed inventing the genre of trade-inspired *canti carnascialeschi* in which the *potenze* sometimes appear.¹⁶

At first glance none of this would seem to trouble the conclusions of most previous students, where the *potenze* are seen as creatures dancing to the tune, “wearing the trousers” in Trexler’s words, of the Medici. They appear to be little more than a plebeian entourage helping to

¹¹ For a recent discussion of the Sala di Gualdrada, see Veen, *Cosimo de’ Medici*, 42-53. Among the other such codifications of public games and ritual, one can point to Giovanni de’ Bardi’s treatise on Florentine football, his book on the subject dedicated to Duke Francesco (Giovanni de’ Bardi, *Discorso sopra il giuoco del calcio fiorentino*, 1580). The *saracino* joust is discussed later in this chapter.

¹² ‘Potentatus et dominationes huius inclite et excelse civitatis Florentie ab antiquis temporibus instituti et institute fuerunt ad finem tantum et effectum ut in publicis gaudiis et letitiis publica spectacula et ludicra presertim hastiludia per homines dictorum potentatum et eorum dominos fierent. Ex quibus civitas exhilarari posset iuxta mores Romane Civitatis in qua teste marone dum triumphales pompe celebrabantur letitia ludisque virum plausuque fremebant’. Parte, 17, f. 115v.

¹³ Migliore, *Firenze*, 516. It should be pointed out that while the reign of Saturn/Augustus was a Virgilian theme, the source for Rome’s Saturnalia festivities, which the Parte may have had in mind in 1559, was not Virgil, but primarily the fifth century *Saturnalia* of Macrobius.

¹⁴ ‘A Firenze si prepara una bellissima festa per questo San Giovanni si fanno tutte quelle cose antiche come quelle *armeggerie* di quelle *potentie*’; Camillo Campana, brother of the duke’s first secretary; MDP, 376, f. 453r (June 16). Ricci says, ‘Si tirerà avanti se così piace a Vostra Eccellenza secondo il modo antiquo’; MDP, 1171, 265. See also Plaisance, *Florence*, 115-6. Martelli point out that the *potenze* were ‘che usar si solieno per li tempi adrieto’, Martelli, *Il primo libro delle lettere*, 58v.

¹⁵ Ricci, 215-6.

¹⁶ Grazzini, *Tutti i trionfi*, xl-xli; Vasari, *Le Vite*, 5, 602 (Life of Granacci). On Lorenzo’s admittedly key role in shaping and popularising that genre, see esp. Castellani, *Nuovi canti*, 18ff.

consolidate Medicean political supremacy and serving up the virtues of the new duchy for public consumption. However, as suggested in the Introduction, this model, which harnesses artisan festive groups to a ‘high’ political narrative of Florentine history, lacks the explanatory force to make their rise and their activities intelligible. While the artisan brigades were certainly intended to form one element in the representation of a *pax medicea*, that peace had a genuinely contractual nature, involving a dialogue with groups keen to assert their own identities both on the festive stage and off it rather than simply represent other “true and essential” things. That said, politics as narrowly conceived remains vital to understanding the emergence of the *potenze* from the late 15th century, and it is useful to begin by isolating this story. Indeed there is more to say about how the Medici, and occasionally their opponents, saw artisan festive groups as a political resource and sought to deploy them within the matrix of their own contests.

1. Politics and Class: Two Narratives

Many Florentine citizens saw the *potenze* in precisely such terms. As the storm clouds gathered on the last republic in 1529, Donato Gianotti, the republican political theorist and bureaucrat, famously wrote: “All the standards, both companies of *armeggiatori* and *potenzie*, should be scrapped, as they are things that take reputation from the public [sphere] and increase that of private persons. And if someone should research their origins he would find that they are created by tyrants, who use them to entertain the *plebe* so they can keep the republic oppressed”.¹⁷ Indeed, politically motivated patronage of the *potenze* is pointed to by some of the earliest, now well-known, shreds of evidence for the brigades. Though not necessarily aspiring to be a tyrant – or prince – we find the tentacular figure of Lorenzo de’ Medici, the so-called “boss of the shop”, lending two goblets bearing the Medici and Rucellai arms, as well as 12 cups, to one *potenza* for a May Day banquet in 1489, the objects picked up (presumably at the Medici palace) by a certain “Domenicho di Benedecto, factor [*tochatore*] for the king of Camaldoli”.¹⁸ The loan was of a piece with Lorenzo’s larger strategy in the *gonfalone* of Drago Verde relatively distant across the Arno: the systematic infiltration of Drago’s local confraternities, plus the donation of large gifts of alms, were all acts intended, at least in part, to short-circuit loyalties developing between that neighbourhood’s Soderini family – who were becoming serious Medici rivals – and the Camaldoli’s large body of textile workers.¹⁹ The Medici investment in the city’s artisans, and its artisan kingdoms, perhaps paid its most important dividend during the Pazzi conspiracy of 1478, when Florentines by and large rejected the Pazzi’s republican rallying cry of “*popolo e libertà*” –

¹⁷ Sanesi, ‘Un discorso sconosciuto’, 26. Noted in Trexler, *Public Life*, 413.

¹⁸ Del Piazzo, ed., *Protocolli*, 448. Trexler, *Public Life*, 413. For this characterisation of Lorenzo, Kent, ‘Patron-Client Networks’.

¹⁹ Kent, ‘“Be Rather Loved”’, 29-30; Eckstein, *The District*, 205-17.

which the conspirators clearly hoped would rouse the poorer districts – and gave their support to the Medici.²⁰ Certain loyal “*garzoni* of the Canto alla Macina”, as they called themselves, lads and shop apprentices near the Medici palace who were linked (at least in the sense of interwoven networks) to that streetcorner’s emergent *potenza*, later told Lorenzo how “these servants and lovers of the house of the Medici” had rushed to attack some of those responsible for his attempted assassination.²¹

This kind of politics was pursued more assiduously by the Medici after their return in 1512 until their expulsion in 1527 – or at least it is better documented, more attentively chronicled by citizens trying to make sense of those tumultuous years. Moreover, Giannotti’s analysis of the Medici-*potenze* relationship appears to have been shared by many of his republican contemporaries, and almost certainly to their strategic disadvantage. *Gonfaloniere a vita* Piero Soderini made only one known attempt to co-opt the *potenze* under a different kind of banner, when, amidst growing external pressures on Florence, he sent the Palazzo’s pipers to accompany the Prato emperor’s May Day processions in 1511.²² During the Last Republic, meanwhile, the *potenze* seem to vanish from the sources, and some brigades were stripped of their banners.²³ Indeed, Giannotti, who may personally have been active against the *potenze* as secretary of the Dieci, recommended their suppression in 1529 as part of a much larger project, his successful blueprint for a citizen militia.²⁴ Organised on the basis of the *gonfaloni* – which, in part, had been set up centuries before as paramilitary associations to guarantee the regime of the *popolo* – the new militia represented a concerted bid to revive the ethos of republican civic self-defence. For Giannotti it made perfect sense to discuss the *potenze* in this context, as for him the new citizen youth militia and the artisan brigades were the antitheses of each other: the neighbourhood kingdoms, which were later to appropriate the symbols of the *gonfaloni* (even, as we have seen, their names in the case of the Sferza), represented for him the complete subversion of these jurisdictions, their festive arms orchestrated by the Medici in the service of tyranny.²⁵

²⁰ On the events of 1478, see, among others, Martines, *April Blood*, ch. 7. Plotters against Lorenzo in 1481 also intended to rouse the city’s *pendici*. Kent, “Be Rather Loved”, 27.

²¹ Kent and Kent, ‘Two Vignettes’.

²² ‘...mandaverunt pifferis palatii dicte dominorum quaternus die crastina cum sonis et comitiva canti ad sonandum imperatori prati per civitatem florentie quo usque ire voluerit dictus imperator sine ali quo in molumento sub pena protestationes eorum offitii mandante.’ Signori e collegi, deliberazioni in forza dell’ordinaria autorità, 113, f. 42r (April 29). However, Soderini appeared to appreciate the alliance-building potential of carnivalesque performance in general. For Fat Tuesday after he became *gonfaloniere* in 1502, he ordered all the *tavolaccini* of the Palazzo to choose a *signore* (a foreshadowing of the election of another *tavolaccino*, Pierone, as emperor in 1545) and to come to the Piazza with a float (*trionfo*) and a song. Cerretani, *Ricordi*, 73. See the discussion in Prizer, ‘Reading Carnival’, 235.

²³ As discussed below, the Guelfa *potenza*’s flag was taken for having the Medici balls on it.

²⁴ Sanesi, ‘Un discorso sconosciuto’; and see Roth, *The Last Florentine Republic*, 117-8.

²⁵ There was arguably something calculated about ending a parade of the new militia on San Giovanni 1529 with a mock battle on the emperor’s Prato d’Ognissanti, presumably using the kinds of fake weapons that were generic for the *potenze*; Roth, 140, 153n. See also Trexler, *Public Life*, 531-40. The issue of arms will be fully addressed later in this chapter.

Given this pre-history, for Giannotti and like-minded citizens there was only one way to read the return of the *potenze* to the city stage after the war of Florence. At the creation of the principate in 1532, the *potenze* played a significant role. On the day before May Day, wrote Giovanni Cambi, Alessandro de' Medici organised that the "five *potentie* of the *plebe* ... each be given a new standard of taffeta with the ensign of each *potentia*, richer than they had ever had before... and he had them hung from the windows of his palace. And each *potentia* went in procession to his house, that is to his palace, with all those they had with them for the *armeggerie*, all well presented and ordered on their horses."²⁶ Ceremonially dismantling the republic on May Day hardly seemed a casual choice. It was a day of festive regeneration long associated with artisan kingship and the *potenze* in particular. On the morning of May Day itself, the world was indeed turned upside down. The final Signoria stood down outside the Palazzo and Alessandro was installed as prince to the thunder of artillery, and then he and the new 48-member Senate processed to the Duomo to hear mass. On their return the *potenze* performed jousts, first outside the Medici palace and then throughout the city. Florentines were to understand the *potenze* as the festive image of a plebeian army, mobilised afresh by the Medici to maintain the family's political control and, now, monarchical rule as opposed to some species of oligarchical republicanism.

As if to add weight to this reading, until the end of the 1540s the dukes talked to the *potenze* through their fiercest partisans and most trusted dependents, rather than immediately putting their trust in the old, once-powerful magistracy of the Capitani di Parte Guelfa. Ahead of San Giovanni in 1545, the Otto di Pratica – that quintessentially Medicean magistracy that rose and fell with the family's fortunes – was given the task of appointing commissars to keep an eye on the five official jousting *potenze*, but even then it was Pierfrancesco Riccio, Cosimo I's childhood tutor and adviser, now the prince's majordomo, who guided almost all the preparations.²⁷ So overburdened was he that at one point he found himself apologising to the duke for neglecting other matters, "because at that moment I didn't write, finding myself busy with kings, marquises, lords and a great force of knights".²⁸ Aiding Riccio behind the scenes was a "*gentiluomo* of his excellency" Luigi Ridolfi, who had been a vital ally during the *tumulto di Venerdì* in 1527 and at the start of both Alessandro and Cosimo's reigns.²⁹ Other hard-core Mediceans emerge in the sources a year

²⁶ Cambi, *Istorie*, 23, 114-117 (quote at 117). Cambi further notes that the *potenze* 'erano rilasciate parechi anni per moria, e querra, et charestia, e assedio, e gran povertà'. See also, Segni, *Storie*, 151.

²⁷ Otto di Pratica, Principato, 45, f. 64v (June 15); MDP, 376, ff. 376, 528r-v. The Otto di Pratica was a creation of the Medici *balia* of 1480, disbanded after 1494 and restored in 1514, scrapped in 1527, then restored again in 1532. It was also the Otto di Pratica that oversaw the *potenze* at the marriage of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino in 1518; Cerretani, *Ricordi*, 351. The 1545 *commissari* will be discussed later in this chapter.

²⁸ "... che in quelli hora non scripsi trovandomi occupati con Re, marchesi, signori et forza di cavalleri." MDP, 376, f. 492r (June 14).

²⁹ At the end of his account of the Prato emperor's election, Riccio remarks: 'Et messer Luigi Ridolfi m'ha mandato l'inclusa poliza; V.S. si degnerà mostrata a Sua Eccellenza perchè era causa della festa'. *Ibid.*, f. 203v. Ridolfi was one of the four on the first Magistrato Supremo, the

after Alessandro's enthronement, during the 1533 celebrations for the *entrata* of his future spouse, Margherita of Austria. At that moment, the coronation of the *contado* emperor at Campi, Piero Bargioni, was officiated by Ottaviano de' Medici and Agnolo Marzi on behalf of the duke.³⁰ Both figures had been point men in Florence for Giulio de' Medici, before and after he became Pope Clement VII in 1523. Ottaviano, heavily sanctioned precisely for this reason during the last republic, re-emerged in the first decade of the duchy as perhaps the most influential man in Florence after the prince, deeply concerned, as his portrait collection attests, in building up the myth of Medici destiny.³¹ Marzi, the political manager of the late 1510s and 1520s, who had kept lists of Medici "friends" and "enemies" and promised to "comfort [the friends] in all their needs",³² became, among other things, Cosimo I's *lemosiniere*, the man "who passed on the supplications, and his distributor of alms".³³

Furthermore, while we should be in no doubt that Ottaviano and Marzi were just as involved with the city brigades on May Day of 1533 – when the "four *potentie* of the *plebe*" performed an *armeggeria* outside the Medici palace – as they were with the Campi emperor, their presence in the *contado* at this crucial point is telling.³⁴ For if the last republic had made militia out of its citizen youth, the duchy quickly moved to disarm Florentines and re-arm the *contado*, in effect a return to the previous model for an indigenous territorial army.³⁵ Thus in the same moment that Duke Alessandro's *commissari* were soliciting oaths of fealty to the prince from the new peasant *bande*, Ottaviano and Marzi were bolstering the nascent *potenze* of the countryside, offering them,

legislative body that replaced the Signoria in 1532; he was also brought in by Maria Salviati to help Cosimo organise grain distribution during the dearth of 1537, immediately after the second duke was elected. Stephens, *The Fall*, 200; Roth, *The Last Republic*, 28, 40; Litchfield, *Emergence*, 27; Coppi, ed., *Cronaca*, 13.

³⁰ Del Badia, *Le signorie*, 25-7.

³¹ Ottaviano, among the 25 most suspected citizens during the siege, and briefly imprisoned, was elected *gonfaloniere* in 1531 for the writing of the new constitution. In 1537 he became Cosimo I's Depositeria generale, or chief of the treasury. According to Segni, he became closer to Cosimo I at the expense of Francesco Guicciardini after 1537, advising him to marginalise the republican legacy and become ever more 'assoluto'. Benvenuto Cellini, who despised him, said 'pareva che governassi ogni cosa'. Stephens, *The Fall*, 169, 172, 250n; Segni, *Storie*, 217-18; Cellini, *La vita*, 289-90. On the Medici portraits held by Ottaviano in the early 1530s – commissioned by him in the case of Vasari's *Lorenzo de' Medici* of 1534 – see Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny*, 234-6. See, too, Bracciante, *Ottaviano de' Medici*.

³² Stephens, *The Fall*, 111-12, 141-50.

³³ Mellini, *Ricordi*, 64. Mellini goes on to recall that alms were also at times organised by Riccio. In 1542, Marzi headed Cosimo's attempts to centralise state charity; Lombardi, 'Poveri a Firenze'.

³⁴ Cambi, *Istorie*, 23, 129. See also, Biagi, 'Per la cronica', 75.

³⁵ The model began with Machiavelli under Piero Soderini but was resurrected in 1514 by the Medici. See Butters, *Governors*, 104-5, 234ff; Canestrini, 'Ordinanza'. Alessandro's *bande* was established by 1534 and regulations were laid out by 1535, with big tax cuts for the lowest ranks. Numbers were under 8,000 during Alessandro's reign, then increased exponentially under Cosimo I, reaching 44,000 men in 1610. Ferretti, 'L'organizzazione militare'; D'Addario, 'L'honorata militia'.

apparently for the first time, equality with the city brigades.³⁶ Just how closely those countryside *potenze* and the expanding ducal militia came to be linked in the minds of the protagonists is revealed by a later Campi emperor, the miller Benino Benini. “Under the jurisdiction of the said monarch there are many *descritti* [infantry] in the militia,” Benini said at the festivities of 1577, in a complaint against the neighbouring king of Carmignano. “And they have announced that they wish to march through [here] with the arms of the militia”.³⁷ Back in the city, meanwhile, with Giannotti’s citizen militia disbanded and the *potenze* re-constituted, it was only the latter who now – and finally – gathered under *gonfaloni*-like symbols; and it is worth recalling in this context that Cosimo I later eliminated the official *gonfaloni* from the decorative program for the roof of the Sala Grande in the Palazzo Vecchio, just as he replaced the intended centrepiece of that historical scheme, the city of Florence, with an image of himself being crowned as emperor, the culmination of all civic history that had gone before.

It would seem, then, that the *potenze* were indeed the festive reification of a plebeian army dedicated to the “absolute” pretensions of Florence’s new hereditary rulers. After all, this was the image unambiguously conveyed by Giovanni Villani, whom 16th-century writers routinely summoned to account for the origins of the *potenze*.³⁸ As Villani told it, for May Day 1343, Walter of Brienne, the Duke of Athens, created six brigades “for himself” – among them the Città Rossa – an alliance between the short-lived despot and the city’s “small artisans” against the republican oligarchy of the “fat people”, with the artisans “offering themselves to him, in help and in arms”.³⁹ A few weeks later at the feast of San Giovanni, Villani went on, Brienne reconfigured the processional presentation of the city. He scrapped the *gonfaloni* and reverted to the guilds, a move that socially broadened ritual participation and, as importantly, marginalised the *compagnie del popolo*, the citizen militia that, almost two centuries later, inspired Donato Giannotti and the last republic. For the Medici dukes, the story of Brienne, the local archetype of the defeated anti-king or tyrant, was not exactly a tailor-made *potenze* foundation myth; as late as 1629 a government list of brigades was, tellingly, headed, “Note of the Potenze created in 1343 *after* the Duke of Athens

³⁶ In a dispute with the emperor of the Prato in 1559, the Campi emperor reminded Cosimo I that in 1533 Alessandro had established that, ‘Tu, Imperatore del Prato sarai per la ciptà, et questo per il Contado’. Del Badia, *Le signorie*, 25. In fact there is no hard evidence, as yet, for the *contado* kingdoms prior to the duchy. Yet even if their absence from the narrative sources indicates a negligible impact, it seems unlikely there was no pre-history whatsoever. In 1577, the king and several others of Calenzano testified that ‘a Calenzano è stato signoria sempre circa a 60 anni che c’è ne ricordanza’. Parte, 1195, f. 370r. If it is correct that the *contado* brigades formed in the 1510s, this may be linked to the reconstitution of the countryside militia by Lorenzo de’ Medici, Duke of Urbino. Trexler intriguingly suggests that the *potenze*-militia relationship began as early as the original formation of Machiavelli’s republican *contado* militia in 1506. Trexler, *Public Life*, 511-12.

³⁷ ‘Sotto la iuriditione del detto Monarca li è assai descritti nella militia et ... hanno presentito che vogliono passare in ordinanza con l’armi della militia.’ Parte, 739, f. 38r. *Descritti* was the usual term for the lowest level of *bande* infantry.

³⁸ Ammirato, *Istorie*, 2, 52; Mini, *Avvertimenti*, 40v-42r.

³⁹ Villani, *Cronica*, 4, 8-20 (quote at 8). See also Stefani, *Cronaca fiorentina*, rubric 575.

was driven out [my italics]”.⁴⁰ However, Villani’s well-known tale undoubtedly nourished the reading of citizens such as Giannotti. Indeed, it was Villani’s Brienne, as much as the early Medici, who Giannotti probably had in mind when he spoke of having researched the tyrannical origins of the *potenze*.

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Important as it is, the story just sketched out would, by itself, represent a rather one-eyed reading of even the previously known sources. For while it describes the political world that surrounded the *potenze* and into which they were drawn, artisans and labourers themselves are more or less absent as protagonists: driving this drama are the contests of citizens or citizen *casate*, of Medicean and anti-Medicean, ultimately the battle between republic and principate. Lower-class men feature only as inchoate material to be moulded into retinue by those with the will and patronal clout. Yet, as we shall see, this was hardly the case – and in order to understand why, it is necessary to analyse the wider social drama that brought worker kings into being in the first place. Indeed, not only did profound and deeply experienced divisions of wealth and status underpin the carnivalesque moment, they too were vital to the growing visibility of the *potenze* on the city stage – for there is little question that in the course of the 16th century social fissures became wider and the rhetorical furniture of hierarchy increasingly robust. In the rise of the *potenze*, a high political narrative intersects with, and ultimately is contingent upon, a story of social change and civic politics as more widely conceived.

Prejudice towards artisans and labourers was hardly novel in the city of the Ciompi. In fact, in a strictly juridical sense the status of the mass of textile workers did not change a great deal after the end of the 14th century: the ideal of a broad corporatist polity in which they had any formal role had effectively been shut down in 1382, along with the brief regime of the minor guilds that followed the Ciompi revolution. Nonetheless, with the expulsion of the Medici in 1494, followed by the constitutional upheaval that resulted in the creation of the Great Council, questions about the social nature of the polity were pushed up to the surface. In the first instance, debate turned around the opposition between the *governo largo* or *popolare* represented by the Council itself and the *governo stretto* of the *ottimati* or *grandi*, an aristocratising elite that had taken on an increasingly defined shape in the 15th century, especially under Lorenzo, but at the same time had been kept in check through the favouring of newer men within the *reggimento*.⁴¹ The argument of the *grandi*

⁴⁰ ‘Nota delle Potenze che si creorono nel 1343 nella Città dei Firenze doppo la Cacciata del Duca d’Atene’; BNF, 1629 list.

⁴¹ See, for a recent overview of Florentine political developments, with further bibliography, Najemy, *A History of Florence*.

was amply reflected in humanist discourse. In the 1520s, for example, Antonio Brucioli imagined a utopia in which neither artisans nor merchants could be “true citizens”, because they lacked the *virtù civile*, “not having applied themselves to ethics, their lives are vile and contrary to *virtù*”.⁴² In terms of its excluded groups, Brucioli’s ideal polity was fairly typical of the civic utopias envisioned by Italian humanists throughout the 16th century, and the same sentiments were later evinced by Benedetto Varchi, who said that “the sort of men who in a prudently constituted republic should never have any magistracy whatsoever are the merchants and the artisans of every kind”.⁴³ Given the aristocratic voices bearing down upon them, it is not surprising that *popolare* republicans struck a defensive tone. Men like Donato Giannotti, a champion of the Great Council – which contained plenty of merchants and a not insignificant minority of minor guildsmen – and thus of the predominance of *mediocri* or *mezzani* in government, were anxious to define this middle order of citizens in contradistinction to the “Florentine *plebe*”, those who had no property and paid no tax towards public needs, who had “no rank whatsoever in the city and are not called citizens”.⁴⁴ Indeed the Great Council itself attests to an “aristocratising” ethos. The council may have considerably broadened political participation, but as others have pointed out, it did so as an act of exclusion: the eligibility criteria – only families *beneficiati* to the three highest offices in the previous three generations – also made it a constitutional *serrata*.⁴⁵ In short, in the post-1494 republic, class made a forceful re-entry into public discourse and the tensions around it militated to re-exclude poorer artisans and labourers, to more sharply identify a civic outsider. In fact the classicising, always pejorative, term *plebe* – which erected a more ontological wall between the citizenry and the lumpen group at the base of the social order than did older distinctions between *popolo* and *popolo minuto* – appears, albeit impressionistically, only to have become ubiquitous around the turn of the 16th century.

Yet the idea of the *plebe* loomed still larger in the early principate. True, the fundamental question of how Florence was to be ruled was now apparently resolved: the settlement of 1532 meant that, under the close control of the Medici dukes, the families *beneficiati* for office in 1494 remained so, but a far more restricted elite dominated the new assemblies, the Senate of 48 and

⁴² Brucioli, *Dialoghi*, Venezia, 1526, Dialogo V; quoted in Mancini, “Il principe”, 29. Francesco Patrizi’s utopia, meanwhile, had ‘two parts, one servile and poor, the other lordly and blessed’, with magistrates, warriors and priests in the latter and peasants, artisans and merchants in the former, again because their vile occupations precluded the exercise of *virtù*. Francesco Patrizi, *La città felice* (Venice, 1553); cited in Pissavino, ‘I poveri’, 168-9.

⁴³ Varchi, *Storia*, I, 225; See also Diaz, ‘L’idea di una nuova *élite*’.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Diaz, *Il granducato*, 45-6. Giannotti echoed an earlier champion of *popolare* government Matteo Palmieri, whose ideal body politic of the ‘civil multitude’ did not include ‘the lowest *plebe* of the city’. Matteo Palmieri, *Vita Civile*, 190-1; discussed in Najemy, ‘The Republic’s Two Bodies’, 253. On the belief that the support, real or assumed, of the *plebe* did not help the case of the *mezzani*, see also, Guidi, *Lotte, pensiero*, 2, ch. 4. Roughly one-sixth of about 3,500 members of the Great Council were minor guildsmen; see Pesman-Cooper, ‘The Florentine Ruling Group’.

⁴⁵ See Rubinstein, ‘Oligarchy and Democracy’, 107 – and Pesman-Cooper, ‘Comments’

Council of 200, as well as the key magistracies. However, the relentless expansion of a formal court around a hereditary prince recodified the issue of status for citizens: it became less about who was fit to govern and more about who could legitimately be part of an indigenous “nobility”. The discourse that unfolded was a fraught one. When writers such as Brucioli and Varchi excluded merchants and artisans from their republican aristocracies they did little more than reiterate commonplaces of European thinking about nobility. However, it had always been problematic to rule out merchants. Now, as Medicean Tuscany competed with other states in the Habsburg imperium – states which at times used the city’s famously mercantile character as a stick to beat it with – Varchi himself, responding to those who described the city’s past as “vile and plebeian”, defended citizens, including merchants, as inspired “by noble and high thoughts”.⁴⁶ In a similar vein, Scipione Ammirato, writing in the 1580s, offered the argument, defensively, that although the *nobiltà civile* did not possess *baronaggi*, in other words they were not feudal lords, the exercise of high office, which included the noble signifier of military command, conferred equivalent honour.⁴⁷ Vincenzo Borghini broadly agreed, insisting that nobility was not only a question of blood, antiquity and wealth, but of *virtù*, which, he explained, meant that at least the top strata of merchants, who had occupied the highest magistracies and used their riches honourably, could be considered noble.⁴⁸

Throughout the 16th century *mercatura* remained a source of anxiety for a nascent nobility. The Florentine ambassador to Ferrara in 1589 may have found it astonishing that nobles there held that the aristocracy of a mercantile city could not be true *gentiluomini*, but at the same time it became increasingly important, at least for those who desired attachment to the court, to deal in commerce at some remove from the actual processes and materials of production – or at least appear to do so. “The *gentiluomo* should not get his hands dirty,” as one aristocratic etiquette book of the later 16th century advised, “but run everything through factors”.⁴⁹ Where the self-fashioning Florentine *gentiluomo* believed, or was encouraged to believe, he could find indisputable clear water, however, was between himself and those further down the ladder, those who truly belonged to the world of work. The ancient opposition between the liberal arts and mechanical trades that underpinned notions of society’s productive hierarchy had already been seized upon by earlier humanists: Giannotti in part defined the *plebe*, those propertyless non-*cittadini* to be excluded from republican government, as consisting of men whose only worth was through their “*esercizi corporali*” – physical labour.⁵⁰ Now, after permitting a few merchants under the wire, writers such as Borghini were quick to add that *arte manuale* was utterly without honour. “The lower trades are

⁴⁶ Varchi, *Storia*, II, 127. On the growth of the court, Fantoni, *La corte*, esp. 30-6.

⁴⁷ Scipione Ammirato, *Delle famiglie*, Parte prima, 25; discussed in Bizzocchi, ‘Tra Ferrara e Firenze’, 10.

⁴⁸ Borghini, *Storia della nobiltà*, 32.

⁴⁹ Girolamo Muzio, *Il gentiluomo* (Venice, 1571), 129, quoted in Mancini, “Il principe e l’artigiano”, 30.

⁵⁰ Giannotti, *Repubblica fiorentina*, 101; see the discussion in Pissavino, ‘I poveri’, 164-6. On this theme, also Mocarelli, ‘The attitude of Milanese Society’, esp. 101-4.

repugnant, as everyone knows,” he said, practiced by men who beyond immediate family had “no bonds that keep them together”, no houses and no coats of arms.⁵¹ Thus, as a family’s history of high office during the republic was fetishised in the duchy as a proof of noble lineage, at the same time it became critical to obliterate any taint of pollution from the workaday world. This found its most strident formal expression in the Order of Santo Stefano, the neochivalric crusading order founded in 1562 by Cosimo I. From its inception Florentines were keen to become members, often paying an endowment if they could not show the requisite “noble” blood on both sides. In the order’s statutes, the long list of prohibitions on membership was conspicuously silent on commerce. Instead it began with the following: “Nothing is more blameworthy, or shameful, for a knight than the exercise of any trade banned by law or vile in itself... And if anyone should be of such plebeian spirit that he should personally practise vile, or mechanical, trades, he is automatically stripped of the habit.”⁵² Even a knight’s servant, who did not have to prove nobility, was forced in revised statutes of 1590 to show he had “upstanding relatives ... had never served anyone in the vile trades, and that neither he nor his father or mother had ever worked manually in a filthy and mechanical trade, except those that are useful to the profession of war.”⁵³

The *essercizi meccanici*, then, became an important element in defining a civic “other”, one element in a chain of ideas grounded in notions of the body: the brute labouring body, untutored and animalistic, as opposed to the disciplined body of courtly grace and *sprezzatura*, and the higher realms of reason, liberal arts and civic *virtù* which that body expressed. Moreover, this vision of a split social body, the *plebe* its crudest, most corporeal component, was readily mapped to an image of the city, in which the centre was contrasted with the peripheral “*pendici*” – in particular the Camaldoli, which had long been shorthand for Florence’s plebeian outskirts, and later the Biliemme, which, as observed earlier, was a term that *potenza* had itself built into the urban topography. As one Florentine physician put it during the plague of 1630 (which, typically, struck with most force in the outskirts), the city’s poor constituted the ignoble peripheral organs of the social body, far from heart or brain, a depository of noxious substances expelled by the nobler part.⁵⁴ At around the same time, and moreover resisting the idea that noble and plebeians belonged

⁵¹ Borghini, *Storia della nobiltà*, 33, 47; and *Id.*, *Dell’arme delle famiglie fiorentine*, cited in Diaz, ‘L’idea di una nuova élite’, 674. As Varchi put it, these trades were “vulgar and filthy”; Varchi, ‘Sulla maggioranza’, 16; and see the discussion in Mancini, ‘Il principe e l’artigiano’, 25-6.

⁵² ‘Nessuna cosa è, nè più biasimevole a un cavaliere, nè più vergognosa, che l’essercitare alcuna arte proibita dalle leggi o vile per se stessa... E se alcuno sarà d’anima così plebeo che esserciti personalmente arti vili ovvero faccia essercizi meccanici ... incorra ipso facto in pena della privazione dell’abito. *Statuti, capitoli e constitutioni*, 179.

⁵³ ‘... non havere servito alcuna persona in essercizii vili, nemeno egli stesso ne li suoi padri et madre havere operato manualmente arte sordida et meccanica, fuori di quelle che si ricchieggano all’uso del mestiero della guerra’. *Ibid.*, 53. About 35 percent of knights were Florentines; overall so many were paying a *commenda* to enter that by the mid-17th century it was feared the order would lose all credibility; see Angiolini, *I cavalieri e il principe*, esp. 67-82.

⁵⁴ Pullan, ‘Plague and Perceptions of the Poor’, 110. With few exceptions, it was the ‘poor’ in the periphery who died in the plague of 1630-3. Calvi, *Histories of a Plague Year*, esp. 59-117. On the social topography of plague, see also Carmichael, *Plague and the Poor*, 73-7.

to the same social body at all, one court secretary, in direct reference to the *potenze*, explained: “We call Biliemme those outlying districts of the city of Florence where this sort of people live. And in truth, though born and raised in Florence, they are different from the other Florentines in their customs and speech. In short, they are a people unto themselves, whom we call the Greasy Ones [*unti*], the [Wool]Beaters, or Biliemme, which also signifies the most vile *plebe*”.⁵⁵ No doubt the long histories of artisan migration into these neighbourhoods helped to cement the link between ‘*plebe*’ and ‘foreign-ness’.

Such typologies were, in the end, not only the prerogative of elites. Just how deeply they permeated the social fabric of the early duchy is suggested by the diary kept by one artisan between 1574 and 1579. Bastiano Arditì lived in the heart of the Camaldoli, and like the vast majority of the residents of that district he was propertyless and a non-citizen. Arditì was a tailor, an occupation that appears several times among the men of the *potenze*, and in fact among the officials of both the weaver brigades that might have claimed his street for their kingdom.⁵⁶ Yet while sympathetic to the poverty of his neighbours, Arditì never saw himself as one of them; he spoke of the *pendici* as if they were somewhere else, a plague and smallpox-prone hinterland “where the *plebe* lived, such as Biliemme, Camaldoli and similar places”.⁵⁷ By his own lights, what separated Arditì from the sphere of the mechanical and unreasoning *plebe* was a degree of cultural capital – here was a man who wrote books, who had been choirmaster for the prestigious confraternity of Orsanmichele and was a chorister in another.⁵⁸ In fact, in the way he distinguished himself from his peers, Arditì was not dissimilar to one of his more socially elevated contemporaries, the chronicler Giuliano de’ Ricci, a historian manqué who resented having to run a goldsmith’s shop in order to earn a living,

⁵⁵ Lippi, *Il Malmantile*, II, 12n (Paolo Minucci’s gloss on Lippi’s poem, which was written in the 1640s and published in 1688). The description of the textile plebeians as the ‘Unti’ may derive from the fact that oil was used at various stages of the production process. Purgers, for instance, kept a count of each ‘panno unto’ they had in their shops for the calculation of confraternal taxes. Capitoli, 843, f. 18r. One chronicler referred in 1588 to the ‘tintori, Tessitori e Battilani ... mal vestiti, unti, sudici’. BRF, Piccolo diario, f. 130.

⁵⁶ On Arditì, who lived in via San Giovanni, see Cantagalli’s introduction to his *Diario*, esp. xxiv. In 1610, the chancellor of the Camaldoli was a tailor, as was the king of the neighbouring Consuma. Parte, 1478, ff. 243r, 206r, 235r. For the tailor who acted as receipt writer in 1577 for the Vice-emperor. Depos., 984, ins. 53.

⁵⁷ Arditì, 62.

⁵⁸ A ‘Bastiano di Tomaso Arditì’ was choirmaster for the lay Dominican confraternity of San Piero Martire from 1549-80 at Santa Maria Novella, and a chorister at the confraternity of Orsanmichele from 1568-74. Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, 88, 118. Wilson was unaware of the connection, but it is without doubt the same man; in the unique instance when Arditì names a specific source for information, it is a friar from Santa Maria Novella; Arditì, 124. Arditì notes that he wrote a book about the emperor Charles V, the most popular subject of historical biographies during his lifetime. *Ibid.*, 46; Grendler, ‘Francesco Sansovino’. The next generation of the Arditì family, we note, saw a little social mobility: in 1583, one of Arditì’s children, Santi, was granted the status of *cittadino* by the Council of 200 – the only way to become a citizen. It was the first step on the road to minor office-holding. Arditì, xx. I plan to discuss Arditì and his chronicle in more detail in a separate article.

“applying myself to *mercatura*, inimical to my essence and against my inclination”.⁵⁹ However, for *cittadini* such as De’ Ricci, from the cadet branch of the important, and ennobled, 16th-century banking family, tailors such as Arditi, along with men from almost every other artisan trade, were more or less automatically relegated to the ranks of the *plebe*.⁶⁰ For Arditi it was necessary to look further down, to the textile base of the trade hierarchy and the men who were always most firmly identified with the *potenze* – to the “plebeian woolbeaters, dyers, weavers of wool and silk cloth”, as he summed up the *potenze* brigades.⁶¹ Thus the aristocratising energy of elites set a cultural tone, one that became part of the everyday din of city life – and not only did this encourage a will to distinction, it provided a ready vocabulary that could be brought to bear on artisans and labourers when the occasion called for it. During the battle in 1606 to keep their confraternal oratory in via della Scala, discussed in the previous chapter, the Biliemme and Camaldoli wool weavers were attacked by their opponents as a company comprising “every sort of mechanical type (*gente meccanica*), and mostly foreigners”, and thus “of erratic temper, given to arguing among themselves, and finally to uncivil behaviour”. “We know,” said the *operai* of the neighbouring hospital of San Paolo to Ferdinando I, “that His Most Serene Highness, the lord your father of fond memory, did not want these kind of people to create such big companies.”⁶²

It was in this context that 16th-century elites started either to abandon mixed associational life, which in a limited fashion had characterised confraternal experience, or restructure it along hierarchical lines. Men in noble orders tended to give artisan corporations a wide berth: the dyers’ confraternity of San Onofrio recorded in 1605 that the company was seeking a new doctor, “due to the fact that our doctor ... no longer wants to serve, since he’s been made a knight of Santo Stefano”.⁶³ Yet this was the tip of the iceberg. Groups such as the prestigious citywide youth confraternities, previously socially mixed, became more or less entirely aristocratic over the course of the Cinquecento, while many other sodalities, old and new, began to organise on a hierarchical basis – either limiting artisan numbers or excluding some artisans, such as textile workers, altogether.⁶⁴ In the rare cases where patricians involved themselves in confraternal life on a neighbourhood basis, growing social divisions appear even sharper. By the early 1500s, the ancient

⁵⁹ Ricci, 67.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 516.

⁶¹ Arditi, 155. For Agostino Lapini the word *potenze* was also shorthand for textile workers; Lapini, 195.

⁶² Per essere questa una compagnia numerosa et d’ogni sorte gente meccanica, et al maggior parte forestieri; ‘Per essere di diversi paesi di stravaganti umori in fra di loro discordanti et finalmente che costumi poco civili’; ‘Sappiamo che S.A.S del signore suo padre di f[elice]:m[emoria] non volse a simil sorte di gente dare adito di far gran compagnie.’ Parte, 1474, ff. 566r, 570r.

⁶³ ‘Detto corpo d’arte si raghuno per fare uno medicho che dovessi visitare i nostri infermi della chasa causato che il nostro medicho che era il signore Giovani Batista Rimbotti il quale avendo chiesto licenzi e non volere più servire per essere lui fatto Cavaliere di Santo Stefano’. Tintori, A.III.1, f. 46v.

⁶⁴ For youth confraternities, Polizzotto, *Children of the Promise*, 201. In general, Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 198-9.

parish company of San Frediano, previously a heterogeneous body in which Camaldoli cloth workers had had a significant profile, was thoroughly exclusive, all its main offices going – by statute after 1565 – to *beneficiati*.⁶⁵ At the same time, citizens were shunning rites of neighbourhood unity under the aegis of an artisan organisation. In 1609, the brothers of San Paolo, the parish confraternity closely tied to the *potenza* of the Spada, recalled that “our canopy used to be carried by citizens of our parish, to bring more honour in the accompanying of the most holy sacrament”. But now, because “not one of these parish citizens comes here any longer”, they legislated to make the confraternity’s own members the baldachin-bearers.⁶⁶

As elites looked to establish a *cordon sanitaire* between themselves and the “*plebe*”, the new ethos of distinction tended to produce, in dialectical fashion, counter-solidarities. In part it was this that mobilised artisans to more emphatically seize upon their occupations as a basis for organisation and collective public identity, and thus was one factor underpinning the associational trends described in the previous chapter – the proliferation of trade and distinctly artisan neighbourhood confraternities, and above all the rise of the *potenze* themselves.

When it came to formal associational life, indeed, disengagement was to some extent mutual. Most occupational confraternities could take the non-membership of citizens as a given, but some neighbourhood sodalities explicitly excluded *statuali*, essentially citizens eligible for office. San Michele della Pace, enmeshed, it appears, with the *potenza* of the Città Rossa, banned “*statuali*, unless someone already of our company should later acquire that state”, a common enough formula. Similar regulations can be found in confraternal statutes dating from the later 15th century, including those of the Resurrezione/Macina *potenza*.⁶⁷ Along with this, almost everywhere one finds the banning of government functionaries, whom confraternities labelled “spies” and which they excluded by putting to use the same poetics of hierarchy that informed status mentalities more widely. A new confraternity of gold silk weavers in 1595 explained that “a man who has no reason and cannot maintain his rank is like a dumb animal”, and because of this agents

⁶⁵ San Frediano’s composition was already heading upmarket by the 1480s, and by the early 1500s artisans were virtually extinct from its office-holding ranks. For a detailed analysis for the 15th century, see Eckstein, *The District*, 78-85, 201ff. Beyond this period, the *tratte* indicates that almost all officeholders were patrician. Archivi delle Compagnie Soppresse, 5, 33 (*tratte*, 1509-1655). For the 1565 statutes, *Ibid.*, 5, 2; see also Wilson, *Music and Merchants*, 225.

⁶⁶ ‘Per i tempi pasati il nostro baldachino è stato portato dai cittadini del nostro populo per più onoranza di detto per avere acompagnare il santissimo sagramento, dove oggi non ci viene più nessuno di questi cittadini di questo populo.’ CRS, 120, A 99, no. 2, f. 58r. Partially cited in Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 218n.

⁶⁷ San Michele della Pace banned ‘*statuali*, salvo che se alcuno di nostra compagnia acquistassi lo stato doppo’. Capitoli, 45, f. 29; the same formula can be found in the Assunta, detta Monteloro, which met at the streetcorner in the church of the convent of the Candelì and was very likely linked to the Monteloro brigade. Capitoli, 811, f. 5r (1578). One confraternity just east of Florence in Santa Margherita a Montici allowed ‘nessun cittadino eccettuato il Correttor nostro’, their spiritual guide; Capitoli, 494, ch. 22, unpag (1587). For the Resurrezione in 1485, Capitoli 100, f. 16v. This and other 15th-century examples are also discussed in Kent, ‘Un paradiso,’ 198-203.

of the police, the merchants' tribunal, the guilds or any other magistracy, could not be members.⁶⁸ Even in San Onofrio, that unusual microcosm of an older corporatist model, in which the *lavoranti* – the ranks of the Dyers' *potenza* – held half the offices, a number of these brothers moved in 1595 to partially detach themselves from the “*maestri e gentiluomini*” and establish a separate “little company”.⁶⁹

As *potenze*, meanwhile, disengagement, or rather the representation of a distinct artisan sphere, was a large part of the point. Artisans and labourers, unsurprisingly, almost never used the term *plebe*, but for the most part projected the notion that they were the lords of the “poor”. In the self-census of 1610, the grand counsellor of the Nespola, a mattressmaker, told the Parte that “in the said *potentia* and [under its] banner 480 are found, all poor, beggarly men”.⁷⁰ The *gran maestro* of the Rondine, a master carpenter, said that after “a diligent search in the territory of my *potentia*” he found 1690 men, women and children – but “from this figure I reckon there are 400 well-off people, which deducted from 1690 leaves 1290”.⁷¹ The baker king of the Sferza observed that he had reached his estimate of 500 men without taking note of those living in the Palazzo Pitti, which by this time had its own *potenza*, “nor of many other *gentiluomini*”.⁷² As poor kings, artisans manipulated a well-understood theology of exchange, of charity, one that insisted on the spiritual capital of poverty and the obligations of the rich on this earth. “Blessed are the poor, for paradise will be theirs,” as one confraternity put it. “In this life the poor need the rich for bodily sustenance, but in the other life the rich will need the poor for spiritual sustenance.”⁷³ At the same time, the poor in question were principally those that the *potenze* themselves embodied – the working poor, or the “poor artisans” as another mattressmaker described the 63 men he counted “under the regime” of the Graticola, apparently misunderstanding the intent of the census and including only the men of the *potenza* proper.⁷⁴ In other words, as *potenze*, the crafts, and work itself, was integral to the dramatisation of exchange between rich and poor.

⁶⁸ ‘L’uomo che non ha ragione in se e non tiene il su grado è asimigliato a uno animale senza ragione’; CRS, Capitoli, 22, 13v-14r (San Francesco di Pagolo). The Camaldoli weavers’ confraternity of Santa Maria della Pietà prohibited anyone of ‘quel vituperoso uffitio, che volgarmente si chiamano spie, palese, o segreto, intendendosi spie tutti coloro che facessino rapporti a qual si voglia magistrato’. Capitoli 608, ff. 7v-8r (1566). See also Black, *Italian Confraternities*, 47.

⁶⁹ Tintori, A.III.1, ff. 100r-101v. The ‘little company’ is explored in more detail in Chapter Three.

⁷⁰ ‘Si ritrova in decta potentia e insegna numeri quatrocento ottanta, tucti poveri uomini mendici.’ Parte, 1478, f. 213r. Baccio Lapi, chancellor of the Macina, meanwhile, talked of his ‘lista della potentia del Re della Macine quanti poveri huomini e nel suo dominio e ufiziali’; *Ibid.*, f. 171r.

⁷¹ ‘Ho fatto diligente ricerca nel territorio della mia potentia delli huomini donne e fanciulli et fanciulle che in esso si ritrovano ... delli quali giudico che vene sieno numero 400 benestanti che dedotto di 1690 restiano 1290’. *Ibid.*, f. 153r.

⁷² ‘Non havendo presa nota di quelli che habitano nel Pallazzo di S.A.S. che è sotto detta signoria nemeno di molti altri gentilhuomini.’ *Ibid.*, f. 211r.

⁷³ The confraternity of Santa Brigida; quoted in Ronald Weissman, ‘Brothers and Strangers’, 29.

⁷⁴ ‘Poveri artieri’. Parte, 1478, f. 169r. As Del Badia also surmised; Del Badia, ‘Lettera’, 25.

To be sure, artisans were not entirely alone in asserting their workaday virtues in the face of courtly or humanist disdain. There also existed a literate counter-discourse, the most widely read example of which was Tomaso Garzoni's *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo* of 1585, the *piazza* a microcosm of urban society in which Garzoni set out to praise the "liberal and mechanical arts in common" and insisted, though with considerable ambivalence, that many of the latter were "honourable and worthy of repute".⁷⁵ Yet ultimately it was artisans themselves, at least in Florence, who put the case most forcefully for the much-maligned crafts, in effect clamouring for civic incorporation on very basis of their exclusion. So strong, indeed, was the desire to present a trade identity in the civic arena that in a handful of cases even the somewhat better-off felt impelled to participate in a subculture largely defined by textile workers. In a note he attached to the 1610 census, the *bargello* remarked that the *potenze* consisted of "all poor people", yet the Parte observed that three city-centre brigades – the Pecora, Diamante and Caroccio – were "very fine artisans, among them even citizens", with the Pecora counting a Mannelli as vice-duke and a Salvetti among its leadership.⁷⁶ In the case of the Caroccio, this even provoked a clash around the question of the fundamental social identity of the *potenze*. In 1577, the weavers of gold silk cloth elected one of their own as duke of the Mercato Nuovo brigade. But the "factors" of the silk merchants, often the sons of the owners apprenticed to co-ordinate the putting-out, argued that the Caroccio had always belonged to them and, moreover, to "noble persons". They replaced the weaver with a young son of the Fortini family, and among the brigade's silk factors that year were a Salviati, plus a Donati and Spinelli youth.⁷⁷ This "second class of nobility", as De'Ricci later described them, created the Caroccio "in order not to seem less than the *plebe*".⁷⁸ Yet competing on

⁷⁵ Garzoni, *La piazza*, 1, 55-6. Important on these themes are Martin, 'The Imaginary Piazza'; and McClure, *The Culture of Profession*, ch. 3, though in my view both push the idea that Garzoni deconstructed hierarchies in his *piazza* too far. Garzoni tended to walk a line of playing to the perceptions and prejudices of his assumed readership, while smuggling in a rather limited honour to trades he himself often acknowledged were marginal or problematic. Of dyeing, for example, he says, 'Servono ... alla vaghezza et ornamento di questo mondo ... Laonde il mestiero ha del civile quanto all'effetto, se ben nel farlo ha dello sporco, et dell'immondo, come i tintori hanno le mani, e il viso de'lor colori tutte imbrattate, e lorde.' Garzoni, *La piazza*, 1, 638-9. Nonetheless, in this context one even finds Varchi back-peddalling in order to ascribe a higher status specifically to artists. Decontextualising the usually pejorative 'meccanico' to define it in the purely literal sense of physical effort, he conceded that 'non è possibile dire arte la quale non sia meccanica'. Varchi, 'Sulla maggioranza', 18; also discussed in Mancini, 'Il principe', 38. In this context, it is worth noting that a defence of the crafts and of fair remuneration for work was also mounted from a civic-theological perspective by Florentine archbishop Antoninus in the mid-15th century: Howard, *Beyond the Written Word*, 208ff.

⁷⁶ 'In queste potenzie non c'è se non artieri e bottegai tutta gente povera'; Parte, 1478, f. 292r. 'Queste 3 potenzie son benissimo artieri e bottegai et anco vi interviene cittadini'; *Ibid.*, f. 291r. For the Pecora's Camillo di Amaretto Mannelli, the vice-duke, and Gismondo di Girolamo Salvetti, one of the men affirming his receipt; *Ibid.*, f. 248r.

⁷⁷ Ricci, 226. For Piero di Tomasso Salviati, Depos., 984, ins. 75. For Cresci di Giovanni Donati and Fortuno di Fulvio Spinelli, aged 18 and 19 respectively, Otto, 2263, f. 371r. The Spinelli family, and their silk businesses, are discussed in Jacks and Caferro, *The Spinelli of Florence*.

⁷⁸ Ricci, 519.

overwhelmingly ‘plebeian’ terrain to represent the prestige end of the Florentine silk industry brought with it a measure of anxiety. At the San Giovanni festivities of 1588, the duke of the Caroccio, again elected by “some youth of the families of the Principals of the Mercato Nuovo”, erected a triumphal arch in the centre rather than at the borders of his territory because, as one contemporary sharply observed, this “great and noble person ... wanted at all costs to make a display that was different to the ephemera and festivals of the *potenze* of the ignobles”.⁷⁹ However, by 1610, if not before, the weavers of gold silk cloth were once again in control of the Caroccio, having regained ownership of what clearly they – and perhaps ultimately the silk factors themselves – regarded as an all-artisan affair.⁸⁰

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Whatever else it was, then, the *pax medicea* over which the grand dukes sought festively to preside was indeed a social peace, in a city increasingly splintered along lines of status, something that the advent of the principate had in fact done much to encourage. Mediation was, after all, also a role marked out for the prince, prescribed as both a matter of realpolitik and Christian ethics by the emerging ‘advice’ literature on the *ragione di stato* and mythologised in Medicean hagiographies – sometimes the same tracts. In his *Il ritratto del vero governo del principe dal esempio vivo del Gran Cosimo de’ Medici*, published in 1552, Lucio Rosello hoped that impartial justice would produce a “brotherly friendship, not only between the King and the Princes of the Kingdom, but even with the *plebe minuta*”.⁸¹ Battista Guarini developed the idea in praise of Ferdinando I: since in a republic there is always conflict between rich and poor, he said, there needs to be “a subject who is partisan neither towards one nor the other, an elevated spirit of great humanity who both honours the nobility and at the same time respects the *plebe*”.⁸² The Prato emperor himself appears in a dialogue of 1564 by Alessandro Ceccherelli, designed to lionise, and rehabilitate, the murdered first duke of Florence, Alessandro de’ Medici. In one story, the duke happens across a “poor man”

⁷⁹ ‘Perchè essendo quel duca, che l’aveva fatto fare persona grande e nobile, volle in tutti i costi mostrarsi disimile e differente dalli apparati e feste della potenze degli ignobili’; BRF, Piccolo diario, f. 125. In a letter to Duke Ferdinando’s brother Pietro de’ Medici, Valerio Ruggeri wrote: ‘Ora alcuni giovani de’ principali di Mercato Nuovo, hanno creato in fra loro un Duca ... ma hanno avuto occhio di non dargli altrimenti voce di Potenza, come alle altre, atteso che, considerate le maniere e i costumi di molti e la differenza delle azioni e della nobilità, pensarono a diverse cose che succedere potessero’; quoted in Gori, *Le feste*, 139.

⁸⁰ The duke of the Caroccio in 1610, Giovanni Baci, describes the brigade as ‘tessitori di drappi d’oro’ and himself as a ‘tessitore di drappi d’oro’. Parte, 1478, ff. 185r, 262r.

⁸¹ Quoted in Von Albertini, *Firenze*, 299, and see ch. 4, *passim*. Moral injunctions and statist imperatives were most famously fused in Giovanni Botero’s widely read *Ragione di Stato* of 1589. On these themes, see Viroli, *From Politics to Reason of State*, ch. 6; Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince*, ch. 3.

⁸² Quoted in Von Albertini, *Firenze*, 302.

being hauled off to the debtors' jail of the Stinche. On his knees, the man explains that he had been elected emperor by the men of the Prato for San Giovanni and had spent beyond his means in order to "live honourably" and pay the expenses of his courtiers, all "to honour your excellency". Alessandro admonishes the police, orders the release of the emperor and pays his 40 ducat debt – a perfect example, the author concludes, of both his justice and liberality.⁸³ As every theorist of monarchical statecraft agreed, justice and liberality were key princely virtues: what they were held to give the *plebe* was protection from the wealthy and the perception of economic redistribution; what they bought the prince was loyalty hopefully based on love, which was preferable to Machiavellian fear. In fact, it was rather elite fears of the lower classes that haunted humanist political discourse: the brute labouring body at the base of the social order could also be, in Lionardo Salviati's words, "like a ferocious beast, not with many heads but rather without a head – however it can easily adapt itself to any leader".⁸⁴ Courtiers and ducal functionaries may have scoffed at lumpen plebeians masquerading as kings. Giovanfrancesco Lottini, who, as we saw in the Introduction, gleefully reported the hilarity provoked by the signature of the virtually illiterate emperor Pierone in 1545, sent the duke's major-domo another note about that year's upcoming festivities in the same facetious vein. "We are in Paradise here, and it's even more certain that Your Lordship must be too," he said, "since we don't have to envy the emperor of the Prato and the king of Biliemme with all the *potenze* of Camaldoli, and Your Lordship could add to this the style of the Dyers – Oh such an angelic face, Oh such a regal presence, the force of which drives us all mad".⁸⁵ Yet in his own minor contribution to the theory of state, dedicated to Duke Francesco and published in 1574, Lottini suggests that he read the politics underlying such exchanges in a similar way to his peers. He also imagined the prince as the good arbiter, adding that he "never has to fear the poor while they can sustain themselves with their trades and buy bread ... but when they cannot practise their crafts or when practising them still cannot eat or are forced to pay more in taxes than they earn, they will gather together and learn from necessity that which they never would have learned by themselves, that by greatly surpassing in number those who have the state in hand, they also possess greater force".⁸⁶

In fact, there is no sign that even the most dire material circumstances ever prompted the mass of artisans and labourers to act on the radicalism that lurked within carnivalesque tropes of inversion. If the kind of trenchant social critique found, say, in the writings of Antonfrancesco Doni – the son of a Florentine scissors-maker whose utopia of 1552 imagined a city not only entirely

⁸³ Ceccherelli, *Delle azioni*, 24. Scipione Ammirato later had it as May Day; Ammirato, *Istorie fiorentine*, 421.

⁸⁴ Lionardo Salviati, 'Discorso sopra le prime parole di Cornelio Tacito' in Dati, *Gli Annali*, ch 4, unpag; quoted in Berner, 'Florentine Political Thought', 195; and see 193-7.

⁸⁵ 'Noi ce ne stiano in Paradiso et sia pur certa la S.V. che non haviamo invidia allo imperadore del Prato et al Re di Biliem con tutti le potentie di Camaldoli si la S.V. ci aggiugnissi bene lo stili de' Tintori. o che viso angelico, o che presentia reale, infini le forze che noi impazziamo tutti'. MDP, 1171, no. 375.

⁸⁶ Lottini, *Avvedimenti civile*, 109.

organised around the crafts but one in which all property (and women) were held in common in order to obliterate distinction – ever animated streetcorner chatter we know, as yet, nothing about it.⁸⁷ If anything, by opening the civic stage up to artisan kings, the Medici looked to play underlying fears of plebeian dissent to their political advantage; even to stir up the spectre of the Ciompi, who continued to exert a grip on the historical imagination of Florentine citizens. Niccolò Machiavelli, for one, seemed to speak to the deepest implications of status cross-dressing in his *Storie fiorentine*, written in the early 1520s, when he had one Ciompi woolworker rally his comrades with the words: “Strip us all naked and you will see that we are alike; dress us in their clothes and them in ours, and without a doubt we shall appear noble and they ignoble, for only poverty and riches make us unequal.”⁸⁸

That said, the imperative to arbitrate social peace was real and, crucially, the call on the prince to do so came not only from above or in the abstractions of political theory, but, as I have begun to suggest, was equally driven from below and therefore is not reducible – as in Ceccherelli’s tale of Duke Alessandro – to arbitrary gestures of munificence initiated by an “absolute” ruler. The prince, indeed, was only ever partially the author of himself. As he surveyed his subjects, he was also observed by them, a double-gaze that caught both sides within webs of prescription and obligation. The prince “lives a life of theatre”, wrote Don Pio Rossi in the early 17th century, “since the great are continually exposed to a world of spectators [and] every little act is discussed by everyone with the most critical diligence”.⁸⁹ His analysis is fully borne out by the chronicle and diary sources. Bastiano Arditì, for one, obsessively tracked the actions of the duke, in his case Duke Francesco, and many of the Camaldoli tailor’s concerns – food prices, income, work – were identical to those of the neighbours he so disdained. Around the figure of the prince swirled a blizzard of claims, and thus when the Medici staged extraordinary civic *feste*, these events were every bit as urgent to artisans as they were to the Medici themselves, probably more so. When the king of Camaldoli initially failed to organise anything more than the “usual” banquet for San Giovanni in 1559, it almost cost him his crown. “Having seen all the other *Potentie*, outside and inside the city, making festivities,” Bernardo said in a letter through the Parte to Cosimo I, “the men of the said king created a tumult, saying they would ring the bell and make a new king if he did not resolve to hold *feste*.”⁹⁰ What galvanised these men was not simply a desire to become Medici retinue. Rather these “Medicean” events became privileged moments of civic contract – or, in the language of the *festa*, of war and peace.

⁸⁷ Grendler, *Culture and Censorship*, 213ff.

⁸⁸ Machiavelli, *Opere*, 3, 444 (libro 3, 13).

⁸⁹ Rossi, *Convito morale*, quoted in Fantoni, *La corte*, 130.

⁹⁰ ‘Et havendo egli (come è il solito) fatto un convito a tutti. Determinato haveva egli non fare altre feste, nè allegrezze, se non per commissione di vostra illustrissima eccellentia. Gli huomini di detto Re vedendo tutte gli altre *Potentie*, così di fuori, come dentro la città festeggiare, fecero tumulto dicendo che sonarebbero la campana, et creerebbero uno altro Rè, se egli non si risolverà a fare feste.’ Parte, 708, no. 48.

2. The Prince and the *Potenze*

To get an immediate sense of both the narrower and wider politics of civic festivity in the 16th century, the Biliemme tabernacle (figs. 6-7) repays another visit. On one hand, here was an object deeply implicated in the struggle between the Medici and their political opponents. In May of 1522, the year inscribed on the tabernacle, Cardinal Giulio de' Medici uncovered and crushed a plot to assassinate him and restore a *popolare* regime under Piero Soderini. As the alleged conspirators were being rounded up in early June, Giulio reversed his policy of appeasement towards *popolare* Savonarolans and moved to firm up his grip over a factious republic.⁹¹ He turned to the region's most important peacemaker, the Madonna of Impruneta. Since the 14th century, this miracle-working Marian image, "the true custodian of our city" as one Florentine described her in the mid-1500s,⁹² had been brought in from the *contado* at moments of grave crisis, begged to propitiate an angry God at times of drought or plague, or appealed to by the government as a force that could unify the commune – functions that often went hand in hand, since the civic sin of discord, rooted in pride, could be both sign and cause of enmity between God and man.⁹³ Now, on 10 June, 1522, thousands gathered to see the Impruneta icon, and she elicited prayers that God should create "public wellbeing and reduce the city to a state of good justice and tranquillity".⁹⁴ In Piazza San Felice, where the Madonna was traditionally set down upon entering the city, Giulio offered her a gold crown worth 200 *scudi*, before processing her to the Duomo, along with the Signoria, the city's priests and a number of confraternities.⁹⁵

Two weeks later, at San Giovanni, Giulio made another public move to shore up the *pax medicea*: he paraded the family's links with the *potenze*. Ahead of the annual *palio* – which like all civic *palii* began at the Porta a Prato – the Prato emperor was called upon to welcome the visiting viceroy of Naples, an important Medici ally, into his kingdom. Before the race began, the viceroy and his entourage rode onto the racecourse and met the Prato emperor, who also came on horseback, his entourage consisting of 50 riders and six banners. "The emperor showed his reverence to the viceroy with many trumpets," said Bartolomeo Cerretani, "and the viceroy tarried

⁹¹ On the plot against Giulio, see Cerretani, *Ricordi*, 405ff; Polizzotto, *The Elect Nation*, 314-20; *Idem.*, 'Prophecy, Politics and History'.

⁹² Coppi, ed., *Cronaca*, 67.

⁹³ See Trexler, *Public Life*, 63-6, 353-8; Del Grosso, 'Origine e culto'. She was also brought to Florence, for example, in 1502 when the post of gonfaloniere for life was created, and during the siege of the last Republic in 1529, when she was smuggled in and housed in the Duomo. Del Grosso suggests her republican image largely kept her out of ducal Florence – she was brought in due to bad weather in 1538 and 1547, but not seen again until the plague of 1633.

⁹⁴ Cerretani, *Ricordi*, 408.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*; Trexler, *The Libro Cerimoniale*, 128-9.

with him and they spoke together, which was a fine and pleasing thing".⁹⁶ In effect, the Prato emperor reprised the role of the Signoria in the ritual of diplomacy, which had been played out officially by the Signoria shortly beforehand; momentarily, it was the emperor who embodied the commune in its relations with a foreign power. With this, Giulio telegraphed that, if necessary, he was perfectly capable of allying himself with the city's 'non-political' artisans and undermining Florence's constituted authorities. To underscore the point, the Medici cardinal went on to watch the horserace from the emperor's home – and though the viceroy joined the Signoria at the Ricasoli palace, when the race ended he joined Giulio at the emperor's house and the two of them and their entourage processed back to the Medici palace.⁹⁷

Erected in the politically charged aftermath of these events, the Biliemme tabernacle suggests how we might read these kinds of ritualised exchanges, how the cardinal's appeal to the kingdoms of the *potenze* in order to mobilise artisan support was matched by artisan appeals to the same festive scripts for, in the first instance, an assertion of their civic identity. The Biliemme could scarcely have built such a huge tabernacle in the Medici ancestral district of San Lorenzo without Giulio's at least implicit approval, and arguably the cardinal hoped it would project the same kind of message as had the festivities of San Giovanni.⁹⁸ Yet in the first and last analysis the Biliemme's tabernacle laid claim to a slice of San Lorenzo entirely on its own terms. No doubt the arrival of the Madonna of Impruneta into Florence inspired the men of the Biliemme; indeed, the closely linked confraternity of the Assumption later placed the unusual obligation on its members to pay homage to the Madonna whenever she came into the city.⁹⁹ But with their own Virgin, the Germans of the Biliemme re-imagined the unifying power of the civic cult in a very local sphere and, as discussed in Chapter One, in response to a set of urgent local issues. In a similar way, other potent civic motifs – the ring of saints' busts around the frame of the tabernacle unmistakably quoted the Baptistry doors – were pressed into the service of the Biliemme's own micro-state. In short, the "men of the Biliemme" had taken advantage of the opening, the unusually fluid transactional space, created by the summer's political crisis to represent themselves in monumental fashion.

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⁹⁶ Cerretani, *Ricordi*, 408.

⁹⁷ Trexler, ed., *The Libro Cerimoniale*, 130; Cerretani, *Ricordi*, 408. As Giovanni Bocchi later explained, the Ricasoli palace had the best view along Borgo Ognissanti – it later hosted the grand dukes for the *palii*; Bocchi, *Beauties of the City of Florence*, 107. When Giulio became Pope Clement VII in November 1523, he once again opened the centre of the civic stage to the *potenze*; Cerretani, *Ricordi*, 436; Cambi, *Istorie*, 22, 249; Masi, *Ricordanze*, 274.

⁹⁸ Whether Giulio facilitated the construction of the tabernacle, or paid anything towards it himself, is unknown, but I note that it was fixed to the back wall of the convent of San Onofrio di Foligno, which was patronised by Clarice Orsini, who funded building works from 1474 apparently through the Medici bank. Leo X later gave an indulgence to the altar. Thomas, *Art and Piety*, 47-8; Lowe, 'Lorenzo's "Presence"', 28. Richa, *Notizie*, 4, 168-172.

⁹⁹ Capitoli, 827, f. 26.

The above vignette underscores how more than one politics of community was in play in the festive moment. Rebuilding a kingdom's identity meant recreating the *potenza* and its constituency, reasserting the festive state in relation to other kingdoms, and also in respect to urban elites. First and last it meant calling into being a dialogue with the prince, to whom artisans looked to legitimise and if necessary arbitrate all these transactions. Of course horizontal and vertical, local and civic, negotiations took place more or less simultaneously, each set of relationships imbricated with the others. Nonetheless, prising them apart to some extent will allow us to address in a more systematic fashion the dynamic of festivity and its interpenetration with the everyday world.

Making war and peace always began close to home. In fact the next time we encounter the Biliemme in the sources after 1522, ahead of the festival of San Giovanni in 1545, its king was seeking Cosimo I's approval for his appointment of four "peacemakers", which Riccio believed would have "good and Christian effects".¹⁰⁰ Argument was clearly expected, and in the first instance it was expected internally. The long incumbencies of several kings, noted in the previous chapter, usually began at the extraordinary civic festivities of the early duchy, and the election of these kings could be a lightning rod for debate and conflict. In 1545, Riccio reported to Cosimo I that the "lords and magistrates" of the four other jousting *potenze* had "drawn out their flags to the great joy of their subjects", but noted that the imperial Prato "finding itself without an emperor was badly caught out, and in trying to create him they experienced great difficulty".¹⁰¹ Riccio skips the details, "the telling of which would take too long", to inform us that finally the council gathered to the sound of bells to elect the agreed candidate, Pierone – emperor until at least 1559. Later evidence throws more light on how these major festivals were seen as times to shake up the festive polity, and not always before the formal election of a king. In 1610, at the festivities for the birth of an heir to Cosimo II, the census of the Dyers, submitted on July 17, was "carried out by me, Agostino di Sabatino, Gran Signore of the Dyers".¹⁰² Along with almost every other *potenza* official in the city, Agostino and his men went to the palace of the Parte on July 21 to claim the ducal gift. However, three days later Agostino was out of the picture. Piero di Baccio Fedi, "newly elected Gran Signore of the Dyers due to the absence of Agostino", arrived at the palace with a new set of officials to reclaim the duke's 25 *scudi*, which Agostino had been ordered to hand back.¹⁰³ This putsch – or was it a handover? – seems to have had a generational as well as a factional dimension, possibly linked to workshop rivalries. As set out in Chapter One, Agostino was part of the group that helped push through the reform of the confraternity of San Onofrio at the turn of the

¹⁰⁰ 'Detto Re et soi Consiglieri chieggono cosa giusta della confirmatione de 4 paciali et che fanno buoni et cristiani effetti'; MDP, 376, f. 203v. (Riccio to Pagni, May 11, 1545).

¹⁰¹ 'Hieri e' signori con li altri magistrati delle 4 Potentie, cioè Nespola, Mela, Rossa, et Monteloro trassono fuora li loro stendardi con grand' allegrezza de sudditi. El Prato trovandosi senza imperator era assai malcacciato, et nel pensar di crearlo adducevano molte difficoltà, il raccontar delle quali sarebbe troppo lungo'. *Ibid.*, f. 200r.

¹⁰² 'Lista fata da me Agostino di Sabatino gran signore de tintori'. Parte, 1478, f. 163r.

¹⁰³ 'Io Piero di Bacco Fedi eletto nuovamente gra(n) signore de' Tintori in difetto di Agostino'. *Ibid.*, f. 222r.

century; in 1602 he sat as a captain along with two men who would later act as his counsellors in the *potenza*, one of whom later appears as the supervisor in a dyeing shop. On the other hand, Fedi had no officeholding profile in San Onofrio, but his father and his *carmalingo* had been captains together in 1603, and we know that his brother was the supervisor of another dyeing workshop.¹⁰⁴ Nearby, in the kingdom of the Rondine, Gran Maestro Battista Lucherini also submitted his 1610 census report on July 17, but on July 21 it was a new Gran Maestro, Piero Barbetti, who went to collect the ducal gift.¹⁰⁵ Eighteen years later, in 1628, Barbetti was still king, and that year he told Ferdinando II – now newly installed as grand duke – that he was “at present Gran Maestro of the Rondine of Florence, having been made so by agreement the day of the birth of Your Most Serene Highness”.¹⁰⁶ As Barbetti linked his rightful emergence as neighbourhood king with the organic renewal of the duchy itself he also expunged any sense of debate from the process – Ferdinando II in fact had been born on July 14, 1610, and thus if anything it was Lucherini who had been elected that day.

To be sure, the introduction of ducal money into the local arena could sharpen internal conflict. Andrea Pellini, a silk weaver in Ardiglione, and “some of his other companions in the Potenza of the Consuma” brought a case to the Parte against the lord of the brigade after the 1610 festivities, because, he said, Cosimo II's gift of 16 *scudi* should have been distributed to all the men of the *potenza* rather than “to only his officials and followers, about 15 persons”.¹⁰⁷ Yet as these words suggest, the ducal gift only upped the ante, bringing underlying divisions to the surface of the festive cauldron. When a new king of the Camaldoli was elected in the wake of the 1577 festivities, and then promptly brought suit against his predecessor to recoup Duke Francesco's gift of 50 *scudi*, the old king produced an account of his expenses and appealed to the duke, saying that the new king wanted to ruin him “out of hatred and envy”.¹⁰⁸ At the same festivities, issues of money, though not the duke's in this case, opened up fractures that clearly existed within the Woolbeaters' *potenza*/confraternity, after a group of about 60 “*venturieri*” – soldiers of fortune, or trade

¹⁰⁴ The king's brother, Giovanni di Baccio Fedi, appears as a San Onofrio office-holder in the 1610s and 1620s, first seated in 1615 as *carmalingo*. Piero di Baccio himself appears in the confraternity *corpo* in 1604 for the vote on reform. Tintori, A.IX.1, unpag., and N.6.32, f. 6r; and see Chapter One of this study.

¹⁰⁵ Parte, 1478, ff. 153r, 228r. Tellingly, Lucherini took the unusual step of listing the brigade's officials in his census report, himself at the top.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Piero di Gostanzo Barbetti ... al presente gran maestro della Rondine di Firenze, stato fatto per partito il di della nativita di V.A.S.’; Parte, 1486, f. 85r.

¹⁰⁷ Andrea di Giovanmaria Pellini tessitore di drappi in Ardiglione, il qual' dice a nome suo, e delli altri suoi compagni della Potenza della Consuma, come Bastiano di Lorenzo Pettinelli sarto, e signore della detta Potenza, ha havuto sedici scudi di mancia nella nascita del Gran Principe per distribuirli a' tutti li huomini della detta Potenza, e che in vece di distribuirli a tutti egli l'ha distribuirli a suoi ufficiali e seguaci solamente che sono da 15 persone in circa.' Parte, 55, f. 34r.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Avendo gl' huomini de luogo fatto uno nuovo re il quale domanda avanto alli Signori Capitani di Parte che esso povero suplicante rimetta il conto delli scudi 50 autti da V.Alt. dove che per odio et invidia li anno fatto questo et cerchano mandarli disperso per il mondo se da V.Alt non gli è datto sochorso'. Parte, 739, no, 176.

freelancers – used a banner with the Woolbeaters’ symbol to demand a festive tax from the city’s merchants, and then refused to pool the cash. Indeed, this crack in the labourers’ “republic” was very possibly linked to a violent assault on the official brigade’s flagbearer by two other woolbeaters, which cost both of them their lives.¹⁰⁹ The Woolbeater king also appealed to Francesco, who allowed him to enlist the men of the Bargello to round up the *venturieri* and force them to process around the boundaries of the kingdom with a torn flag and a muted drum.¹¹⁰ Meanwhile, if the tensions of ordinary time could vector in towards the festive stage, so could the world of festivity ramify into the everyday. In the summer of 1559, the sense that the politics of community were ripe for debate arguably triggered a minor upheaval within the commune of Campi, which in certain respects was the formal counterpart to the Campi empire. Long-nurtured grievances over the secretive patronage system that determined who ended up in communal office boiled over during or immediately after that year’s San Giovanni festivities in June – for six weeks later the communal council changed the constitution in a way that radically widened participation, “since getting elected are not those who are eligible for the said commune, but rather the election is made to the liking of those that govern, calling on their relatives and friends ... which results in the reduction and damage of the said community”.¹¹¹

As these words suggest, internecine clashes were not aimed at breaking up community; rather they spoke to the struggle to define, represent and, as the Biliemme’s “peacemakers” attest, hopefully unify it. To this end, artisans drew upon a number of rich cultural repertoires. As the Biliemme understood when it organised the erection of its tabernacle, sanctifying the kingdom and seeking to legitimise it and its leadership could amount to the same thing. Above all, the divine was mobilised around the figure of the king himself. In the Prato, a number of emperors were buried as such inside Santa Lucia, which sacralised the empire as it made the parish church the repository of its “dynastic” memory – which was not essentially dissimilar to how the Medici acted at San Lorenzo. The single surviving imperial tombstone, dated 1594, was once prestigiously placed in a

¹⁰⁹ Otto, 2263, f. 343r.

¹¹⁰ The Woolbeater king had the splinter group sent to labour on the new ducal villa at Pratolino for ten days. Ricci, 221-2. The expenses list of the Camaldoli suggests the *potenze* gifted a small amount to the police as a matter of course – 1 lire 6 soldi to the Bargello, 2 lire to the Otto, both on May 20, the first day of festivities. As we will see, this was probably as much to stop them interfering as to call on them to help police their states. Parte, 739, no, 176.

¹¹¹ ‘Per che si elegge non si va beneficio di decto comune ma più presto tale electione si fa a piacimento di quelli che governano chiamando in la electione di che fanno lor parenti et amici il che resulta et reducenda in danno della decta comunità’. Statuti, 115, f. 43r. (Sept 10, 1559) Statutory reforms in 1515 had put in place a ‘secret nomination’ procedure for most of the candidates for the 12-man general council of the commune. For the top office of gonfaloniere, there was an imborsation of three secretly nominated men from each parish. For the eight parish counsellors on the general council, three candidates were also secretly nominated on a parish basis, and then, without imborsation, directly scrutinised by the outgoing council. *Ibid.*, ff. 8r-9r. The reform of 1559 did away with the restricted secret selection for the eight parish counsellors, instead placing in electoral bags one or more men from every house, ‘secondo le qualità e benemeriti di ciascuno’.

chapel beside the high altar (figs 10-11).¹¹² Sacred, too, was the procedure of election. In its printed pamphlet of how it conducted the 1577 festivities – itself a carefully choreographed secondary performance – the Graticola began by emphasising how, three days after the birth of Duke Francesco’s heir, all those subject (*sottoposti*) to the kingdom were summoned by drums to elect a new king and officials “inside the greater residence of the church and chapter of San Lorenzo”.¹¹³ On January 9, 1600, the beating of drums also accompanied Donato Penneccchini, an “old and poor woolbeater” as he and a “big retinue of his people” processed towards the church of Sant’ Ambrogio following his election as grand monarch of the Città Rossa. Inside the church a mass was performed, then the prior of Sant’ Ambrogio gave the *pax* to Donato, blessed the crown, put it on his head and anointed him with holy water.¹¹⁴

Besides calling down the glow of heavenly sanction, these kinds of performances arguably allowed a brigade to both fashion itself under a king and gain the acclaim, or at least the tacit consent, of the greater “poor” of its territory, because the creation of a monarch also began to “turn the world upside down”. The act of gathering together and electing a new ruler was to appropriate the language of politics and symbolically transgress the boundary between non-citizen and citizen – as Ioseppo Paganone the Venetian, the Graticola’s quartermaster and pamphlet-writer, emphasised when he recorded how his king had granted him the status of “noble citizen”.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, it began symbolically to substitute the material conditions of one with those of the other: the language of kingship was also the language of plenty. This was a festive trope with a long history, already sufficiently normative by the mid-1300s that Antonio Pucci could give it ideal-typical form in his poetic sketch of the celebrations then held every year by the foodsellers of the Mercato Vecchio.¹¹⁶ In Pucci’s poem, the first order of business after electing a monarch was to spend on finery. Two hundred years later, in 1577, the expenses of Camaldoli king Francesco di Bernardo show that the brigade’s second largest single payout, 28 *lire*, was to a second-hand clothes dealer, a transaction handled by viceroy Domenico Zagli rather than the usual minor official.¹¹⁷ The Graticola offers a taste of how this money was spent. Immediately after being elected, its new king, Simone Caluri, was “dressed in a beautiful shirt, interfaced with gold with great skill and embroidered with red velvet flowers, and with great pomp was seated in a chair covered with rich

¹¹² Mss, 625, f. 886.

¹¹³ ‘Giovedì addì 23 di maggio fu raunato insieme a suon di tamburo tutti quelli si trovauono sottoposti al Regno della Graticola, & nella maggiore residentia della Chiesa, & Capitolo di San Lorenzo posti tutti per ordine sedere’; Paganone, *Ordini, feste, et pompe*, f. 3r.

¹¹⁴ Parte, 51, f. 12r; 769, f. 395r. Possibly the earliest chronicle account of this event is found in BRF, Moren., 200, vol. 2, f. 251v (‘Diario dal 1532 a 1600’). It, or some third narrative, is repeated verbatim by Settimani (Mss., 131, ff. 169v-170r.) and can be read in an almost identical version in Manni, *Osservazioni*, 21, 32-3.

¹¹⁵ Paganone, *Ordini, feste, et pompe*, f. 6v.

¹¹⁶ Pucci, ‘Proprietà di Mercato Vecchio’.

¹¹⁷ Parte, 739, no. 176. The payment was made on June 18, ahead of San Giovanni. It was also Zagli who signed for the ducal gift that year; Depos., ins. 53.

cloth”.¹¹⁸ Here, in the image of the king, the producers of elaborately worked cloth, in huge demand in the early duchy, suddenly became its consumers, underscoring their everyday role in the urban economy as it inverted their position within it. Artisans were not only denied luxury garments due to the expense, but by law: new sumptuary legislation under Cosimo I severely limited or prohibited non-citizens, manual workers and *contadini* from wearing velvet, silk, or any gold or silver cloth.¹¹⁹

The king not only represented the conquest of poverty in his own person, but as noted in the previous chapter, convention prescribed that at least in part the world of plenty was delivered via his princely liberality – which is why Ceccherelli’s Prato emperor ruined by debt was such a recognisable figure. At its most symbolic, this could take the form described for the procession of Prato emperor Pierone in 1545, which featured a special version of the *carro della Zecca* that was wheeled out every San Giovanni to represent and purify the city’s wealth before the Baptist. Here, the emperor’s mint trundled through the city beating out fake coins (stamped on one side only), which were then thrown into the streets. Perched on another float close by was Pierone himself, “in the rich dress of an emperor”.¹²⁰ More tangibly, a king’s expenditure might go towards staging the procession itself, such as the “solemn and magnanimous Triumph” Bernardo of the Camaldoli ultimately organised in 1559.¹²¹ Yet it was Bernardo’s initial provision of a banquet that was the most fundamental way in which everyday material shortcomings were put to one side under the sign of the king. In Pucci’s poem, the “*buon briganti*” of the Mercato Vecchio swapped water, leaks and roots for wine, capons, partridges and veal, and we recall that the later *potenza* king of the Mercato foodsellors was called the lord of Abundance (Dovizia) and sometimes of Fertility.¹²² In 1545, the reverence paid to the emperor of the Prato was, said Riccio, helped along by wine and

¹¹⁸ ‘& subito fatte tali creationi fu il Re vestito di una bellissima veste di teletta d’oro con grand’ arte ricamata a fiori di velluto rosso’; Paganone, *Ordini, feste et pompe*, f. 3r. In 1545, The Re Piccino had a tunic brocaded with gold, donated by Cosimo I; Coppi, *Cronaca*, 51.

¹¹⁹ Calvi, ‘Abito, genere, cittadinanza’; also Currie, ‘Clothing’.

¹²⁰ BNF, Magl., XXVII, codice 83. This document describes the ritual order of the five *armeggerie* brigades in 1588, looking back to Cosimo I and 1545 as the model.

¹²¹ ‘Onde egli raunato il Popolo, et suoi consiglieri nel luogo deputato consulto per ultima deliberatione che si dovesse fare uno solenne, et magnanimo trionfo’; Parte, 708, no. 48. The king of the Macina paid for the float that the *potenza* created for San Giovanni in the later 15th century. Capitoli, 100, f. 9r. In 1577, in Campi, the butcher Mariotto di Rafaello signed for a wooden *palco* from a tavernkeeper for the ‘imperadore et suo carmalingo et proveditore’, only to appeal the payment later since it was the emperor’s expense. Parte, 739, f. 210r.

¹²² For the Dovizia as the ‘Prince of Fertility’, Parte, 17, f. , 116r. The classical figure of Abundance by Donatello in the Mercato Vecchio, from which the Dovizia took its name, was in place by 1430, and served as a model for a number of abundance statues out of the Della Robbia workshop from 1500-20; Randolph, *Engaging Symbols*, 21, 36-40. Donatello’s figure of Abundance is unmistakably used as a representation of Carnival in a Florentine woodcut of c1494, and not so directly in another of c1520, both on the theme of Carnival versus Lent; reproduced in Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance*, 34-5. Other *potenze* names related to food include the Consumption (Consuma), Sheaf of corn (Covone), Ear of wheat (Spiga), Millstone (Macina), Sifters (Vagliati), Apple (Mela), Medlar (Nespola), Cow (Vacca).

bread sent by Cosimo I, which the men of the district then augmented by buying dozens of flasks wine, bread and cheese, “promising to spill blood for the emperor and put their lives in the service of His Excellency [Duke Cosimo]”.¹²³ Or to put that another way, bread and wine were the contractual glue that enabled the festive polity to be reassembled under a king. At the 1577 festivities, Camaldoli king Francesco di Bernardo’s single biggest expenditure was 29 lire, for “a meal in the house of the admiral [a mock title used by one of the men of the Camaldoli, unique to that brigade], all his men and any others who wanted to come”. On the same day, he paid out a further 6 *lire* to a tavernkeeper for “lots of wine” for the admiral’s meal, plus another 12 *lire* for three barrels “to give to drink to the people, whoever wants to drink”.¹²⁴ As the Graticola’s pamphlet of the same year suggests (fig. 12), artisans looked to bring together this transition to a state of abundance with the reestablishment of territorial community, all under the sign of the king. In the single ritualised sequence with which the account of their festivities began, Simone, now elected and fitted out as monarch, is described as emerging from San Lorenzo on a litter carried by eight men, two pages in front bearing the royal crown and rapier. “And so they went making a *festa* through his kingdom, touching part of the Biliemme, the Covone and the Dovitia, having behind them a huge number of people, who in a loud voice shouted, ‘Viva, Viva’ and ‘Graticola, Graticola’; and they put the king down at his home, in front of which he had many coins thrown and wine brought out to give to whoever wanted it. And that was end of the celebrations for that day.”¹²⁵

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¹²³ ‘In adiuto de quali essendosi mandato in nome di Sua Eccellenza, come all’altre potentie, certo vino et pane, crebbe l’ardore talmente che di freddi et tiepidi in poco spazio facevano offerta chi di vendere il letto, chi il lettuccio, et chi gl’alari per honorare l’imperatore Sua Maestà: et in questo ardore s’attese a correre all’hosterie più vicine per le dozzine de fiaschi, alli fornarij per le picce del pane e alli pizzicagnoli per formaggio sardesco et forza di baccelli, di sorte che in sino alle 5 hore di notte non si fece altro che metter tutti l’altri pensieri da parte et darsi piacere, col promettere all’Imperadore di spargere sangue et metter la vita in servitio di Sua. Eccellenza’. MDP, 376, ff. 200r-202v.

¹²⁴ ‘Adi [May] 25 detto lire ventinove soldi 9 danari servino per uno disinare in casa l’amiraglio haverne tutti i suoi omini e quelli che volssero venire a quello desinare’; ‘lire sei a donato oste per tanto vino che servi a detto desinare in casa l’amiraglio’; ‘lire dodeci a lorenzo vinatiere per tre barili di vino servi per dar bere a popoli a chi voleva bere’. On the day of ducal birth itself, May 20, Francesco spent 12 lire for ‘tanto vino’ at the ‘tavole de soldati in casa Lorenzo di Borgo del Prato’; Overall, the Camaldoli spent one-quarter of its 50 *scudi* on food and drink. Parte, 739, f 176.

¹²⁵ ‘& cosi andorno festeggiando per il suo Regno, toccando parte di quello di Biliemme, del Covone, & (d)ella Dovvita, havendi dietro grandissimo popolo, il quale ad alta voce gridava. “Viva, viva”, e “Graticola Graticola”; diposorno il Re alla sua casa innanzi alla quale fece gettare molti denari, e portar vino, e darne à chi ne voleva, & per detto di fu finita l’allegrezza’. Paganone, *Ordini, feste et pompe*, f. 3v

As the Graticola's opening procession and name-checking of its neighbours indicates, no *potenza* recreated its state in a vacuum – but in relation to other kingdoms. “Peace and war, war and peace,” begins a song written about the *potenze* before 1510. “Monteloro, Mela, Città Rossa and Empire / have warred together a long time, with the desire to drive one and the other from their states... We are now united and we all cry for peace.” Here was festivity's master narrative idealised and served up, from above, as a literary topos.¹²⁶ Yet just as the festive moment was seen as a time to renegotiate relations within individual kingdoms, it was also a time to renegotiate relations between them.

Such moments never resulted in a total overhaul of what might loosely be understood as the system of artisan states, which remained more or less stable from the 1510s until after the confiscation of the flags in 1610. The four *potenze* named in the song above – Monteloro, Mela, Città Rossa and Empire – were the city's officially recognised jousting or *armeggerie* brigades, joined, in 1518 at the latest, by the Nespola in Santo Spirito.¹²⁷ These were the five brigades who, as noted earlier, jousted outside the Medici palace on May Day 1532, and who then went on to tour the city, jousting for “all those *plebe* and *potentia* who had made some decorations in their districts (*paexi*)”.¹²⁸ This pattern was repeated in later years. The Graticola, for example, welcomed the “*armeggiatori*” into its kingdom in 1577; the Camaldoli during the same festivities gifted two flasks of wine to the Monteloro and on the same day offered “*berlingozzi e ciambelle*” – pastries long associated with Carnival in Florence – “when the *potenze* passed through”.¹²⁹ While these five brigades were not the only groups to joust or put men on horseback, the image of the official *armeggiatori* on one side, and the rest of the *potenze* on the other, embodied the ancient division between *milites* and *piedes*, or of men on “horse and foot” as several *potenze* put it.¹³⁰ Indeed, there is some sense that the *armeggiatori* held at least an ad hoc leadership role, these “superior” brigades, as one chronicler had it in 1545, instructing the others “to get themselves together in order to put on a fine *festa*”.¹³¹ The jousting *potenze* themselves were unambiguous about their

¹²⁶ The ‘Canzona degli amatori di pace’ by Giovanfrancesco Del Bianco, before 1510; Brusciagli, *Trionfi*, 1, 50; Partially translated in Trexler, *Public Life*, 417.

¹²⁷ For the Nespola, Cerretani, *Ricordi*, 352. See also Masi, *Ricordanze*, 237.

¹²⁸ Cambi, *Istorie*, 23, 117.

¹²⁹ Parte, 739, no. 176. See for example, Lorenzo de' Medici's ‘Canzona de' fornai’ (Noi facciam berlingozzi e zuccherini, / cociamo ancor certi calicioncini), Brusciagli, *Trionfi*, 1, 25. When Giuliano de' Medici was ‘messer’, lord, of the confraternity of San Giovanni Evangelista for Carnival in 1491, he provided the brothers with berlingozzi; Masi, *Ricordanze*, 16.

¹³⁰ For example: the Graticola, Dyers, and emperor of Campi, in 1577 – Paganone, *Ordini, feste, et pompe*, f. 3v; Depos., 984, ins. 53; Del Badia, *Le signorie*, 27. The Dyers were also considered a quasi-official jousting group, discussed in Chapter Three.

¹³¹ Coppi, ed., *Cronaca*, 51. This may sometimes have taken place on the basis of quarter, despite the fact that the jousting *potenze*, taken together, were not mapped to these divisions. In 1525, the Nespola was listed first among the ‘Potentie Grande e Piccole del quartiere di Sancto Spirito’ and similarly the Città Rossa for Santa Croce; and in breakdowns by quarter in 1610 it was always

exalted status: in a 1577 list “sent to me by the empire” (the “me” being the ducal treasurer Napoleone Cambi or one of his officials), the emperor put the city’s official “*armeggianti*” up top, and all received the very high payment of 50 *scudi*.¹³² Above all of this stood the emperor of the Prato himself, whom the other *potenze* moved to legitimise and sought to be legitimised by. In 1545, as the *potenze* regrouped ahead of San Giovanni, Riccio reported that “today you don’t hear anything except drums, reviews, parades and visits to the Emperor”.¹³³ In 1577, the king of the Camaldoli made one such visit, laying on a banquet upon his return home, while the king of the Graticola recorded how he, too, travelled to the Prato d’Ognissanti, where he made “due reverence and ceremony and the Emperor did likewise”.¹³⁴ Indeed, on one day during the 1577 festivities, gift-bearing kings arrived at the Prato *en masse* to ritually receive their crowns, while in the same year we discover that the emperor possessed what De’ Ricci described as the “books of borders and privileges”, something that spoke to his putative role as arbiter of the entire urban patchwork of kingdoms.¹³⁵

While hardly immune to various challenges, this was the scaffolding on which *potenze* made war and peace. At times, and no doubt more often than we presently know, this could speak in a very direct way to everyday relationships. The expenses list of the Camaldoli in 1577 reveals that, apart from his visit to the Prato emperor, king Francesco di Bernardo made one other trip during those festivities: he crossed the Arno with his “soldiers and other people of the king” to feast with the king of the Biliemme, now his confraternal brother after the wool weavers of these two neighbourhoods had forged their difficult alliance the year before. After they dined, “his colleague” the Biliemme king walked him home.¹³⁶ Yet the festive moment itself called into being flurries of conflict and alliance-making. Indeed it was generic to the process of re-making their kingdoms that hierarchies and, especially, borders were never permanently settled but were perennial sites of dispute, petition, arbitration, treaty, and sometimes battle – and it was above all through the conduct of foreign relations that individual kingdoms asserted, indeed produced, public identity and, in the face of some resistance, ongoing histories as, collectively, they redrew the city.

One territorial clash in 1559 between neighbouring kingdoms, the most common kind of dispute, throws open this process. In the lead up to San Giovanni that year, the Mercato Vecchio’s

listed at the top, as was the emperor of the Prato for Santa Maria Novella: BNF NA, 987, unpag.; Parte, 1478, f. 70.

¹³² Depos., 984, ins. 68.

¹³³ ‘Hoggi non s’è sentito altro che tamburi, rassegne, ordinanze et visite all Imperatore.’ MDP, 376, f. 492v. (Riccio, June 14, 1545).

¹³⁴ ‘Giunto allo Imperatore dove il Re fece il debite riverentie, & cerimonie, & dallo Imperatore fu fatto altresì’; Paganone, *Ordini, feste, et pompe*, f. 3v.

¹³⁵ Ricci, 226.

¹³⁶ From the Camaldoli’s festive expenses of June 2: ‘Adi detto lire sette quando s[']andò al desinare di Re di Beliemo’; ‘Adi detto lire otto servino per so[']dati et al altre persone del re quando ttoreno [sic] dal Re a Beliemo accompagnò re sua colego’. Parte, 739, no. 176. Significantly, a second mass vote in both districts, to secure approval for the final version of the new brotherhood’s statutes, took place on May Day 1576; Capitoli, 799, f. 3r.

Dovizia and the Piccino at the Nighittosa, marshalled themselves before the magistrates of the Parte. The Piccino claimed that the Dovizia unjustly controlled territory that had been recognised as theirs by Prato emperor Pierone in 1545, a small patch of ground on via Speziale that had previously belonged to two other minor *potenze*. Now, however, the emperor – still Pierone, though this is never stated – had recognised the same piece of territory as belonging to the “new prince” of the Dovizia.¹³⁷

In a bid to deal with this mess of contradictory imperial rulings, the Parte felt compelled to adumbrate a kind of political theory of the festive world. First, the magistrates appealed to the myth of the absolute prince. The Prato emperor’s word was law, it said. He had been created “in the fashion of a true Caesar and this ludic Caesar might preside over all the kings, tetrarchs, dukes, counts and games princes, and preside in such a way that he could exercise the utmost authority of imperial power and supreme jurisdiction”. Judicial commonplaces derived from Roman law were thrown in as support: “As Valentinian attests, it is not right to dispute a princely judgement, and it is akin to sacrilege to doubt whether someone whom the emperor has chosen is worthy.”¹³⁸ This brought the Parte to the issue of contradictory imperial rulings. As noted several times, carnivalesque genre norms insisted above all on the contained, temporary nature of the *fiesta*; as set down by the likes of Antonio Pucci, the world was turned upside down and the poor became kings for a day, after which their kingship vanished like smoke.¹³⁹ Here, the Parte set out a quite radical version of carnivalesque ephemerality. It reasoned that the *potenze* kings, tetrarch, dukes, counts, princes and the emperor himself were all created purely for the moment of festivity, to which they were “annexed and connected and from which they arise and on which they are dependent ... and not that they might last in perpetuity”.¹⁴⁰ Thus the authority of the emperor “expires along with games themselves, and equally is not revived with new games but is created anew”.¹⁴¹ This meant

¹³⁷ Parte, 17, ff. 115v-16v; and for the Parte’s letter on its ruling to Cosimo I, Parte, 707, f. 216r.

¹³⁸ ‘Et quod non ex alia causa Caesarea maiestas in his ludicrus constituta fuit quam ut ad instar veru imperatoris et Caesaris ipse ludicrus cesar cunctis regibus, tertrachis, ducibus ... ludicrus praesset, et ita praesset ut imperialis potestatis summum imperium et quoad haec ludicra tantum et eis annexa et connexa, et ab eis dependentia et emergentia iurisdictionem supremam et omnimodam quandiu durarent ludicrorum tempora posset exercere’; ‘Quod teste Valentiniano Imperatore Disputari de principali iudicio non oportet sacrilegii nec instar est dubitare an is dignus sit quem elegerit Imperator.’ Parte, 17, ff. 115v-116r.

¹³⁹ “E posson dir: ‘nessun maggior dolore / ch’a ricordarsi del tempo felice / nella miseria’, e ciò disse l’autore; / ché dove avean capponi e pernice, / la vitella e la torta con l’arrosto, / hanno per cambio il porro e la radice”. Pucci, ‘Proprietà’. In 1513, Francesco Vettori’s passing comment to Niccolò Machiavelli in which he compared the duke of Milan to a Florentine festive king similarly spoke to genre norms: ‘Il duca di Milano, se ha punto di cervello, credo che gli paia essere come li nostri re delle feste che pensono la sera aversi a tornare quelli uomini erono prima’. Machiavelli, *Opere di Niccolò Machiavelli*, 3, 408; discussed in Brown, *The Renaissance*, 93.

¹⁴⁰ See note 137 above; and ‘Et quod predictis tantum letis temporibus et non ut in perpetuum durarent reges, tetrarchas, duces, comites, principes et summum etiam Imperatorum constitui consuetum est.’

¹⁴¹ ‘Et hoc duntaxat donec ipsum Imperium durat quod cum ipsis ludicris expirat et pariter cum novis ludicris non reviviscit sed de nov creatur.’

that imperial rulings carried no weight beyond each festival and a Caesar could ignore, “without any prejudice of justice”, the laws of his predecessors (or his former self in this case).¹⁴² In other words, there was a radical discontinuity between one festival and the next, the *potenze* had no official past and precedent was meaningless.

Yet the Parte’s own ruling, and the process that led to it, belied all such abstractions. To begin with, the role of the emperor was plainly reactive and consisted of steering a course – or being yanked – between the various claims that emerged on the streets, with his decisions then open to challenge before the ducal proxy of the Parte. Furthermore, this reality was reinforced at the Parte’s hearing. The case was not resolved simply by resort to imperial diktat, but through testimony that aimed to set out the past and present of facts on the ground. Despite its appeals to genre conventions, the Parte felt bound to accommodate artisan groups intent on demonstrating a past and an ongoing public identity in order to legitimise their contemporary claims. The magistrates affirmed the borders of the Dovizia granted by the emperor after they “saw and examined the witnesses for each party, along with all the documents, public as well as private, produced from both sides”.¹⁴³ In respect to the two former minor *potenze*, known as the *Pediculi* and *Putei*, the Parte explained that “it is not just that men subject to one jurisdiction are deprived in perpetuity of their natural lords”, which suggests that whatever their previous status, the men of that small area now raised no objections to being incorporated into the Dovizia’s kingdom.¹⁴⁴ And the key point, the Piccino’s historic claim to the disputed stretch of street, was refuted after “depositions of very many witnesses and even of the sacred emperor himself” had satisfied the Parte that this had not been the case before the “games of 1545”.¹⁴⁵ What this case also brings into focus is how these extraordinary civic festivals were not only special moments of renegotiation for the *potenze*, but were remembered as such by them, becoming key moments in the story artisans told themselves, and the city, about their kingdoms, moments around which collective memory could be organised and a historical identity asserted – or challenged. Indeed, only two days before the Dovizia-Piccino case, Prato emperor Pierone was involved in a separate hearing before the Parte after he had made a grab for the countryside. Pierone claimed that “a peasant from Campi ... had dared to usurp the title of emperor”. This was quickly dismissed because Campi was able to show that Piero Bargioni had been created emperor of the *contado* at the festivities of 1533, producing testimony from

¹⁴² ‘Unde Iuri consentaneum est quod Gesta per hunc temporaneum Cesarem temporanea et non perpetua sint ita ut novus Imperator non idem censeri possit cum eo qui in retroactis ludicris creatus fuerat. Et non tenetur gesta veteris Imperatoris invitus observari sed virtute novi Imperii ex sua absoluta potestate sine preiudicio iustitiae potest vetera imperatoris veteris gesta immutare’.

¹⁴³ ‘Et visis testibus per utranque partem examinatis et omnibus scripturis tam publicis quam privatis hinc inde productis...’

¹⁴⁴ ‘Et cogitantes dicti Domini [Parte] quod non est iustum quod homines uni Iurisdictioni subiecti priventur in perpetuum suis naturalibus dominis’.

¹⁴⁵ ‘Et cum constiterit ipsis Dominis Capitaneis ex depositionibus plurimorum testium et ipsius etiam sacri Imperatoris quod potentatus Nighittose ante tempus ludicrorum anni 1545 nullam iurisdictionem habebat in homines potentatus *Pediculi* et *putei*.’

Bargioni's parish priest, among several others, that his coronation had taken place with the imprimatur of Ottaviano de' Medici and Agnolo Marzi, who had "obtained the good grace of Duke Alessandro that the said Emperor of Campi was well made".¹⁴⁶

These cases involved the performance of living memory – but artisans also looked to present the idea of a still more distant past, of deeper origins, for their festive states. When Campi's *contado* supremacy was challenged again, in 1577, this time by neighbouring Carmignano, emperor Benino Benini reprised the claims his predecessor had made in 1559. But now, from the liberating distance of four and a half decades, he decisively pushed back Campi's imperial origins to before the advent of the duchy and scrapped any suggestion of the prince's foundational role. "The Caesar and always August Majesty of the Emperor of Campi was already constituted in this dignity by our ancestors," Benini informed Duke Francesco de' Medici, "which was then confirmed by the most excellent Duke Alessandro in 1533."¹⁴⁷ If the *potenze* were intended by their Medici patrons to be redolent of ancient, now revived, Florentine traditions, artisans were quite capable of playing the same politics of cultural memory from the other side.

The most revealing example of this comes in the context of another border dispute, a case that also takes us out of the palace of the Parte and back into the street, where sovereignty was first articulated and conflict first provoked. Shortly after the 1577 festivities began, on May 20, Simone Caluri, king of the Graticola, wrote to Duke Francesco de' Medici. "We have found that our neighbours, whom we had held to be brothers, the Kings of the Covone and of the Macine ... entered and occupied some jurisdictions on the borders of our State," he said, making it clear in a second letter that the central issue was that the Macine had "usurped" the *via Larga*.¹⁴⁸ The dispute was settled in the Graticola's favour on May 22, via the Prato emperor's books of borders and privileges, but the men of the Graticola still felt they had a point to make. It was the next day, May 23, that the Graticola staged the formal (re)election of Simone Caluri in San Lorenzo, followed by the march around the kingdom's borders – this rearticulation of the territorial state later presented in the brigade's pamphlet as its original festive act. Then, on June 30, the Sunday after San Giovanni and the tail end of the festivities, it reiterated its case again, putting up decorations on Piazza San Lorenzo that, in the opinion of Giuliano de' Ricci and no doubt many others, outclassed those of every other *potenza* in the city.¹⁴⁹

Directly in front of the church of San Lorenzo, the Graticola set up a "big *palco* with two ramps", a wooden "*residencia*" or "house" of the king. From this hub of the state, sovereignty radiated outwards towards its edges, where the brigade erected triumphal arches – one "in Borgo San Lorenzo, on the border of the Graticola and Covone", and another across *via Ginori* where it opened into Piazza San Lorenzo, presumably its border with the Macine. So far, all this was fairly

¹⁴⁶ For these documents, Del Badia, *I signori*, 24-27, quotes at 24 and 26. Ser Cresci Martini was rector of the parish church of San Lorenzo, Bargione's parish, as outlined in Chapter One.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁴⁸ Del Badia, 'Lettera'.

¹⁴⁹ Ricci, 228.

typical of *potenze* festive ephemera of the early duchy – the *palco* a princely dais, a version of which the grand dukes sometimes set up on public occasions on the *ringhiera*, the temporary triumphal arches a classicising confection that had been used for civic events and entries since the late 15th century. Such displays were always competitive, and here the Graticola was out for maximum visual impact: its *palco* was covered in fine carpets and the king's chair was gilded and surmounted by a canopy of red velvet with white embroidering.¹⁵⁰ But the Graticola went much further than this. A few yards out from the front of San Lorenzo, it put up an enormous *piazza*-spanning wooden structure representing a *loggia* (fig. 12). Between the top of this structure and the church was a ceiling of cloth – and it was under this covered space that the king's *palco* sat. Towards the *piazza*, the *loggia* showed a series of arches, supported by 14 columns, painted with leaves and greenery. Above the arches ran a frieze, in which, as the Graticola explained in its pamphlet, there were 14 “portraits of kings, who had been Kings of the Graticola since 1343, since, as one sees in the chronicle of Giovanni Villani, in that time, the Lord of Florence, the Duke of Athens, created six Potentie to make festivities”. Following Villani, the Graticola listed the six brigades, starting with the Città Rossa and ending with the brigade in the via degli Spadai (via Larga) “which was later called the Graticola”. It then added: “And really these six are the ancient and true Potentie”.¹⁵¹

Earlier we encountered Villani's story as a text in which contemporaries might readily find the model of a monarch, or tyrant, creating plebeian festive brigades in order to suppress the *popolo*.

¹⁵⁰ In 1545, noting again the use of two arches, ‘il Duca del Cardo fece due Archi trionfali con bellissime storie intorno al Tiratoio di Lung'Arno’; Coppi, *Cronaca*, 51. The visual competitiveness of ephemera is well illustrated at San Giovanni in 1588, where one Florentine wrote how the Nespola, at the southern end of the Ponte Vecchio, had set up two triumphal arches on the bridge, before immediately going on to compare them (as he was clearly invited to) to the two arches belonging to the Nespola's neighbour, the Biscia, based at the northern end of the Ponte Vecchio: ‘Questi due archi della Biscia era più belli di quelli della Nespola, per esser meglio e più riccamente lavorati, et per essere adornati di quadri più belli e di maggiore importanza che non erano quelli della Nespola.’ BRF, Piccolo diario, f. 124.

¹⁵¹ ‘& in 14. quadri erono tanti ritratti di Re, i quali sono stati Re della Graticola dall' anno 1343. come per Cronache di Gio: Villani si vede, che in tal tempo essendi Sig. di Firenze il Duca d'Atene creò sei Brigate, cioè sei Potentie per festeggiare. La prima e la maggiore fu nominata la Città Rossa, & il loro Sign. si nominò l'Imperatore. L'altra à S. Giorgio, col Pagliaroco, & una ne fu à S. Friano, una nel Borgo d'Ogni Santi, & una un quel di San Pagolo, l'altra nella via degli Spadai, che fu poi nominata la Graticola, e queste sei vermente sono le antiche, e vere Potentie, & il primo Re di Graticola dal Duca detto creato fu Guglielmo fedele, & seguitando come di sotto li altri di mano in mano. Guglielmo fedele I. Re di Graticola l'anno 1343. / Mariotto detto il Savio II. Re di Graticola 1360 / Lorenzo buono III. Re di Graticola 1371 / Lionardo affettato IIII. Re di Graticola 1388 / Anselmo Pio V. Re di Graticola 1399 / Giovanbatista Sarti VI. Re di Graticola 1412 / Piero detto il riccho VII. Re di Graticola 1419 / Questi sette sopra nominati cominciavano dalla parte del fregio di verso la scuola, seguitando verso la Stufa, e dopo l'ultimo Re sopradetto era una Graticola, che era nel mezo del fregio, & nel restante del fregio seguivano li sottoscritti Re. Benedetto grasso Re VIII. di Graticola 1405 / Cornelio basso Re VIII. di Graticola 1421 / Ulivieri di Alesso Re X. di Graticola 1476 / Ruberto di Lippo Re XI. di Graticola 1503 / Bastiano lucchese Re XII. di Graticola 1543 / Antonio di Gio: Re XIII. di Graticola 1556 / Simone di Gio: Caluri Re XIII. di Grat. 1577'. Paganone, *Ordini, feste, et pompe*, f. 4r-v

Here we see the Graticola selectively appropriating that story for its own ends, putting it to use to legitimise its claim for the disputed via Larga by inserting (or reinserting) itself into a quasi-mythical pantheon of proto-brigades, as well as presenting the kingdom as enjoying an unbroken existence from 1343 to the present. The Graticola listed the 14 kings exactly as their “portraits” appeared in frieze, starting at the right hand side of the Piazza San Lorenzo with “Guglielmo the Faithful, I King of the Graticola 1343”, and then moving along a chain of kings and festive election dates to the other side of the piazza, where finally it named “Simone di Giovanni Caluri King XIII of the Graticola 1577”, the current incumbent and the man sitting beneath the *loggia*. Beyond the brigade’s immediate agenda, the Graticola’s display reveals how Villani provided artisans as a whole with a foundation myth for their kingdoms, a story that – in the same way as Campi’s vague claims of antiquity took its origins back to a point before the Medici principate – created an existential distinction between them and any particular regime or political configuration and instead embedded them deep in the fabric of civic history.

When it came to the objects that the *potenze* embedded into the actual urban fabric, ephemeral representations became stubbornly durable signifiers of a kingdom’s past, present and future. These objects also looked to assert the identity of a *potenza* in relation to other kingdoms. With its figure of San Lorenzo, complete with his martyr’s grill (*graticola*), the Biliemme tabernacle did not only honour the parish saint, it seemed to nod down via Ariento towards the neighbouring kingdom of the Graticola, later a close ally. At the same time, the entire tabernacle would have inevitably invited comparison with Giovanni Della Robbia’s far smaller glazed terracotta of Sant’ Ambrogio for no less a brigade than the Città Rossa.¹⁵² Events in the non-festive world were critical, I have argued, to the erection of the Biliemme tabernacle, but festive foreign relations themselves also inspired such permanent declarations of territory or status. In 1577, at the same moment as the Graticola was appealing to the foundation myth of 1343, the Grand Monarchy of the Città Rossa – which the Graticola, citing Villani, named as the original imperial brigade – found its own status under threat. A *potenza* in Santo Spirito, the Monarch of the Stone, claimed that it, too, held the rank of grand monarch.¹⁵³ When the men of the Città Rossa argued they had a more ancient right to the title, the Parte agreed. Yet, like the Graticola, the Città Rossa still felt it had a point to make – and now the brigade put up the second of its marker stones around the corner of Sant’ Ambrogio, an imperial red crown with the words “Gran Monarca Giovanni MDLXXVII” (fig. 1). By placing these new *lapide* about a foot above its earlier marker, the Città Rossa effectively set out a story of historical continuity that travelled up the wall of church. How far back did that history go? In all likelihood the Città Rossa was also playing to the Villani myth of origins: indeed, naming the grand monarch along with the date roughly reflected the way the Graticola presented its kings in the

¹⁵² The sources, it must be pointed out, only allow us to be certain of the Graticola’s existence from 1545; Otto, 40, ff. 18v-19r.

¹⁵³ Parte, 35, ff. 23v-24r. This Monarca di Sasso, or of the Convertite, as he is called in 1577, appears among the brigades of 1545 and was probably the ‘Signore del Monarcha’ in Santo Spirito noted in 1525. Otto, 40, f. 18v; BNF, 1525 census.

frieze at San Lorenzo (which the men of the Città Rossa may well have seen before putting up their stone), and it arguably conveyed that this Giovanni was only the latest incumbent in a line that stretched back to 1343.¹⁵⁴

The argument between the Monarca di Sasso and the Città Rossa also gives us a rare insight into how apparently isolated disputes between two brigades could become part of a swirling politics of contest and alliance that stretched across the city. The antagonisms between these two brigades smouldered on after 1577, flaring up again in October of 1599. Now the Città Rossa attacked its rival, here provocatively calling himself the “Monarca del Sasso di Terra Rossa”, for daring to use the symbol of the red imperial crown on its banner, arguing that in the past the Monarch had used the *mazzocchio* or ducal crown. It lost this argument, but the Parte did allow that only the Città Rossa could put a distinguishing gold trim around its red crown.¹⁵⁵ At exactly the same time, the Monarca del Sasso was clashing with two of his neighbours in Santo Spirito. On the same day as its case with the Città Rossa, the Monarca del Sasso found himself in front of the Parte magistrates over a number of streets that, the Parte ultimately ruled in late November, belonged to the kingdom of the Gatta. A few weeks later, he was there again to hear the Parte fix its borders with the kingdom of the Sferza.¹⁵⁶ All of this serves as a preamble to the coronation, touched upon earlier, of a new Città Rossa grand monarch in Sant’Ambrogio on January 9, 1600. Indeed, the Città Rossa’s dispute with the Monarca del Sasso helps to explain what was, in fact, an extraordinary event. January 9, which marked the anniversary of Cosimo I’s election as duke in 1537, may have been a day of official ceremony in Florence, but it had never been one associated with the *potenze*. Yet, as with the major politico-dynastic junctures, here too was an occasion that might allow a *potenza* to identify the legitimate establishment of its own micro-polity with that of the Medicean state. The Città Rossa seized the moment with both hands. Inside the church of Sant’ Ambrogio a solemn mass of the Holy Spirit was performed “using the richest equipment the church possess”, before Donato Penneccchini was crowned by the parish priest.¹⁵⁷ Waiting outside the church was the throng that had accompanied Donato to his *residenza* on Piazza Sant’ Ambrogio. The Città Rossa’s own men were there, gathered around his flagbearer, and so were their neighbours, including the

¹⁵⁴ The Graticola’s festival in Piazza San Lorenzo was four days after the Città Rossa received a favourable ruling on June 26. In this context, the lower Città Rossa stone invites the speculation that the emergent *potenze* of the 15th century also found their organising reference in the stories of 1343. As noted in Chapter One, the Città Rossa marker, placed before 1486, is one of the earliest fragments of evidence for the *potenze*; the others include the Monteloro marker, dated 1473, and the statutes of the Resurrezzione/Macina, of 1485. Both the Canto al Monteloro and Canto della Macina are named as boundaries in the version of the 1343 story told by Marchionne Stefani, another standard Trecento source in subsequent centuries; Stefani, *Cronaca*, 575.

¹⁵⁵ The Monarca del Sasso also appealed the Città Rossa’s claim that it had to use the word ‘semplicemente’ after its name, though it still appears in a government list of brigades in 1629 as ‘Il Monarca semplice dalle Convertite’: Parte, 50, ff. 179r, 182r; BNF, 1629 list.

¹⁵⁶ Parte, 50, f. 184v (Sasso and Sferza); ff. 178v, 188r (Sasso and Gatta)

¹⁵⁷ ‘Et vi s’era detto la messa solenne dello spirito santo con li più richi fornimenti che havessi quella chiesa’ Parte, 769, f. 395r.

fellow *armeggerie* brigades of the Monteloro and Mela. Among the other *potenze* in attendance, several had processed from across the Arno. Both the Gatta and the Sferza came, and so too did the Spalla, which had been involved in a boundary dispute with an apparently friendly neighbour of the Monarca del Sasso at around the same time as the other skirmishes in Santo Spirito were taking place.¹⁵⁸ The absence of the Monarca del Sasso was as conspicuous as the presence of his neighbours and rivals.¹⁵⁹

Potenze not only conducted their battles processionally and judicially, they also squared up to each other literally. The parades, *armeggerie* and, in the *contado*, a strong identification with the ducal *bande*, reflected a martial ethos that was close to the heart of the artisan state's self-presentation. When the 1610 Prato emperor Alessandro Biliotti described in his census report all the able-bodied males aged over 12 in his kingdom as the *uomini da fazione*, what he implied were the men who could be warriors.¹⁶⁰ In his census, the vice-duke of the Pecora, Camillo Mannelli, two of whose men styled themselves as commissar and captain, said that those "under my duchy all fit for battle number 40 men". The butcher Iacopo Bercilini of the Dovizia, whose officials included a *maestro di campo* and corporal, reported that "under him are found 150 men for combat", while the lord of the Scodellini, Tomaso Calici, a dyer, said "I find in the territory 100 men fit for battle".¹⁶¹

Like rites of election or coronation, battle was a performance – and in several respects it amplified artisans' other assertions of festive statehood since, more than anything else the brigades did, militaristic posturing projected the idea of a *potenze* as a brotherhood of men. Both exhibitions and spontaneous street clashes sharply gendered public spaces as domains of masculinity, broadcast a vision of social relations that, among other things, split public/domestic, active/passive and performer/spectator along neat lines of gender. In doing so, they implicitly claimed that the public arena was a place in which all men had a legitimate stake, where male honour was asserted and codified.¹⁶² For artisans, as opposed to Florentine citizens and office-holders, we have already observed that that legitimacy rested in part on an idea of work. The king of the Woolbeaters drew this connection in his 1610 census report, when he said that he had counted "all the men found in

¹⁵⁸ The Spalla was disputing with the Consuma. Parte, 50, f. 179v; BRF, Moren., 200, vol.2, f. 251v.

¹⁵⁹ The animus between the Città Rossa and Sasso did not end in 1600: in 1610 the latter declared himself in his census report to be the '*Gran Monarca del Sasso di Terra Rossa dalle Convertite* [my italics]', while the Città Rossa's grand monarch referred to himself as 'Io Filippo di Piero Sicuriani gran monarcha septima' the only king to make reference to predecessors that year, suggesting that a genealogy of his kingdom had been 'invented', like the Graticola's, since the conflict with the Sasso began in 1577. Parte, 1478, ff. 147r, 219r.

¹⁶⁰ Parte, 1478, f. 189r; the term is also used by the Olmo and Cornacchia, ff. 157r, 216r.

¹⁶¹ 'Mi trovo sotto el mio ducato tuti abili a bataglia numero quarata uomini; 'si trova sotto di se numero 150 huomini da combattere'; 'Io Tomaso di Francesco Calici mi trovo nel teretoro con cento huomini da bataglia.' Parte, 1478, ff. 186r, 180r, 156r.

¹⁶² On these themes, see also Davis, *War of the Fists*, 90-109; *Id.*, 'The Geography of Gender'. On rituals of combat more generally, see, Zorzi, 'Battagliole e giochi'; Ciappelli, *Carnevale*, 125ff; Davis, 'Say it with Stones'.

his realm, and they are for work and for combat when it is necessary to do combat” – a link the same brigade made processionally in 1577, when, along with the Dyers and Purgers, they stormed into the Piazza at the announcement of the ducal birth armed with pitchforks, pikes and work tools, barricading the streets behind them with bales of wool, the material of their labour.¹⁶³ Indeed, an identification between occupational identity and the profession of arms through masculine *virtù* – which carried a sense of virility and valour, as well as of skill and ability – also underpinned the carnival songs of trade, the popular mock-chivalric literary genre of the first half of the Cinquecento in which artisans proffered their occupational/sexual skills and wares to women. The *potenze* are alluded to in several such songs, where the ‘trade’ in question is stone fighting, one of the emblematic forms of combat between kingdoms. In Antonfrancesco Grazzini’s ‘Canto di fare ai Sassi’, for example, published in 1559, the imperial men of the Prato, about to do battle with the Dyers, brag to the ladies about their superior skill and strength in stone fighting, the descriptions of their prowess loaded, as was typical, with double entendres about sexual penetration, mostly sodomy.¹⁶⁴ As such songs burlesqued and levelled both workaday feats and chivalric exploits, there is some preliminary evidence to suggest that a conversation about *canti carnascialeschi* took place between the literary-artistic/patrician milieu within which the genre took shape and the artisans of the *potenze*, that the latter were in on the joke and even colluded in performances. In 1545, Domenico Barlacchi, actor, writer, and formerly a herald of the Signoria and member of carnivalesque Company of the Cazzuola, was to be found feasting with the men of the Monteloro – “he was in the middle of that state by which he is adored,” said Riccio – as they lit fires and rallied the kingdom in the run up to that year’s San Giovanni festivities.¹⁶⁵ Alfonso de’ Pazzi, meanwhile, who moved in the same circles as both Barlacchi and Grazzini, set out in a preamble to his ‘Canto per le sassaiole’ of the late 1540s – which aims to persuade women that stone fighting is superior to

¹⁶³ ‘Ruolo di tuti quanti gli omini che si trova i nel suo reame e da lavorare e conbater casi che bisogniasi da conbaterere.’ Parte, 1478, f. 164r; Ricci, 216. When *potenze* kings arrived at the Graticola’s festival in Piazza San Lorenzo in 1577, with armed squads, the king of the Biliemme brought one group dressed as Wild Men who, instead of pikes, carried beams from weavers’ looms; Paganone, *Ordini, feste, et pompe*, f. 5r-v. On wild men, see Kinser, ‘Why is Carnival so Wild?’

¹⁶⁴ Bruscagli, *Trionfi e canti*, 2, 378-81 – Grazzini’s song was first published in 1559, in Grazzini, *Tutti i trionfi*, but may have been written, and perhaps performed, considerably earlier. See also ‘La Vecchia’ by Alfonso de’Pazzi, again referring to the dyers, in Castellani, *Nuovi canti*, 199-203. Pazzi’s songs date from 1546-50. On the genre in general, see *Ibid.*, ch. 1. Castellani’s invaluable notes on erotic double entendre are, like Bruscagli’s, largely based on the lexicon worked out in Toscan, *Le carnaval du langage*.

¹⁶⁵ ‘Gl’era nel mezzo di quello stato dal quale lui è adorato’, MDP, 376, f. 202r. Ricci later wrote about his fears that Barlacchi would be too ill to perform in a comedy also planned for the 1545 festivities; *Ibid.*, f. 513r. Cf. Plaisance, *Florence*, 117, 122, who incorrectly describes Barlacchi as a member of the Monteloro. The most recent discussion of the Company of the Cazzuola (a club whose wide membership included men from the political and social elite, such as Giuliano de’ Medici, as well as writers and artists) is in Mozzati, *Giovanfrancesco Rustici*, 191-268; for Barlacchi, see *ibid.*, 361-3; also Cummings, *The Maecenas*, 105-6 and ch. 3, *passim*.

all other carnival diversions – to explain how the song should accompany a series of staged battles between the Nespola and Mela, accompanied by ministers of the court.¹⁶⁶

Unlike stone-fighting, the other emblematic form of *potenze* combat, the *armeggerie* – especially the *saracino*, in which jousters targeted a dummy representing a Saracen – was thoroughly aristocratic, a chivalric kitsch that Florentines had always understood as a signifier of nobility. Yet if the stone was the rough and ready weapon of the street, and the *gioco di sassi* long associated with the politically or economically disenfranchised, the noble joust, under the sign of inversion, similarly transformed occupational *virtù* into feats of warrior prowess – and, in the carnival literature, with the same phallic double entendres.¹⁶⁷ In the 1590s Paolo Mini celebrated the *armeggeria*, which he associated above all with the *potenze*, as a game in which jousters “break lances with no little skill at breakneck speeds”, standing in the stirrups or on the back of the horse, and with only tiny saddles.¹⁶⁸ For artisans, all forms of virile combat were ultimately assertions of honour. The imperial Prato may have been the city’s premier jousting brigade, the emperor coming sumptuously on to the field with as many as 13 *armeggiatori*, four foot servants for each one, but it was also a band of stonefighters.¹⁶⁹ At least one occupant of the several imperial tombs once inside the church of Santa Lucia was dressed as a knight, in a tabard and with a two-handed sword beside his body. On the single surviving tombstone, meanwhile, the inscription, in Latin, reads, “I, emperor, conquered, fighting with stones, 1594” (fig. 11), a stonefight that may well have taken place at the birth of a second son to Ferdinando I.¹⁷⁰ Presumably this anonymous figure died in the fight, but in any event what he aimed to do was fix victory in battle as the best definition of himself as emperor, since in that role he brought honour to, and projected the solidarity of, the weaver kingdom.

¹⁶⁶ Pazzi said that two ducal ministers should favour each *potenza*, who should have 20-25 fighters a piece with floats loaded with stones and carrying the brigades colours, and both song and fight should take place on the Sunday of Carnival near the Duomo, on via Maggio, on the Prato d’Ognissanti, via Larga and finally on the Piazza. Castellani, *Nuovi canti*, 229-31. Castellani suggests the song was intended for the upcoming stone fight on the via Larga in 1549 – referred to in a letter to Piero Guicciardini, published in Plaisance, *Florence*, 135. Pazzi and Grazzini were both members of the Accademia fiorentina, in the 1540s, and connected to Barlacchi. See Zanre, *Cultural Non-Conformity*, chs. 3, 5, esp. 134n. Social connections between Grazzini and Barlacchi are also noted in Bryce, ‘The Oral World’, 94n. In general, the socio-historical, and indeed literary, analysis of the large corpus of carnival literature remains very much a work in progress, and little has been unearthed about performances.

¹⁶⁷ The one jousting song clearly referring to the *potenze* is in Singleton, *Canti*, 43; partially translated in Trexler, *Public Life*, 416.

¹⁶⁸ Mini, *Avvertimenti*, 41r-42r. In 1577, the Graticola said: ‘Perchè vennono li Armeggiatori benissimo à cavallo, e vestiti di drappo verde, e corsono più lance e rompevano al saracino stando ritti su cavalli, il qual giuoco fu molto bello, & di grande forza’; Paganone, *Ordini, feste, et pompe*, f. 6r-v. See also Scalini, *Il saracino*, 53ff. For noble *armeggerie*, *ibid.*, 40 (discussing the famous *saracino* for the wedding of Francesco to Bianca Cappello in 1579); Arditi, 88 (1575, involving Duke Francesco’s brother Pietro); Saslow, *The Medici Wedding*, 164-5 (1589).

¹⁶⁹ BNF, Magl, cl. 27, no. 83, unpag (‘Feste fatte in Firenze’, looking back to festivities of 1545 from 1588).

¹⁷⁰ The child, Francesco, was born on May 6, 1594.

Like their deployment of a history and a presence that transcended the festive moment, the clamour of the *potenze* to vaunt themselves in battle pushed against the boundaries of the festive paradigm as ducal authorities sought to define it. The fault line was quite similar: on one hand, artisans wanted to give their states solidity on the stage of the city; on the other, the authorities looked to limit this by policing the boundary between the imaginary and the real. When it had come to asserting a collective past, however, resistance from above was half-hearted at best. Artisans easily sliced through the kinds of genre rules – the *festa* as a super-ephemeral and super-contained world – that the Parte was trying to set out, seemingly in an ad hoc way, in 1559. But actualising their kingdoms through the threat or use of violence was another matter. Here, the boundary between the imaginary and real was a place of persistent tensions. *Armeggierie* may have been by nature exhibitions, and stonefights were periodically revived in the duchy as an official event – but little else was tolerated. When, in 1577, border disputes turned the city centre into a battleground that saw stones and even bolts from crossbows flying around the Canto al Diamante, leaving several police wounded, a few fighters were jailed. This prompted, not for the first time, a ban by the Otto against both *sassi* and arms – and it was especially around the issue of proper weapons that tensions truly turned.¹⁷¹ Potenze were expected to bear “*armi finti*” – fake arms – and to a significant extent they did so.¹⁷² They could even appeal, tactically, to this festive code. When, as discussed earlier, the men of Carmignano proposed to march through Campi on their way to a party at Castello “with the arms of the militia” – in the wake of Carmignano’s failed grab for Campi’s imperial title – emperor Benino Benini begged the duke to command that the Carmignano monarch “not to go to the said *festa* with any arms except fake ones, as is usually done”.¹⁷³ Artisans wanted to bring real weapons on to the public stage not only to settle disputes but because weapons were talismans of honour and, inversionally, of status: bearing arms in Florence was repeatedly banned for everyone except courtiers, knights of Santo Stefano, and expressly permitted gentlemen and citizens.¹⁷⁴ In practice, the ducal response was ambivalent, a shifting, negotiated compromise between licence and control. To Campi’s request in 1577, the Parte responded that the Carmignano king “should not dare pass with other arms except fakes, as is usual – save for swords, daggers, coats of mail and hafts, for those allowed to carry them”. It was a ruling that followed the line spelled out by the Otto’s decree, which forbade real weapons, “except for those that have express

¹⁷¹ Ricci, 226-8. For the ban on stone-fighting, Cantini, *Legislazione*, 8, 345 (1577); and see *Ibid.*, 16, 213 (1636, reaffirming the ban of 1554).

¹⁷² Arditi noted that in preparation for the 1577 festivities, that artisans ‘avevano fatte fare tante arme di legno inargentate, tutte contraffatte’; Arditi, 154. See also Ricci, 223; Lapini, 195. As Trexler first suggested, the use of fake arms, for practise, may have its origins in Machiavelli’s *contado* militia; the later militia of the duchy was noted in 1562 as staging ‘battaglie finte’ every month: Trexler, *Public Life*, 538-9; D’Addario, ‘L’ *Honorata militia*’, 712.

¹⁷³ ‘Passando domani alle 8 per andare alla festa di Castello con le sue genti non ardisca passare con altre arme se non finte come s’usa salvo che con spade et pugnale et giachi et maniche, quelli che ce possono portare’; Parte, 1567, August 17 (unpag).

¹⁷⁴ For example: Cantini, *Legislazione*, 2, 3-4 (1547); 5, 49 (1563); 12, 112-16 (1588).

licence of His Most Serene Highness, to carry them, but not to use them".¹⁷⁵ It was a recipe for trouble, and no doubt exacerbated conflict in some cases. According to Ricci, the stonefights in the city centre in 1577 were triggered off when the Goldsmiths wrestled a sword from one of the silk factors of the Caroccio, seeing that all the Caroccio men had been given license to carry arms. The Otto's first response was to revoke the Caroccio's right to carry weapons – but then, shortly afterwards, it reversed this ban. As for the case, noted earlier, of the flagbearer of the Woolbeaters who stabbed two of his colleagues to death, he was acquitted on the grounds of self-defence but sentenced by the Otto to 20 *scudi* and three stretches on the rope for carrying a dagger in the first place. Yet on petition to Duke Francesco, this Piero di Martino "alias the Idiot" (*barullo*), was let off, after arguing that he had understood that "in this moment bearing arms publicly was tolerated for all the *potenze* and their officials".¹⁷⁶

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The militaristic posturing with which the worker kings asserted their sovereignty was closely bound up with the central, vertical, axis of festive peacemaking – for if the constituency of a *potenza*'s kingdom was the "poor", their territories also encompassed the "rich". In 1610, Antonmaria Milani, the captain of the Bargello or police chief, summarised the dynamic of exchange between them in neat, almost abstract, terms. "In those *potenze* there are only artisans and shopkeepers, all poor folk, though citizens or substantial, well-off artisans also live in these districts. For the most part these people mind their own business and leave the festivities to those with less wherewithal, but they're happy to give a little from their purses to those who make festivities – since they too are subject to those *potenze*."¹⁷⁷ Underpinning this theatrics of inversion

¹⁷⁵ A similar ambivalence on arms is evident in 1545: On June 6, the Otto instructed that 'quod ultra sonum xxiiii horarum reponant in eorum domibus vexilla insignia ornamenta tamburos et omnia arma offendibilia et defendibilia et non extrahant ditta insignia neque adunationem faciant ultra dittam horam', while on June 18, one of Cosimo I secretaries said, in relation to Pierone's request for big swords, the duke wanted 'a nessuno si dia arme da offendere, nè si permetta il portarle'. Otto, 40, f. 19r; MDP, 1171, f. 418r (Cristiano Pagni to Riccio).

¹⁷⁶ 'Havendo in ciò errato a buon fede et essendo allora tollerato il portare pubblicamente l'arme a tutte le potentie et loro offitiali'; Otto, 2263, f. 343r. Two youths of the Caroccio who had got into a fight on via de' Bardi and wounded each other with knives also noted that the duke had given license to carry arms. *Ibid.*, f. 371r.

¹⁷⁷ 'Et in queste potenzie non c'è se non artieri e bottegai, tutta gente povera, sebene abita in dette contrade cittadini o grossi artieri benestanti. Per i più questi tali badano a fatti loro e lassano fare le feste a quelli che hanno manco il modo, vanno bene soccorendo qual che poco con la borsa a quelli che festeggiano, come sottoposti ancora loro a quelle potenzie'; Parte, 1478, f. 292r.

was a notion of redress, or justice, which in turn was predicated on a sense of lower-class grievance. It may have been this that Milani had in mind, as well as the inevitable border battles between brigades, when he prefaced his remarks by assuring Cosimo II that “I have made a pact with the eight Potentie who might make a tumult, as Your Lordship will see, and when these ones stay quiet none of the other *potenze* ever get stirred up”.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, the perceived potential for serious, unscripted class violence was arguably another reason why the early Medici dukes, while no doubt finding the image of a plebeian army politically useful, hardly relished the idea of a real one – not with artisans so adept at using the language of festivity in pursuit of their own place in the civic world.¹⁷⁹

Some indication of how deep that sense of lower-class grievance could run can be found in the Florentine carnival literature. Not all the songs of trade were written from above or used the crafts principally as a vehicle for mock-chivalric erotic wordplay. Towards the middle of the 16th century, a few writers of a non-patrician, even artisan background took up the genre to fashion what effectively were protest songs.¹⁸⁰ A certain Michele da Prato’s “Song of the Artisans”, for example, married an assertion of the crafts and their importance to the wellbeing of the city to a polemic against the rich. “Florence would be poor without the crafts, as you know. So be warned, if it’s work and income you want, do not exploit the efforts of the poor, because that’s an ugly sin”.¹⁸¹ Michele proceeded to remind the wealthy that they too were dependent (“what need you have for meat, weavers and shoemakers”), and to castigate them for exploiting high grain prices to pay artisans whatever and in what way they liked (“forcing us to do it since hunger puts too much pressure on the poor”), as well as for offering loans at fantastically usurious rates when they were sick (“this is what charity really means to them”).¹⁸² Artisans, he said, have too many enemies who want to make them work, but the good and just Lord also wants the poor to be able to earn, “so

¹⁷⁸ ‘Ho fatto il fio alle otto Potentie come vedra V.S. le quali son quelle che possano fare tumulto e quando queste stieno quiete tutte l’altre potenzie non sogliono mai risentirsi.’ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Apart from always communicating the potential for social violence, stone fighting, common to many cities, could become just that, as occurred during a famine in Perugia in 1586; Davis, ‘Say it with Stones’, 124, and *passim*. See also, for example, Ferrante, ‘Tumulto di più persone’.

¹⁸⁰ McClure, *The Culture of Profession*, 40-51.

¹⁸¹ ‘Senza l’Arti, Fiorenza / Pover sarebbe, come voi sapete; / Sicché abbiate avvertenza, / Se lavorare, e guadagnare volete: / La fatica de’ pover non togliete, / Perch’ è peccato brutto.’ Grazzini, *Tutti I trionfi*, 246-8. The erotic sensibility remains part of the poetics, however, since *povero* conveyed the idea of the passive sodomite, and for this reason Castellani sees artisans in this song as expressing a preference for the active role – rather, we might add, than being penetrated and thus emasculated by the rich; Castellani, *Nuovi canti*, 209.

¹⁸² ‘Voi che bisogno avete / Di Carne, Tessitori, e Calzolai; / Quand’ il Grano sta caro, / Ci dan per amicitia il lor lavoro, / Nè ci troviam riparo / Che non ci paghin sempre a modo loro: / Altro non possiam far, perciò costoro / Ci fan star per forza, / Perche l a fame il pover troppo sforza; / E quando siamo malati, / Che ‘l bisogno ci stringe per la fame / Noi siamo accomodati / Con cete Mercanzie, tengono di rame; / Come Scrocchi, Barocchi, simil trame, / A cinquanta per cento, / Quest’ è la carità ch’ egli hanno drento’. *Ibid.*

now we want to humbly beg you noble Citizens that the fat ones do not eat the little ones”.¹⁸³ The good and just Signore to whom Michele appealed was in the first instance God, but he also elided this with a notion of the ideal temporal ruler, who, in his last lines, he identified with the Medici. “So, just Lord, we would jump in the fire for you at any moment, provided you make it that the great man is worth little; because we cannot stay in this place if we have to think a lot of him – since for the Palle [Medici] the Great man was never of any value at all.”¹⁸⁴

The main lines of Michele’s argument were implicit to the theatre of the festive stage. Artisans kings sought “tribute” from their subjects, who more or less willingly acknowledged their states, along with the value of their crafts and the demand for a just economic exchange between rich and poor, that these states represented. To an extent, Michele’s animus also found expression in the ritual arena, most fiercely in the case of the Woolbeaters, who very likely were one of the Bargello’s eight brigades “who might make a tumult”. Indeed, these lowest *sottoposti* labourers of the wool industry staged an inversion within an inversion. They claimed Orsanmichele, the church of all the city’s guilds, as their *residenza*, and on at least one occasion, San Giovanni in 1545, they used the cloths that once canopied the area around the Baptistry during the feast of the patron to cover a section of street around Orsanmichele, so condensing an image of the commune into their textile republic with themselves as its producers of wealth.¹⁸⁵ The Woolbeaters were the first brigade to occupy the privileged space of the Piazza at the start of the 1577 festivities, and the bales of wool they brought with them to blockade the surrounding streets were meant to keep, temporarily, the other *potenze* out. When it came to taxing their employer-subjects in their workshop territories, the Woolbeaters, as Arditi described it, “went round all the shops covered by roofs of either wooden planks or tiles and from all they demanded by force a *mancia*, a gift for services rendered, or they would throw their roofs down – and so they made an infinite amount of money”.¹⁸⁶

In the neighbourhoods, meanwhile, *potenze* circulated around the houses of the wealthy. Here the atmosphere was less threatening. Which is not to say there was never a coercive undertone when large groups of artisan men fronted up at the doors of a palace, but symbolic redress beyond the workshops – that is, for the bulk of the *potenze* – was arguably more abstract in the absence of a direct, everyday employment relationship. There was, however, plenty of aggression on display outside the homes of the “rich”, for what the evidence from the neighbourhoods does reveal, and this can be taken as true throughout the city, is that skirmishes between brigades over territory and precedence were often linked to their claims to the pockets of the well-off. In 1577, the Nespola

¹⁸³ Ma ’l Signor giusto, e buono / Vuol , ch’ i poveri possan guadagnare: / Or umilmente vi vogliam pregare, Voi nobil Cittadini, / Che grossi non si mangino i piccini.’ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ ‘Sicché, giusto Signore, / Sempre entrerrem per voi in mezzo il fuoco / A tutte quante l’ore, / Purchè facciate, che ’l Grande vaglia poco; / Perche star non possiamo in questo loco, / Se quel ci vale assai: / Che per le Palle il Gran non valse mai.’

¹⁸⁵ Coppi, ed., *Cronaca*, 51.

¹⁸⁶ Arditi, 155; see also Ricci, 217.

quarrelled with its neighbour, the Nebbia, until, a month after festivities began, the Parte intervened, telling their leaders that if they did not “made festivities merrily” they would be “captured and punished, like all the others who would make tumults or fights”.¹⁸⁷ The treaty the two sides eventually signed, virtually an amalgamation, reveals that the Nespola had forced, or re-established, its claim to special status in Santo Spirito, seeing it was the quarter’s only *armeggeria* brigade. When the two *potenze* were together, the treaty said, it was to be “as if they were the same thing, united and in peace”, but the Nespola called the shots and it was always to precede the Nebbia, now calling itself the Amorevoli (the Kindly Ones), “either at the *residenza* or in procession”.¹⁸⁸ What the men of the Nespola were essentially after, and what the Nebbia had been defending, were the rich pickings in the latter’s territory. The Nebbia was based at the Borgo San Iacopo corner of via Maggio, one of the quarter’s most salubrious streets, while the Nespola was some distance away at the foot of the Ponte Vecchio. But now when it came “going round the houses to collect the *mancia*, particularly in via Maggio”, the Nespola was always to make the first circuit.¹⁸⁹ In the territorial dispute between the Graticola and the Macina over ownership of the via Larga the same year, what stirred up the quarrel was the prize of what by then was known as the “old Medici place”, occupied by Duke Francesco’s youngest brother, Pietro de’ Medici. On the first day of festivities, Pietro set out a table in the street loaded with bread, wine and cheese, guarded by the men of the Macina. When the Graticola challenged this, the dispute quickly became a wider struggle, the Macina joining forces with one Graticola neighbour, the Dovizia, while the Graticola found support from the now-allied Covone and the Biliemme, both of whose kings, as we have seen, would later be guests at its *fiesta* in Piazza San Lorenzo. Before the last-minute intervention that settled the case in favour of the Graticola, the two sides were ready, in De’ Ricci’s words, “to bash each other’s heads, which, being armed, they were well able to do”.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ The Parte relayed to Duke Francesco that it had spoken to the two sides, ‘esortandogli festeggiare allegramente e che facendo in contrario ne saranno catturati e gastagati si come tutti gli altri che facessino tumulti o lite’. Parte, 1466, f. 270r.

¹⁸⁸ ‘Prima: Che la Nespola et signoria d’essa in ogni luogo così in residenza come in camino debba prociedere a detto signore degli Amorevoli. Secondo: ogni volta che la Nespola mandassi per detto signore che venga contatta la sua gente et insegna per far festa et rassegne et altri loro trattenimenti che detto debba venire et stare come se fusse una cosa medesima uniti et in pacie.’ Parte, 738, no.186.

¹⁸⁹ ‘Terzo: quanto allo riscuotere le mance per andare alle chase, particolarmente in via maggio, vi possa andare l’una et l’altra potenza in questo modo cioè: che la prima volta la potenza della Nespola abbi a fare ciera lì, et di poi detto Signore degli Amorevoli ha ogni sua posta’. Moreover, if the Nebbia wanted to make any festivities by itself, it had to ask the Nespola’s permission to process along the Arno, as well as on Piazza Santo Spirito and Piazza dei Frescobaldi, the last of which was the heart of Nebbia territory. *Ibid.* The merger did not appear to last; the brigade does not appear in the emperor’s 1577 list of brigades for ducal payment, but by 1588 it had reverted to calling itself the Nebbia, and received a separate ducal gift under this name in 1610. Depos, 978, ins. 68; Parte, 45, f. 58r; Parte, 1478, ff. 215r, 261r.

¹⁹⁰ Ricci, 222; see also Arditi, 155. The Biliemme’s parish connections with the Graticola – expressed in its tabernacle and, we recall, through the parish confraternity of the Concezione – was also affirmed on June 9, the Sunday after Corpus Christi, when the Graticola said that ‘si fa la

In the same way as the artisan kings framed, and then appealed, to an image of the prince as the arbiter in their disputes with each other, they sought his sanction for these festive transactions. By and large the dukes endorsed them. Festive relations allowed the prince to present himself as the necessary principle through which status antagonisms could be, if not dissolved, brought into a stable tension. And embedded within this princely mediation of social peace lurked the narrower political agenda with which this chapter began. With brigades such as the Woolbeaters, the Medici could play to the notion of the “Palle” that Michele da Prato, for one, wanted to project – friend of the artisans, enemy of the great men’s avarice and injustice. Indeed the casting down of merchants’ roofs was almost a trope of Medici politico-dynastic celebrations. At the news of Siena’s surrender in 1555, for example, one chronicler wrote how Florence suffered the “march of the *plebe*”, after which there was barely a roof left in the city, adding – more in disgust than true astonishment – that it was incredible that Cosimo I had permitted such damage to the fatherland.¹⁹¹ To be sure, the government tried to poise itself, as with the issue of arms, between license and control. Ahead of San Giovanni in 1577, though a whole month after festivities had begun, the Otto warned *potenze* that they could not give “impediment to the shops or shopkeepers of any sort, nor exact tribute from them”, instructing that only four men from each brigade could go round the shops in their territories and “accept quietly what is placed voluntarily in their bowls”.¹⁹² But clearly the dukes believed it made tactical sense to underwrite more antagonistic social relations, so long as violence was limited and directed only at property. However, the men of the *potenze* did not look to the prince only as a mediator, but as an exemplar – the very model of the true Grande, the ideal “noble citizen” to whom Michele ultimately appealed in his carnival song. In effect the prince was positioned, and positioned himself, as the master patron of the *potenze*, the conversation between them a special dialogue between artisan kings and the “grand king of Tuscany”, as the king of Camaldoli addressed Duke Francesco in 1577.

To the Woolbeaters’ clamour in front of the Palazzo Vecchio in 1577, the prince responded by promising them the *mancia* – and the next day, when the first round of ducal gifts were made to the *potenze*, Francesco made the largest payment to these lowly wool workers, 60 *scudi*, compared to the 50 *scudi* that went to the five *armeggeria* brigades, the Dyers and the wool weavers of the Biliemme and Camaldoli.¹⁹³ Other *potenze* received lesser amounts. In order to receive these gifts,

processione per il popolo di San Lorenzo, il Re vestito alla Reale con le sue genti come sopra, & con scettro in mano seguì le processioni accompagnato dal Re di Biliemme con gran maestà, e bell’ordine’. Paganone, *Ordini, feste e pompe*, f. 3v.

¹⁹¹ Coppi, ed., *Cronaca*, 181. The best-documented instance of pulling down and burning wooden roof planks, especially from shops, was at the election of Giovanni de’ Medici as Pope Leo X in 1513: Masi, *Ricordanze*, 119-20; Cambi, *Istorie*, 22, 6-7.

¹⁹² Cantini, *Legislazione*, 8, 346.

¹⁹³ In the context of the court, the princely *mancia* was understood as a kind of bonus for services a functionary, rather than a noble, was salaried to carry out, and was often paid on major feast days. It was this term that tended to be used by chroniclers for payments to the *potenze*. But by ducal authorities and the *potenze* themselves terms more properly denoting a gift, such as *donativo*, *dono* and *mercede*, were also common – and this perhaps played to the rhetoric of plebeian ‘nobility’. As

artisans organised supplicatory letters, petitions, in which they looked to lock down the nature of that initial exchange in the Piazza and in effect to trace the image of the ideal prince.¹⁹⁴ Here the language of feudatory bonds between states and that of patronage became inextricable. The Graticola king told “our most singular friend” – *amico* a term freighted with ideas of both political alliance and patron-client obligation – that “we will be pleased, should the occasion arise, to remind you that we are here to give you advantage and benefit ... with money and people on horse and foot with all our force”. The Campi emperor offered “people at arms on foot and horse most ready for your every need”,¹⁹⁵ while, pushing the ‘fiction’ of festive petitional codes into the realm of the fantastic, the king of the Dyers wrote that, for the ducal gift, “a quantity of potion”, Francesco could “avail himself of my forces for the service of His Highness [and] it can be promised to him that I will muster one hundred thousand horses and two hundred thousand infantry”.¹⁹⁶ The king of Castello, meanwhile, did not promise “our most cordial friend the Grand Duke of Tuscany,” an army, real or illusory, but he too presented the image of a community mobilised around the celebration of a Medici heir and offered, instead, spiritual goods of a kind considered particularly valuable. King Domenico, a sand miner, told Francesco that, while the duchess had been in labour, he had “publicly commanded every young girl in his state and territory” to pray for a male child. Since the “hot prayers of the pure and simple virgins had been answered by God, he is rightly tormented by his own conscience and by the appeals of the girls and their poor fathers’, but he had run up a big debt for his celebrations and “there wasn’t a penny to be found”. Therefore he begged the duke to help, so he could fulfil his promise of giving a dowry to four of these girls.¹⁹⁷

Fantoni points out, though, all of these gift terms tended to be used interchangeably. Fantoni, *La corte*, 99ff. Adopting court procedures, the Graticola’s quartermaster was made a noble citizen by the king after ‘chiedendoli la mercede del suo ben servito’. Paganone, *Ordini, feste et pompe*, f. 6v.¹⁹⁴ For the argument that the poetics of petition not only enhanced the sovereignty of the prince, but also constituted a bid, successful or otherwise, to shape his public identity, and thus behaviour, I am building on the suggestive work of Natalie Davis, *Fiction in the Archives*. More recently, see Würigler, ‘Voices from Among the “Silent Masses”’; Nubola, ‘Supplications Between Politics and Justice’.

¹⁹⁵ Del Badia, ‘Lettera e supplica, 26; *Idem.*, *Le Signorie*, 27. On the political significance of *amicizia*, foundational is Kent, *The Rise of the Medici*; see, too, Lowe, ‘Towards an Understanding of Goro Gheri’s views on Amicizia’. On *amicizia*’s role in the process of patronage, horizontal and vertical, more widely, see Kent, ‘Patron-Client Networks’; *Idem.*, ‘Be Rather Loved than Feared’. In treatises on the subject, friendship was most commonly related to justice, and by extension the creation of concord; Bolton, “Friendship in the Renaissance”, 25ff.

¹⁹⁶ ‘Vostra Signoria gli piacerà pagare al gran Signore de’ Tintori quella quantità di pozione ... prometendoli che avendo bisogno il serenissimo gran ducha nostro Signore di volersi prevalere delle mie forze per servizio di sua A.S. la può promettere che io gli meterò in ordine cento mila cavali e dugento mila fanti.’ Depos, 984, ins. 53.

¹⁹⁷ ‘Al Serenissimo Gran Duca di Toscana nostro cordialissimo amico’ ... ‘fece pubblicamente comandare a ciascheduna fanciulla del suo stato e territorio che dovesse piamente e devotamente co’ tutta la sincerità del core pregare l’altissimo Iddio che liberasse ella da le spasimevol pene quanto prima et facesse l’A.V.S. gioire in un mar di letitia dandogli un figliolo maschio ... et che essendo per somma benignità però di Dio state esaudite le calde preci delle pure e semplici vergine, ella è

As they shaped these transactions, artisans again mobilised a history of their states, now to exhort the prince to acknowledge an ongoing relationship of reciprocal obligation. The Campi emperor rehearsed the same argument he would soon successfully invoke against his rival Carmignano, though here he left aside airy claims to a “more ancient” past and focused on his relationship with the Medici. “A long time ago, the well-remembered Duke Alessandro conceded this dignity to the Community of Campi and the well-remembered Grand Duke Cosimo confirmed it, and so also we supplicate now to Your Most Serene Highness that he should want for benevolence to confirm it.” To this he added that he had organised a festival for the Invention of the Cross in order to mark the ducal birth, but because “the means of the empire are not so great they can get this festival running ... [and] the cost will not be little”, he appealed to the duke’s liberality to finance it.¹⁹⁸ When the king of the Olmo appealed to the prince’s “mere liberality” for a gift, offering to “appear and make festivities with arms and horses, like the others who have been favoured”, he also urged Francesco to recall the bonds between them. “The Lord of the Olmo and his officials and followers set out to Your Most Serene Highness how by him the men here should be remembered, and more, that in memory, the said dominion had always been and truly is and always will be most affectionate towards the Medici house, the most evident sign being the standard made by the said dominion in 1526.”¹⁹⁹ The Olmo claimed this flag had been preserved by the duke’s Guardaroba and returned to them for the present festivities – and while the Medici did keep flags, those for use in *armeggerie*, in the Palazzo, and gifted *potenze* new ones at major festivals, it seems unlikely this banner dated from 1526.²⁰⁰ Nonetheless it represented a bid by the Olmo to form ties of continuous allegiance that reached back beyond the caesura of the Last Republic, ties that implicitly incorporated the brigade – its own role implied – within a political narrative of recent Florentine history and its central contests. Indeed, the *potenza* of the Guelfa, apparently regrouping for the first time in the duchy for San Giovanni in 1558, said it once

tormentata e giustamente dalla propria coscienza e da i continui prieghi delle fanciulle e di lor poveri padri, et che per havere ella speso e fatto gra’ debito per mettere in ordine tutta la sua gente ... non si ritrova piu un denaio.’ Depos., 984, ins. 77.

¹⁹⁸ ‘La Maiesta Cesarea dell Imperator di Campi, et del suo distretto, ricorre a piedi di V.A.S. narrandoli come più tempo fa, la buona memoria del Duca Allesandro concedè tal dignità alla Comunità di Campi; et la buona memoria del Serenissimo Gran Duca Cosmo la confermò: così anco supplichiamo hora a V.A.S. che la voglia per sua benignità confirmare. Di più per poter detta Comunità maggiormente rallegrarsi del Serenissimo. Gran Principe concessovi del grande Idio, habbiamo ordinato fare la festa dell’ Invention della Croce, ma perchè le forze di tal imperio non son tali, et tante, che possa condurre a fine tal festa, supplichiamo a V.A.S. che per la gran sua liberalità la voglia suvenire de qualche mercede, perchè la spesa non sarà piccola.’ *Ibid.*, ins. 63.

¹⁹⁹ ‘Il Signor dell’Olmo di Borgo San Niccolò oltre Arno et li suoi offitiali et seguaci expongghono a V.A.S come da che si ricordano gli huomini in qua et più di che in memoria detta signoria è sempre stata come è veramente et sarà sempre aff. ma alla casa Medici havendo maxime per segno evidente lo stendardo fatto da detta signoria sino l’anno 1526’. *Ibid.*, ins. 63.

²⁰⁰ Arditi, 157; Ricci, 221. New standards were given to at least the five *armeggeria* brigades in 1532, as noted above; and apparently to all the *potenze* by Leo X, flags they brought on the public stage in 1523 at the election of Clement VII – Cambi, ‘Istorie’, in *Delizie*, 22, 249; discussed in Trexler, *Public Life*, 513.

possessed an ensign, given to it by the Medici through the Parte Guelfa, that featured the *palle* and the eagle of the Parte, but claimed that this banner “was taken from us in 1526 because it had the arms of the house of your most serene and illustrious duke on one side”.²⁰¹ Providing a design of this original flag, the brigade supplicated Cosimo I for a new one. Despite finding nothing in its records, the Parte acknowledged that the Guelfa *potenza*’s claim could be legitimate, since “we clearly understand from several people that before the year 1526 the said men used have such a banner with the arms of Your Excellency and the Parte with which they took part in the *armeggerie* in various festivals that were put on for the city”.²⁰²

The Graticola’s transformation of Piazza San Lorenzo in 1577 can also be understood in terms of this conversation between prince and *potenze*. As we have seen, in the first instance the Graticola traced itself back to 1343 in order to secure its territorial claims against the Macine. At the same time, it framed its lineage of kings in a close relationship with the duke. A week before the Graticola’s display, on the vigil of San Giovanni, the birth of the Medici heir had been celebrated by Florence’s aristocratic youth confraternities.²⁰³ Supervised by the episcopal authorities, this was quite distinct from the activities of the *potenze*; indeed, the archbishop’s vicar had urged the Otto a few days beforehand to ensure that these “devout and exceptional performances” were not “broken up by the crowds, especially these *Potenzie*, who, should they get in the middle of this event, would cause very great confusion”.²⁰⁴ Most explicit in regard to the birth of Filippo was the Company of San Giovanni Evangelista’s staging of the genealogy of Christ. It took as its text the start of the gospel of Saint Matthew, with its three series of 14 generations stretching from Abraham to Jesus. The confraternity condensed the story, favouring the second series, parading the line of 14 kings proper from David to the Babylonian exile. This was followed by a three-tiered float with the fathers of the Old Testament, the four Evangelists and, at the summit, Christ as judge. At the front of the float was a cherub, marked as Florence by a lily in

²⁰¹ ‘Non possiamo [festeggiare] perchè dell’ anno 1526 ci fu tolta per avere da una banda l’arme della Chasa di vostra illustrissima’; Parte, 706, no. 149.

²⁰² ‘Intendiamo bene da più persone che detti huomini avanti l’anno 1526 sollevano havere detta bandiera con l’arme di. V. eccellenza et della Parte, con la quale intervenivano nelle armeggerie in alcune feste che si facevano per la Città.’ Parte, 706, no. 148. The use of the date 1526 in both these cases is curious. These men may simply have meant 1527, but one notes that the Medici government fell fairly early in 1527 (s.f.), May 16, and before the new year (March 25) there was growing opposition in the city, and within the ruling group itself, making Medici control uncertain. Stephens, *The Fall*, 195ff.

²⁰³ Arditì, 161; Ricci, 228; Lapini, 195-6. See also Polizzotto, *Children of the Promise*, 237. There is no real evidence to support Polizzotto’s wider argument, however, that the *potenze* were pitted against the youth confraternities, or supplanted them after 1532 in terms of Medici support, or indeed that they set out to parody everything these religious confraternities held dear; *Ibid.*, 205-9. For the youth confraternities in 1545, see Coppi, ed., *Cronaca*, 51-3.

²⁰⁴ ‘In questa festa di S. Giovanni si faranno le processioni con qualche devota representatione oltre al solito, sono stato avertito che si operi et facci in modo che le non sieno impeditè nè intramezate o rotte da popoli, et massime da queste *Potenzie*, le quali se si intermessino in questo atto causerebbono grandissima confusione et non si potrebbe condurre la festa a gl’ fine che è ordinata’. Otto, 2263, f. 294r.

its laurel wreath. In its hand it held a chalice from which, in place of the customary child as sacrament, rose a crown, representing the continuation of this sacred genealogy in the essence (*genio*) of the newborn Medici prince.²⁰⁵ In effect, the men of the Graticola, equally familiar with the gospel of St Matthew, paralleled their own lineage of 14 kings with this Medicean procession of empire. Moreover, the brigade placed the portraits of its 14 kings directly *above* the “14 arms of most noble Florentine houses, and in the middle the arms of His Highness”. In other words, the men of the Graticola pitted a genealogy of their kingdom against the cult of patrilineal antiquity from which the nobility drew much of its sense of entitlement. The arms of the Medici, effectively the 15th ensign, were not really part of that inversional visual rhetoric. Instead, and like other *potenze*, the Graticola positioned the prince as the figure underwriting the claims it made for its kingdom: the brigade interspersed the 14 portraits of its kings with imperial, royal and ducal arms, while the baldachin above the throne of the incumbent king carried portraits of a succession of Medici patrons – named as Cardinal Giovanni de’ Medici, Grand [sic] Duke Alessandro, Grand Duke Cosimo, Grand Duke Francesco, and Don Pietro, Francesco’s brother in the old Medici palace.²⁰⁶ In the woodcut it later produced for the frontispiece of its pamphlet, the Graticola seems to have been deliberately circumspect about depicting its own king enthroned on what, after all, was, the Medici ancestral *piazza*, leaving the dais unoccupied and showing the tightrope-walking put on during the last day of its festivities (fig. 12). Nonetheless, this processional, visual dialogue between the brigade and the prince was of a piece with the compact the Graticola, again like other *potenze*, imagined in the written performance of supplication. “Your house in its moments of great happiness customarily recognises this kingdom with some kindly gift rather than a tribute”, King Simone Caluri told Duke Francesco, reminding him that his father, Cosimo I, who was “born a vassal of our kingdom ... never abandoned this most happy kingdom of his birth, but instead helped it with advice and aid with all his wisdom and force, as we find in the annals of our ancestors”. He went on to say that since Francesco was the “successor of the *virtù* and of the empire, he must be successor of the love and affection towards this our dominion, and likewise the great son, born to succeed in the great dominion, should again succeed in his affection towards us”.²⁰⁷

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²⁰⁵ Marucelli, *Ordine della Compagnia*, unpag.

²⁰⁶ Paganone, *Ordini, feste, et pompe*, f. 4r-v. In 1588, the Nespola, and no doubt other brigades, also placed ‘alquanti quadri di pittura di ritrati naturali di personaggi di Casa Medici’ in the frieze on its triumphal arch at the foot of the Ponte Vecchio; BRF, *Piccolo diario*, f. 123. Like the *potenza* of the Guelfa, and other brigades, the Graticola flag also carried the arms of the Medici, as did that of the Covone; Paganone, *Ordini, feste, et pompe*, ff. 3r, 5v.

²⁰⁷ Del Badia, ‘Lettera e supplica’, 26.

Did the dialogue between artisans and prince imagined in petition and ritual inform their rapport beyond the festive moment? Not always. In March 1523, the plague that had first entered the city late the previous year returned in force, especially in the Santa Lucia sul Prato district. As textile work ground to a halt and, as Giovanni Cambi said, the “majority of citizens and merchants fled to their villas since they were afraid of the *plebe*”, Giulio de’ Medici’s government quarantined both sick and healthy, inflaming artisans to protest that they were now dying of hunger as well as disease.²⁰⁸ For these reasons a special “outskirts” police chief was created and, as Bartolomeo Cerretani noted in his diary, this official “was sent to the emperor of the Prato and certain other bosses of those weavers, and they were seriously threatened, because everywhere you looked the *plebe* had become swollen up with anger”.²⁰⁹ While this example illustrates how artisan kings could be recognised from above as representing everyday communities, it also suggests that they were seen as conduits through which plebeian Florence might be disciplined. Yet the circumstances in 1523 were extreme and, according to the well-informed and well-connected Cerretani, the regime’s response to the plague was a case of botched crisis management. Just as often, perhaps far more often, the agendas that artisans pursued in festive time also shaped everyday transactions. In the textile industry, for example, the government tried repeatedly, though with limited success, to protect weavers from their employers, increasingly their creditors, who wanted to pay them in kind and strip them of any independence.²¹⁰ One finds, for example, silk weavers in the early 17th century lobbying Ferdinando II to prevent the concentration of ownership of looms in the hands of a few masters, and to force merchants either to continue paying them a living family wage when they were unable to provide work or to allow weavers to “help themselves with their own *virtù*”, that is to produce cloth for themselves. “The Lord Grand Duke does not keep servants or slaves whom he does not pay for their effort or *virtù* – and he is our boss,” the weavers said, adding that the merchants attitude was harmful to the “public good”.²¹¹ How common such exchanges were is as yet unknown. Labour relations in the duchy remains to be systematically investigated, as do wider patterns of social bargaining, which a prosopographical approach to the disputes and petitions that pack the archives of duchy’s many magistracies might illuminate. Nonetheless, even in a study of limited archival scope the sources readily yield cases in which *potenze* men translated the kinds of claims they made in festive time – about the privileges and autonomies of the “poor”, the obligations of the powerful, and the exemplary and mediating role of the prince – into a quotidian politics of negotiation.

When the wool weavers of San Barnaba and the Camaldoli joined forces in 1576 to form the confraternity of San Giovanni Evangelista, this was the result of their direct petition to Duke

²⁰⁸ Cambi, ‘Istorie’, in *Delizie*, 22, 228.

²⁰⁹ Cerretani, *Ricordi*, 424.

²¹⁰ Rolova, ‘La Manifattura’; Malanima, *La decadenza*, 121-6.

²¹¹ Quoted in Lombardi, *Povert  maschile*, 111. In this 1628 dispute, the weavers were successful in limiting the number of looms held by any one master, but not on becoming independent of merchants.

Francesco, a supplication later rehearsed in their foundational document under the names of the six men who established the confraternity, including Camaldoli *potenza* viceroy Domenico Zaghi. Indeed the confraternity's statute writer, Biliemme *potenza* secretary Cosimo Pieralli, also named in this document, may well have been the man who articulated his brothers' desires to the prince. The weavers told Francesco that they had

made representations over and over again since 1517 to found a Company in order to gather together on feast days ... and to manage some of the income of our own effort and sweat... And since that had been conceded to the other *Sottoposti* of the University of the Wool Guild, such as Woolbeaters, Purgers, Dyers and Trimmers, it should all the more be the case for us, seeing that since 1530 due to the grace and Providence of the great God this enterprising Florentine state had come under the just and happy Empire of the Most Serene House of the Medici, from which, as from the Trojan Horse, Gentlemen, Lords, and Princes of such great Bounty, Good Religion and Magnanimity of Spirit have come forth for Hundreds of Years. And not only have they permitted such good works to be carried out, but with their own money have erected and endowed Temples, aided other places of piety and infinite numbers of miserable persons – among others, the Most Serene Lord Cosimo Duke of Tuscany of Immortal Memory and Lord Don Francesco the successor of that house who is no less in Valour or Bounty.²¹²

In effect, the wool weavers set out a story that opposed their legitimate desire to incorporate and to provide themselves with basic social insurance against a history of resistance. Implicitly one source of resistance had come from the merchants of the Wool Guild, for whom artisan corporations had never been a welcome proposition. Indeed an anxious guild moved shortly afterwards to amend the statutes of their subordinates: firstly to limit the confraternity's powers, so that it could not force weavers to join or make decisions that contravened guild rules; and secondly to ensure that when it came to the moral instruction of new members, it could not teach "against the honour of God, His Most Serene Highness, or with prejudice against the Guild or its members".²¹³ In the middle the weavers placed the prince, bouncing back the rhetoric of princely virtue, so much part of Medici self-fashioning, at the duke, and furthermore framing their ideal patron in highly politicised terms.

²¹² 'Havendo fatto officio più e più volte al 1517 in qua di fondare una compagnia per ritrovarci alle volte insieme nei giorni festivi ... e volendo noi parimente ordinare alcune entrate delle nostre proprie fatiche e sudori ... quanto che era cio stato concesso ad altri sottoposti all' alma università dell' Arte della Lana, come a Battilani, Purgatori, [2r] Tintori e Cimatori e che dovesse ancora a noi tanto più succedere al meno dal 1530 in qua' quanto che per gratia e Providenza del grande Iddio questo ben avventurato stato Fiorentino e' venuto sotto il giusto e felice Imperio della Serenissima Casa de Medici, della quale, come del Cavallo Troiano sono da centinara [sic] d'anni in qua usciti Gentilhuomini, Signori, e Principe di così gran bontà, giusta religione e magnanimità d'Animo, che non solo hanno permesso farsi così buon' opere ma con i proprii loro denari hanno ancora eretti e dotati tempii, e sovvenuti altri luoghi pii, et infinte miserabile persone, et fra gli' altri quella immortal memoria del Serenissimo Signor Cosmio Gran Duca di Toscana e del Serenissimo Signor Don Francesco Successore di quella non meno di Valore e Bontà'. Capitoli, 799, ff. 1v-2v.

²¹³ 'Al capitolo 13 de' Novitii agguinsono: non intendendo però delle cose si trattassino contro l'honor di Dio ne di Alt Serenissima nè in preiuditio della dett' Arte et sua membri'; *Ibid*, f. 41r.

The image of the munificent Medici emerging from the Trojan horse not only spoke to the myth of the prince as simultaneously head of the social order and outside of it – a kind of peace-bringing *podestà* – it presented the Medici as conquerors who had outwitted the republic, establishing a monarchy to which the weavers were loyal and that, in contrast to the republic, should now permit them to form their craft corporation.

As discussed in Chapter One, Zaghi and Pieralli were not the only *potenze* officials who can be identified as mediating figures. We also find in the communal records of Campi that the *contado* emperor elected in 1533, Piero Bargioni, in the same year was pushing through legislation to protect the working conditions of the commune’s messenger in the face of new demands from Florence as Duke Alessandro moved to re-establish a *contado* militia.²¹⁴ However, the best documented case we have of *potenze* men translating festive processes into the non-festive world is furnished by Bargioni’s city counterparts, the emperors at Sant Lucia sul Prato – and here the stakes were much higher.

Santa Lucia had always been owned by the Benedictine Umiliati, based in the neighbouring church of Ognissanti, but in 1548 it was sold to a chapter of Augustinian canons known as the Scopetini. However, since Santa Lucia was a sub-parish to Ognissanti, the cure of souls, 4,000 or more, was deemed to remain with the Umiliati, though they held the sale of the church cancelled their obligation to maintain priests there.²¹⁵ A confused jurisdictional quarrel about who administered the sacraments broke out – an “enormous scandal” at Easter of 1549²¹⁶ – that for the parishioners of Santa Lucia was about more than the practical problem of receiving the sacraments. They did not want to have to go to Ognissanti. Regardless of who performed the sacerdotal function, it was urgent that the sacred power not be removed from Santa Lucia, the physical and ritual locus of both parish community and the empire.

Government functionary Pierone was described as “our Pierone” by Pierfrancesco Riccio when he was elected emperor in 1545 – but if he was the Palazzo’s man in the Prato, he was also the Prato’s man in the Palazzo. In 1551, he became the first chief procurator in what would turn out to be a struggle for the survival of the parish church. In a letter to Cosimo I, “Pierone, servant of the ducal palace,” argued that the Umiliati “have continually resisted the decision that the cure of the parish must take place in its usual, and ancient, church of Santa Lucia.” The parishioners, he said,

²¹⁴ Bargioni sought a 2 lire a month pay rise and an understanding that the messenger’s first duty was to the *podestà* on local issues rather than to the new *commissari* sent out from the city. Statuti, 115, f. 25v.

²¹⁵ The Padri Umiliati had been in this area since the 13th century, originally in Santa Lucia and then in Ognissanti, which they built, from 1256. The Scopetini were so called as they had been based in San Donato a Scopeto south of Florence, destroyed during the 1529-30 siege. For the storyline that follows, I have drawn on the summary in Aranci, *Formazione religiosa*, 137-138, and a digest compiled by the confraternity of Santa Lucia in 1601; ASF, CRS, 1770, Part A, ff. 341r-344r. The Santa Lucians’ claim of 4,000 was made in the 1550s or 1560s; a figure of 4,550 appears in a 1587 estimate of Florentine parish numbers. *Ibid.*, f. 633; ASF, Miscellanea medicea, 299, no. 2, unpag.

²¹⁶ Coppi, ed., *Cronaca*, 105.

had been forced to repeatedly appeal to the archbishop – “and so time and money have been thrown away, with [the Umiliati] spending strongly that which they never earned against those who do not have the bread to live; and because of this great need Your Most Illustrious Lordship, patron of this place, is petitioned to order whomsoever he likes to undertake the cure of the people in that Church”.²¹⁷

Despite Cosimo’s intervention, jurisdictional ambiguities remained unresolved, since Santa Lucians were told they could still go to Ognissanti and the Scopetini, therefore, did not feel obliged to supply, as parishioners saw it, adequate pastoral care. The issues smouldered and then magnified dramatically when, in 1575, the Scopetini were granted a second church in Florence, San Iacopo sopr’Arno. They proceeded to abandon Santa Lucia, taking the church bells with them and planning to deconsecrate the building.

In March, 1579, several months after the Scopetini had last come to celebrate mass, parishioners, after first supplicating Duke Francesco, laid out their case to the archbishop.²¹⁸ By this time it was the resurgent parish confraternity leading the protest, future Prato emperor Alessandro Biliotti being one of the presiding captains. Like Pierone before him, Alessandro would soon be chief procurator himself, and it is likely that one of the current procurators and confraternal officials was the emperor elected in 1577.²¹⁹ The brothers said the parish church should be “released from the Scopetini with the powers that they exercised there returning to the church, with the authority the church has always had.”²²⁰ Primacy, they implied, ultimately inhered to the building itself, the material embodiment of the lay community of the faithful, living and dead: the brothers claimed that the parish had existed for 550 years, and that “more than one hundred thousand bodies are buried in the church”. Among the aggrieved dead were those who, 200 years previously, had paid for the ‘stolen’ bells, “so they could ring the said bells for all the needs of the

²¹⁷ ‘Pierone donzello del ducale palazzo ... per diversi giuditi essendosi venuto a sententia o giudicato il popolo dovere essere curato nella sua solita et antiqua chiesa di Santa Lucia di frati di Ognissanti, sempre hanno fatto resistenza a tali difinitioni ... et così il tempo et i danari a tempo si vengano a gittar via, spendendo eglino gagliardamente quello gia mai guadagnorno contro a chi non ha pane da vivere; però fa di bisogno, et di tanto, si supplica che Vostra Illustrissima Signoria come patrona di tal loco per compera ordini a chi li piace che in essa chiesa sia curato il popolo’. ASF, CRS, 1770, Part A, ff. 357v-358r

²¹⁸ The company had petitioned the duke seven months earlier, in September 1578, complaining that the Scopetini had, at that point, not performed mass for four months. *Ibid.*, f. 649r.

²¹⁹ The 1577 emperor used only his baptismal name in the *potenze* sources, though, given the pattern, it was probably the silk weaver Vincenzo Grazzini, confraternal provisioner and one of four procurators in 1579, as well as one of four men assigned to rewrite Santa Lucia’s statutes in 1582. Like Biliotti, Grazzini was also, until 1588, a procurator of the citywide silk-weavers confraternity, and he was elected to revise that corporation’s statutes in 1587. Depos., 984, no. 53; CRS, 1769, no.1, unpag; CRS, 677, no. 6, ff. 7r, 15r.

²²⁰ ‘Et avendo detti frati fatto forza volere fare profanare detta chiesa e non lla volendo ufiziare preghiamo ... sia relassata da detti frati scopetini chon quelle facultà le quale vi provorono appartenente in deta chiesa et anchora chon quelle alturità che sempre auto detta chiesa’. CRS, 1770, Part A, unpag., between ff. 651 and 652

confraternity and the parish.”²²¹ Nor, again, should Santa Lucians have to go to Ognissanti. Indeed the battle on that front had taken a new turn. In 1554, the dwindling, soon to be defunct, Umiliati had also given up Ognissanti, this time to the Observant Franciscans, who attracted a major infusion of elite patronage. Sometime before 1571 the confraternity argued that the single priest that the Franciscans maintained for Santa Lucia (though not at the church) was inadequate and, as had Pierone, they framed the entire issue as an attack on the legitimate rights of those least able to defend themselves. “The friars find themselves having to confess a great part of the nobility of Florence and cannot attend to the great multitude of souls in this parish,” they said. Santa Lucia contained many “very poor people, and the wives of the parishioners are wretched and in rags, and when they go to the church of Ognissanti they can only confess with very great difficulty.”²²²

The audacious bid to have the Scopetini stripped of ‘their’ property in 1579 failed. As a ducal secretary bluntly put it, “the church belongs to the friars, not the confraternity.”²²³ But the Santa Lucians won a considerable victory nonetheless. The episcopal court acknowledged the integrity of the parish neighbourhood and the responsibilities of the Scopetini: the church was saved, the bells returned and the canons instructed to maintain an adequate presence. All the appeals and counter-appeals that followed were led by Biliotti, first elected procurator in 1585. These skirmishes did nothing except strengthen the parishioners’ position. In 1592 the Scopetini were ordered to keep at least two priests at Santa Lucia. At the turn of the century, Alessandro was still fighting, though unsuccessfully, to have the canons themselves dragged back from San Iacopo sopr’Arno.

The fight for Santa Lucia helps to explain the almost unique irruption of *potenze* alter egos into confraternal statute. In 1582, the Holy Sacrament of Santa Lucia awkwardly included “one boss of the district, that is, an Emperor” alongside the usual confraternal offices, preambled with references to the fight with the Scopetini.²²⁴ Arguably, it was the already decades-long struggle for the church that led these men to identify their existence as officials and subjects of a festive kingdom so closely with their lives as confraternal brothers and parishioners – in other words, to cross a divide that, officially, was meant to stay impermeable. Arguably, too, the struggle for the church was one factor behind the placing of an imperial tombstone there in 1594: the vaunting of an emperor victorious against his enemies in a stone fight resonated with the more or less successful battle for the parish and its parishioners. In any event, in asserting the local, and universal, rights of the

²²¹ ‘Seppellitori in detta chiesa più di ciento milia corppi’; ‘per potere sonare dette campane a tutti e bisogni della compagnia e del popolo’. *Ibid.*

²²² ‘Perchè detti frati si ritrovono occupati nele co(n)fessione d’ avere una gran parte della nobilità di Firenze no[n] posono sovenire a sì gran moltudine d’ anime ... el popolo di Santa lLucia sono persone poverissime, e le don[n]e di detti popolani sono meschine e malvestite, e quando vano ala c[h]iesa d’Ungnisanti con grandissima dificu[l]tà si posono co(n)fesare’. CRS, 1770, Part A, f. 633r. Ognissanti became the principal seat of the Observants in Florence; their most precious relic, the cowl of St Francis, was transferred there in 1571. The Umiliati were suppressed the same year. Richa, *Notizie istoriche*, 4, 260-92.

²²³ ‘La chiesa e de’ frati et non della compagnia’. *Ibid.*, f. 649r (1578).

²²⁴ ‘Uno capo di paese, cioè Imperatore’. CRS, 1769, no.1, capitolo 1. These statutes were probably written either by the incumbent emperor or his recent predecessor.

community of the 'poor' and the representative role of its 'government', the Santa Lucians' fight for the parish was considerably less than a stone's throw away from their festive declarations of sovereignty.

3. Contract and Crisis: The Festivities of 1577

For Duke Francesco de' Medici, the festivities of 1577, which furnish so many of the sources for the *potenze*, were not as easily negotiated as the kind of structural analysis set out above perhaps inevitably suggests. Instead they were a crucible of political, social and economic pressures that had been building up since the death of Cosimo I three years earlier. In the final section of this chapter I want to bind these celebrations to their context in order to add weight and texture to my reading of the 16th-century festive stage as an arena of dialogue and transaction, of contingency, rather than one in which the Medici were the sole authors of a script in which the actors articulated little else but princely power. Artisan groups may have offered their arms in the service of the prince, but the events of 1577 reveal that the prince understood that support as conditional. Indeed for Duke Francesco the opportunities for him that the *potenze* represented that year were almost outweighed by the perceived dangers.

In the first place, at the moment of this dynastic birth, May 20, Francesco's regime was still rounding up the alleged members of an explicitly republican conspiracy to assassinate him. Two weeks before, on May 6, Ristoro Machiavelli and Cosimo Rinieri had been beheaded on a public stage in Piazza San Apollinare behind the Palazzo Vecchio, their heads then displayed on wooden spikes.²²⁵ The pair were the latest, though not the last, men to be executed for their part in a plot hatched by Orazio Pucci, whose father, Pandolfo, had been executed in 1560 for conspiring to murder Cosimo I. When Orazio's plans were uncovered in 1575, he was caught and hanged from the windows of the Bargello. Over the next two years, 22 men from old and aristocratic Florentine families were implicated, rightly or wrongly.²²⁶ As contemporaries noted, all of the alleged conspirators were young men, *giovani*, and arguably there was a generational factor fuelling their republicanism. Access to the honours of the highest offices was limited, since appointment to the Council and Senate that had been set up in 1532 was for life; the dukes personally chose their

²²⁵ Ricci, 212; Arditì, 150-1; Lapini, 194.

²²⁶ According to Arditì, Orazio's last words were 'Non potevo vivere senza liberarmi': Arditì, 63-4; see also Ricci, 170. As festivities were winding down, in August, Antonio Altoviti was condemned, shown clemency but then beheaded as his exile began in Volterra. The next beheading in Florence was of Camillo Martelli on January 14, 1578: Ricci, 231, 236; Arditì, 151, 164. For the Pucci plots, see Diaz, *Il granducato*, 231-3; Berner, 'Florentine Society'.

successors as well as many of the men for key offices. Moreover Cosimo I had systematically undermined the executive power of the magistracies by colonising them with a layer of permanent secretaries, drawn from outside the old elite and thus entirely dependent on the prince.²²⁷ The threat posed by Pucci's noble youth should not to be overestimated, yet they were relentlessly pursued by Duke Francesco. As Arditì put it on May 11, 1577, after the names of several more alleged conspirators – these already dead – were posted in the Mercato Nuovo, the duke “remained greatly suspicious”, surrounding himself with a robust guard whenever he left the city for the villa under construction at Pratolino, and taking artillery with him.²²⁸

In the second place, the beginning of Francesco's reign, in 1574, coincided with the start of a severe financial crisis – partly as a result of the banks having overextended credit during the 1560s but exacerbated by the regime's policies on currency, which encouraged a flight of gold from Tuscany. Despite the regime's attempts to inject credit into the market, the Florentine economy suffered a series of liquidity shocks, which claimed several small banks and meant that the rest, including the De' Ricci bank, the largest in Florence and administrator of the ducal treasury, were increasingly paying with “cheques” (*polizze di banco*), which depositors found almost impossible to cash.²²⁹ Textile merchants were particularly badly struck, and so immediately were their labourers and the small masters, such as weavers, who were normally paid on Saturdays. “Much shouting and lamenting could be heard across the city of Florence concerning the banks, which were only paying in ink,” wrote Arditì on one Saturday in September 1576, as the situation deteriorated further. “And since the supervisors of the workshops were unable to get money to pay the masters, nothing was heard except lamenting among the artisans.”²³⁰ Beyond the banking crisis itself, the common perception of the duke was as greedy and indifferent, whose mediation in this precarious economic climate – further heightened by the rising price of grain – was piecemeal if not non-existent. The Venetian ambassador reported that Francesco hoarded surpluses, or, as Arditì put it, he had “no other purpose except gathering treasure, not caring for either his *popoli, plebe* or peasants”.²³¹ Francesco was attacked directly, but criticism was often thrown at his officials – a displacement inspired by caution but one that also served to underscore that a desired ideal of kingship had been subverted.²³² “Among the artisans you could not defend yourself, since people were not heard other than those named as friends of the petty despots and secretaries of the three

²²⁷ Litchfield, *Emergence*, ch. 4.

²²⁸ Arditì, 153.

²²⁹ Cippola, *Money*, ch. 6. The government regulated the biggest private banks, the Capponi, Strozzi and Carnesecchi, and bailed out the Ricci bank in 1594; but by the early 17th century the main state bank was in effect the public Monte di Pietà, also by far the most attractive option for small depositors. See Goldthwaite, *The Economy*, 468ff; Menning, *Charity and State*, esp. ch. 5.

²³⁰ Arditì, 123; see also *Ibid.*, 26, 143.

²³¹ Cippola, *Money*, 110; Arditì, 182, and on grain, 18, 51.

²³² Criticising officials instead of the ruler was a common petitional ploy – even used, in the case of Naples in 1647-8, during the initial stages of a revolt in order to present demands to the sovereign himself; Nubola, ‘Supplications’.

head brothers [the Medici],” said Arditi. Ricci, meanwhile, quoted approvingly the graffiti found on the tomb of Francesco’s first secretary a few days after his death: “‘Here lies the ruthless and impious [Bartolomeo] Concino, who by ruining others set himself up; he was full of fraud and avarice, he sold grace even though it was divine’”.²³³ *Grazie*, supra-judicial mercies granted by an absolute authority, were the gift of the divinely mandated prince. Talking about conditions for peasants press ganged to labour at Francesco’s Pratolino villa, Arditi said: “If [the duke] had seen this with his own eyes it would have been impossible that he could allow such impiety and injustice by his ministers”.²³⁴ Even at Francesco’s funeral in 1587, Ricci reported that one orator spoke “most elegantly, although with brevity and with blame for the ministers that used to circumvent the dead grand duke, indulging beyond duty his natural inclination to frugality and parsimony”.²³⁵

For Francesco, then, the birth of a son became an unusually urgent moment of dynastic affirmation, particularly since the duchess, Giovanna of Austria, had until this point produced six daughters. Yet his appeal to ritual forms for a display of support from a loyal ‘plebeian army’ came at the same moment in which his princely capital was substantially depleted. At one point in September 1576, Francesco had fled the city for Poggio a Caiano, surrounded by troops of the *bande*, after artisans had gone unpaid the day before.²³⁶ In February 1577, when more financiers went bust, including one failure that “had burnt almost all the wool merchants in Florence, and badly”, the prince made his first move to rebuild relations with artisan Florence.²³⁷ On Fat Thursday, February 17, he toured the Biliemme and Camaldoli areas, handing out money to cash-strapped weavers. These were the same men who a year earlier had successfully petitioned him to create a cross-city craft confraternity, inspired in part by the financial crisis, “our common misery” as they put it.²³⁸ Three days later, on Carnival Sunday, the weavers of both districts, no doubt in conversation with ducal authorities, mobilised festive scripts and martialled themselves on Piazza Santa Maria Novella, beating drums and bearing fake weapons, “poles without iron”, as they staged a review, “moving in order four per row, as do mercenary combat troops”.²³⁹

When it came to the birth of an heir, artisans themselves, in pursuit of a wider renewal of contracts, grasped the initiative. Back in 1575, at the false rumour of a male birth, men had spontaneously rushed on to the Piazza and shopkeepers had locked up their businesses, “expecting and fearing the fury of the *plebe*... that they would put the shops to the sack”.²⁴⁰ Now, in May 1577, artisans mobilised once again to take the city across the threshold of festive time, electing

²³³ Arditi, 50 (and see also 3, 67); Ricci, 239-40. On Concino, see also Arditi, 173-4. Ricci took a similar view at the death of the secretary of the Otto, Lorenzo Corboli, also in 1587, Ricci, 489-90.

²³⁴ Arditi, 206. See also Butters ‘Pressed Labour and Pratolino’.

²³⁵ Ricci, 510.

²³⁶ Arditi, 123.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

²³⁸ Capitoli, 799, f. 2r.

²³⁹ Arditi, 143. I note that Piazza Santa Maria Novella was very close to where the weavers would buy their oratory in 1579, at the top of via della Scala.

²⁴⁰ Arditi, 42; Ricci, 147-8.

kings and parading their banners several days before the 20th in feverish anticipation of an heir. When the news was shouted from the Palace windows and the Woolbeaters flooded the Piazza, at the same time other groups sacked the Mercato Vecchio for its food and set fire to the public *strappata* (rope torture device) in Borgo San Lorenzo.²⁴¹ More men were repelled with force by police after “running furiously with great tumult to the debtors’ jail in order to break in and let all the prisoners out”, anticipating, indeed attempting to take into their own hands, another classic ducal gesture at dynastic celebrations, the release of a discrete number of indebted prisoners.²⁴² As these economic pressures and lower-class grievances exploded onto the festive stage, Francesco’s regime never assumed a solid link between supplicatory and ritual poetics on one hand and true sentiments or intentions on the other. On the same day, the Biliemme processed with drums through its territory and passed close to the ducal fortress, the Fortezza da Basso, soldiers on the ramparts opened fire, killing one boy and injuring another.²⁴³ On the next day, May 21, the duke did liberate indebted prisoners from the Stinche, 44 of them, and eight days later, inundated by supplications, he cancelled all debts from fines of up to 25 *scudi* from the beginning of his reign.²⁴⁴ Cash, as we have seen, was thrown from the Palazzo and wine was supplied in the Piazza; the *potenze* called on the prince to remember his obligations and duly received their gifts. So, too, did 500 peasants from the Pratolino building site, who, after asking the duke for a “sign of goodwill, so that they might be recognised by everyone as among his infinite servants and might finish off the building work with good cheer”, came on to the Piazza with their oxen and mules on the night of the 21st, brandishing work tools and lighting a bonfire with wood they had brought into the city.²⁴⁵ But was it enough? Was this ritualisation of contract, a festive note of promise, credible, or was it more likely to be seen as something that would turn out to be worthless ink when artisans tried to draw against it tomorrow?

Lower-class discontent was only one half of the problem. If Francesco never saw the words or deeds of men so adept at manipulating festive tropes as transparent, neither was he left with an easy strategy for reading noble patronage. As we have seen, the duke presented himself as the mediator of class tensions, judiciously sanctioning ritual redistributions, but at the same time he became the monumental exemplar of the noble citizen in a theatre of carnivalesque patronage that took place

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 215-17; Arditi, 154.

²⁴² ‘Il popolo corse a furore con gran tumulto alle stince per romperle, et cavarne tutti i prgioni che vi erano, ma il gran duca comandò che le fussino guardate e difese dalla famiglia dell’ bargello, si che il popolo non vi entrassi, perchè voleva cha a lui solo si aspettassi il liberare e’ prigionieri et non al popolo, et così fu fatto, imperochè i birri dell Bargello ributtorno gagliardamente l’impeto dell’ popolo.’ BNF, FP, II.I.313, f. 235v.

²⁴³ Ricci, 218.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 227; Cantini, *Legislazione*, 8, 339-41.

²⁴⁵ Ricci, 221; The Pratolino workers said they were supplicating for ‘qualche [donativi –scored out] segno di bene volentia, acciò possino essere conosciuti da ciascuno nel numero de’ sua infini servi et conseguire la sua muraglia allegramente’. Depos. 984, ins. 68; and 67 for the payment of 88 scudi. The artisans of the ducal *casino*, his laboratory on via Larga, received 85 scudi: *Ibid.*, ins. 68.

throughout the city. It needs to be stressed that social relations on those local stages were not necessarily antagonistic; indeed, the festive paradigm could elicit the kinds of privileged exchanges that might build or consolidate ties between nobles and artisans. In the same way as the peasants from Pratolino lit a bonfire in front of the ducal palace, *potenze* made fires across their kingdoms, outside the homes of important ‘subjects’ or at the “houses of gentlemen who sit on some magistracy”.²⁴⁶ In 1545, Luigi Ridolfi, whose palace was in via Maggio, intended to have “a fire in favour of the Nespola, with the customary love that he shows”.²⁴⁷ Ahead of the same festivities, the king of the Biliemme went to Poggio a Caiano and petitioned Cosimo I “to make a fire one evening in front of the house of Pierino Tornabuoni who stays in via della Stufa in the Realm of the Graticola, without prejudicing [the rights of] the king of that Graticola”.²⁴⁸ It was a request that Tornabuoni, a neighbour, even if one a short distance beyond the Biliemme’s borders, readily consented to. The men of the Nespola, as Ricci reveals in 1588, not only received gifts from Ferdinando I as he passed between the Palazzo Vecchio and Pitti, but “they had more from the Guicciardini and other neighbours”.²⁴⁹ There is even evidence to suggest that a few patrons and neighbours, not aristocrats but wealthy men nonetheless, sometimes took active roles in *potenze* brigades. In 1577, a certain Ser Umido, the man who had paid for reconstruction of the parish church of San Piero Gattolini some years earlier, played the role of field marshal for the king of the Gatta.²⁵⁰ When it came to official oversight of the *potenze*, meanwhile, the regime recognised that local notables might wield special influence. The five men deputised by the Otto di Pratica in 1545 to mind the *armeggerie* brigades appear to have been chosen with the proximity of their homes to the territories of their charges in mind; while the deal brokered in 1577 between the Nespola and Nebbia took place “with the intervention of Andrea Pitti, one of the magistrates” of the Parte – not one of the two magistrates originally delegated for *potenze* business but from a noble and major Santo Spirito lineage who lived in or close to Nespola territory.²⁵¹ On the face of it, the men in

²⁴⁶ Lapini, 195. The Graticola said that on the evening of May 20 ‘per il Regno si fece molti fuochi’. Paganone, *Ordini, feste, et pompe*, f. 2r. See also Ciappelli, *Carnevale*, 129f.

²⁴⁷ ‘Et messer Luigi Ridolfi con la sua solita amorevolezza per la parte sua, et di fuoco in favore la Nespola.’ MDP, 376, f. 168r-v. (Riccio to Lorenzo Pagni, May 7, 1545); for Ridolfi’s palace, DG, 3570, ff. 494r-495v (1534).

²⁴⁸ ‘La M[ae]s[t]à del Re di Biliemme è stata qua et ha domandato a sua ecc[ellentia] di poter fare li fuochi una sera et festeggiare avanti alla casa di Pierino Tornabuoni che sta nella via della Stufa nel Reame della Graticola senza prudicio però del Re d’essa Graticola.’ MDP, 1171, f. 405. (Marzio Marzi to Pierfrancesco Riccio, June 12, 1545. Marzi continues that while Tornabuoni had agreed, the Graticola had to give its consent, as well as Bastiano Bindi, the chancellor of the Otto di Guardia.

²⁴⁹ Ricci, 519.

²⁵⁰ The ‘illustre Signor Umido’ announced the procession of his king to the Graticola’s party on May 30; Paganone, *Ordini, feste, et pompe*, f. 5v. Richa calls him Giovanni detto Serumido; Richa, *Notizie storiche*, 10, 117. The church, which he rebuilt after it had been wrecked by Cosimo I’s fortification work in the 1540s, was widely known by the 1570s as the ‘chiesa di Ser Umido’; Arditi, 168.

²⁵¹ For 1545: Lorenzo Stecchuti (Prato) lived in Piazza Vecchia di Madonna (Piazza all’ Unità Italiana) in 1551; BNF, FP, II. I. 120, f. 220v. Francesco Zati (Mela) was censused in 1551 as

most of these examples were friends of the Medici, or servants of their regime, but the question facing Francesco in 1577 was what lurked beneath the carnival mask, whether similar ‘imitations’ of princely patronage by other nobles might signify a subversive appropriation of it – and whether artisans might be receptive to such overtures.

In its decree of June 18, the Otto di Guardia banned outsiders from getting mixed up with *potenze*, over brawls or for any other reason “that might stir up a tumult”, or from supplying brigades with arms or stones and from bearing weapons themselves.²⁵² The immediate prompt for the Otto’s warning was the involvement of “many born nobles” in the city centre clashes noted earlier between the Caroccio, Diamante and Pecora, but behind the edict also lay a far more disturbing incident that had taken place weeks before. On the first day of festivities, while Pietro de’ Medici was putting on a feast on the via Larga, a certain Luigi della Stufa, a knight of Santo Stefano, laid on bread, wine and cheese a few steps away on Piazza San Lorenzo, where his family’s palace was located and in fact noted by the Graticola as the landmark at one end of its wooden *loggia*.²⁵³ “On which *piazza*,” said Ricci, “because it was close by, gathered the Graticola, the Covone and above all the king of the Biliemme”.²⁵⁴ Two days later, on May 22, when the Graticola and Macine squared off over the possession of the Medici palace, Ricci describes how, after police stepped in to break up the fight, the two sides put aside their quarrel immediately and turned on the son of the *bargello*. Without the intervention of Della Stufa, who was “not completely without authority among those men of the *potenze*”, they would have killed the son of the *bargello* and others.²⁵⁵ However, after gaining an audience with Francesco to explain what had happened, Della Stufa was told he should not have interfered. He fasted for a day, then went to the territory of the Biliemme and called, “Out soldiers, we must go to the Piazza and shout *palle palle* until the Grand Duke pardons us”. With 400 men in tow, Della Stufa went to San Lorenzo, where he had a mass sung, then returned to his palace and threw them muskets and money from the windows. Armed himself, he began to lead the *potenza* towards the Palazzo, striking down a servant of the first secretary Concino and fighting with others nobles and a soldier until all were left wounded, Della Stufa mortally. The Biliemme at this point abandoned him. Finally, Della Stufa

living in via Ghibellina on the corner of via Buonfanti (via dei Pepi): *Ibid.*, f. 140r; DG, 3594, ff. 23r-24v (1534); Giovanni de’ Rossi (Monteloro) was in via fra Fossi; BNF, FP, II. I. 120, f. 131r. I have been unable to locate Giorgio Ugolini (Nespola) or Baccio Gherardini (Città Rossa), but the Ugolini ancestral *gonafalone* was Sferza and several households can be located there in 1551: *Ibid.* ff. 102r, 103v, 107r, 109r; Pesman-Cooper, ‘The Florentine Ruling Group’, 144. In 1577, a ducal secretary passed from the Parte, ‘l’incluse capitulationi a V.A.S. fatte con l’intervento d’ Andrea Pitti uno del Magistrato in fra la potenza della Nespola e benigno Signore delli Amorevoli, al passato della Nebbia’. The Parte men originally deputised for the *potenze* were Francesco Strozzi e Girolamo Capponi. Parte, 1466, f. 270r.

²⁵² Cantini, *Legislazione toscana*, 8, 345-6.

²⁵³ The triumphal arch marking their border with the Macine across via Ginori joined the back of the Medici palace to the ‘casa della Stufa dove stà M. Baccio Tolommei’; Paganone, *Ordini, feste, et pompe*, f. 5r.

²⁵⁴ Ricci, 217-18.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 222-5.

was approached by a priest and took himself to the Annunziata, where he prayed for pardon. When the news arrived at the palace, the regime's reaction was instantaneous: troops were massed and armed, the windows and doors on public buildings were fortified and canon was loaded at the windows of the Palazzo. Soldiers manned the streetcorners leading to the Annunziata and blocked entry to Piazza San Giovanni, the Baptistry and Duomo. Della Stufa, alone by this time, was taken without resistance, then dragged to jail in a procession calculated to visibly reassert right order: the most senior man of the court, Prospero Colonna, and 50 *gentiluomini* led the way, followed by police officials with their wounded prisoner, more armed knights and finally a squadron of 60 soldiers from Francesco's garrison of German troops, who fanned out to cover the surrounding streets.

For Ricci – our only source – Della Stufa's actions were a “madness”, the product of an unhinged mind. Yet this madness provoked a hair-trigger reaction from a regime that seemed to be half expecting an uprising. It is telling that Della Stufa was the only citizen to go as far as to provide wine and food for the *potenze* of his neighbourhood; to do so was clearly believed to run the risk of arousing suspicions of competitive patronage. Little wonder, then, that he was rebuked for getting mixed up in the Macine-Graticola fight. Throwing gifts from his palace windows, leading a *potenza* through the ancestral neighbourhood he shared with the Medici and into San Lorenzo – indeed becoming in a sense a *potenza* king as he apparently sought to achieve an honourable exchange with Francesco for his original efforts – could only have multiplied such suspicions, as did the sight of him taking the Biliemme towards the Palazzo. Over the next month or so that festivities ran, even after the details of this incident were surely well known, Francesco never emerged on to the streets without being surrounded by guards and men of the court, “whom he always kept around him after the case with Stufa”.²⁵⁶

What this story points up is that the festive stage was a place where a prince could easily become a paranoid man, because it was a stage that he never in any simple sense controlled. Rather it was one where, as we have seen, there were a plurality of voices, where artisans looked to carve out a representational space for themselves, and where declarations of fealty encoded a plethora of demands for support and mediation from the good prince. Despite the perceived distance between the ideals of kingship projected by Francesco's subjects and the man being pressed to inhabit that persona, the festive paradigm never unravelled in 1577. Nonetheless the king of the Graticola, for one, seemed to hold up a critical mirror to Francesco and his regime when, after reminding the duke that he was obliged to recognise his kingdom with a gift, he added that this was “not because we need it, since in our state, thanks to God and the mercy of our good government, one sooner finds necessities than want, so much so that we are able to minister to the needy”.²⁵⁷ And when the brigade later published its pamphlet, it was perhaps not only working a stock chivalric trope when it dedicated this “little gift” to Giovanna of Austria, “queen by birth and grand duchess of Tuscany

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 227.

²⁵⁷ Del Badia, ‘Lettera e supplica’, 26.

rather than to the prince”.²⁵⁸ Giovanna was widely regarded as a “half saintly” intercessor for the poor, and when she died, less than a year later, Ricci remarked dryly that “it is most certainly to be believed that she went to God to pray in that happy fatherland for all the peoples subject to her husband”.²⁵⁹ The death of Francesco himself, in 1587, was, an anonymous chronicler wrote, “universally considered to be good news, and moreover people greatly rejoiced, especially the *popolo minuto*”, adding that all hoped the new prince, his brother Ferdinando, would return the state to “an excellent form of government”.²⁶⁰ Certainly, Ferdinando I appeared to have a clearer grasp of how the prince was involved in a dialogue with the city. Through the *potenze*, San Giovanni of 1588 became a celebration of the city’s textile industry that older Florentines liked to say reminded them of the feasts of the patron under the republic.²⁶¹ Yet, as the next chapter will explore, even as Ferdinando I looked to evoke the idea that his reign heralded a new golden age of textile trade wealth, artisan representation and state-mediated social harmony, deeper currents of economic, social and religious change were eroding the foundations upon which the *potenze* kingdoms of the 16th century were built.

²⁵⁸ ‘Alla Serenissima Donna Giovanna d’Austria Reina nata & Gran Duchessa di Toscana. E desiderando io che V.A. Serenissima venga partecipe di quelli dilette, et piaceri, che per honore del suo gran Principe nato, il Re della Graticola hà con somma allgrezza porti à questa Città.’ Paganone, *Ordini, feste, et pompe*, f. 2r.

²⁵⁹ Ricci, 243. On similar perceptions of Giovanna, Arditi, 177; Lapini, 198. It was Lapini who said ‘da ognuno era tenuta mezza santa’.

²⁶⁰ Et in effetto fu la morte sua ricevuta in universale per buona novella, e i più se ne rallegrorno grandemente, et in particolare il Popolo Minuto, conciossia che il Grand Duca Francesco si era dimostrati sempre rigido verso la Plebe, e molto stretto nel far grazie, onde era odiato dalla bassa gente, aggiunge ... a questo la grande speranza, che ciascheduna aveva di già concepito nel Cardinale suo fratello, che dovesse ridurre lo stato in ottima forma di governo’. BRF, *Piccolo diario*, 68.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 127.

Chapter Three

The *Armeggerie* of the Spirit

While cataloguing the chapels and family arms inside the churches of Florence in the late 1650s, Stefano Rosselli came across the Prato emperor's 1594 tombstone in Santa Lucia sul Prato (fig. 11). He wrote: "It seems that it might credibly be believed that this grave belonged to one of those who, when our city was more populated and richer and when the Guilds flourished, were created Leaders of the *Popolo* in certain times and in various parts under the names of different Potentates, by those called *Potenze*, who performed festivities, *armeggerie* and stone fights. And the owner of this grave must have been the Emperor of the Prato, who after winning in the *gioco di sassi* wanted to leave a record of this on his grave."¹ Rosselli's slight uncertainty, his cautious reasoning based on the evidence before him, suggests how far the ground of local knowledge had shifted. Here, as the inscription said, was an emperor, fighting with stones, at Santa Lucia sul Prato. Who else could this grave belong to? The *potenze* had not only vanished, they were starting to fade out of collective memory.

To say that *potenze* had vanished by the 1650s is, strictly speaking, true, but this is really a story of transformations. Along with the use of the term '*potenze*', what had collapsed was a paradigm of civic ritual, a mode of articulating both artisan micro-communities and the civic community as a whole. Many of the groups of artisans discussed in the preceding section, some of them confraternities, who had styled themselves as *potenze*, continued to exist. Certain practices that, as I will set out, were strongly associated with *potenze*, especially their processions to Mendicant convents and shrines in the *contado*, remained intact. By 1650, however, such activities took place within a different world. They no longer formed one element in the broader ritual repertoire that artisans, as *potenze*, had performed on the neighbourhood and city stage. The genre that saw men take on the mask and the accoutrements of kingship – in direct relation to their subjects, the local nobility, wealthy citizenry or merchants, and in a special relationship with the prince – collapsed. Their horseback parades, faux-chivalric *armeggerie*, and *sassi* battles by and large faded from the public arena. The banqueting that accompanied, sometimes counterpointed, those ritualised

¹ 'Questa sepoltura pare che si possa verisimilmente credere, che fusse di alcuno di coloro quando la nostra Città era più popolata e più ricca e vi fiorivano l'Arti, in certi tempi erano in diverse parti di quella creati Capi del Popolo sotto nome di diversi Potentati da loro dette Potenze, che festeggiavano, armeggiavano, e facevano a Sassi. Et il Padrone di questa sepoltura dovette essere Imperatore del Prato, che così si chiamava una delle dette Potenze, e per esser restato vittorioso nel gioco di sassi, volse lasciarne memoria nella Sepoltura.' Mss., 625, f. 886.

conflicts, the bread and wine of peace that also laid imaginary claim to the rich man's world of plenty, disappeared.

There is the sketch of an argument in Rosselli's remarks on the Prato emperor's tombstone. For him, the *potenze* were a signifier of a more active mercantile past, their demise connected to the deterioration of civic wealth. Economic decline was also what Ferdinando Migliore had in mind when, a generation later, in the 1680s, he said that Cosimo II had suppressed the *potenze* because of the "exorbitant costs to the purses of artisans".² It is certainly true that Florence was experiencing, like much of Europe, economic crisis in the early decades of the 17th century, as a number of structural problems that had been germinating since the 1570s coalesced to create relentless pressure on artisans and labourers. To begin with, inflation in the second half of the 16th century meant that prices basically doubled in Florence. Wages did not keep pace.³ Most pressing was the price of grain, which started rising quickly during the 1570s. Moreover fuelling inflation on grain was the issue of supply. Price hikes were partly a function of population growth, again a phenomenon across the continent. Domestic production had always barely been adequate in any case, and between the 1550s and 1620s the population of the Florentine state – that is the *stato vecchio*, excluding Siena – rose by about 150,000 to 650,000, Florence itself from about 60,000 to 76,000 people. By 1580, prices were becoming critically high. The problem was further exacerbated by climatic change, which lowered yields. Inflationary and demographic pressures first connected with these agricultural factors in 1579, a very poor harvest year that followed two decades of relative stability; meagre harvests resumed in 1585 and culminated in the severe famine of 1590-1. That crisis was reprised in 1596-7, 1601-2 and from 1617-20, and though these low points stand out, an acute preoccupation with establishing sufficient and affordable food was endemic from the mid-1580s over at least the next half century.⁴

Paralleling the growing problems of cost and availability of basic food were profound structural shifts in the Florentine economy, which further put artisans and labourers, at least those of the textile industry, under economic pressure and caused severe unemployment. The financial crisis and the deterioration of cloth manufacturing in the mid-1570s, discussed in the previous chapter and part of the context of civic ritual in 1577, marked the beginning of the textile industry's transformation. For the wool sector, after considerable growth in the early decades of the duchy, with a peak in the 1560s and early 1570s, it was the start of a slow, but almost terminal, decline, when traditional export markets were lost to cheaper northern European cloth. By 1589 wool cloth output was just half of the 30,000 pieces a year that it had been in 1572. It remained at roughly this level until around 1614, but in the next few years it dropped by half again. By 1630 about 5,000 pieces a year were being produced and, from here, the wool sector gradually diminished into

² Migliore, *Firenze*, 516.

³ Parenti, 'Prezzi e salari'; Goldthwaite, *The Economy*, 366-7.

⁴ Licata and Vanzulli 'Grano, Carestie, Banditismo', esp. 335-58; Pult Quaglia, 'Controls over Food Supplies'; Litchfield, *The Emergence*, 244-61. More widely on the European crisis of the early 17th century, see the outline in Parker and Smith, 'Introduction'.

insignificance. Of silk, a smaller sector, we still have few details for the 16th century, but, continuing a trend that had begun in the 15th century and with government support, a growing one. By the first decade of the 17th century, production was at around 10,000 pieces and, despite a dip in the 1610s and 1620s, it gradually increased over the next century. Thus between the 1570s and the second decade of the 1600s, silk definitively replaced wool as the basis of the Florentine industrial economy and became its single biggest employer. Overall, however, the contraction in the textile industry across the same period was acute, estimated at about 35 per cent.⁵

These were the major economic trends. However, the argument for change put forward here is a multi-stranded one. As Migliore said, Cosimo II made a decisive intervention: in 1610 he stripped the *potenze* of their banners, permanently. Yet Migliore was wrong to assume such a tidy closure. The duke did not outlaw the *potenze* – what he did was force them to petition for their flags every time they wanted them. Only in the long aftermath of that process did the *potenze* disappear. And while Florentine artisans certainly knew impoverishment, economic factors alone neither explain Cosimo's intervention nor the nature of the *potenze*'s transformation. Instead, economic shifts, while critical, are better seen as creating a fertile terrain upon which wider forces for change could take root, forces that – decades before 1610 – were militating against the cultural logic that had sustained the artisan kingdoms of the previous century.

1. Sacraments versus Jests

The year 1600 (1599sf) marks a dramatic threshold in the story of the *potenze*. As discussed in previous chapters, on January 9 that year, a woolbeater was crowned grand monarch of the Città Rossa in the church of Sant' Ambrogio. To recall the story, the kingdom's flagbearer, also a wool *bottega* labourer, the men of the Città Rossa and several other *potenze* assembled in Piazza Sant' Ambrogio, along with a large crowd that had gathered to the sound of drums that had accompanied Donato Penecchini as he processed towards the church from his home in the parish. Once inside, a mass was sung, which the *potenza* paid for, then the prior of Sant' Ambrogio and parish priest, Piero Mannucci, anointed Donato with holy water and placed the crown on his head. As noted earlier, in sacralising its kingdom on January 9, the anniversary of Cosimo I's 'election' as duke,

⁵ Malanima, *La decadenza*, 295, 302-14; Litchfield, *Florence Ducal Capital*, pars. 223-4, 255-8. The downward trend in wool is also evident in the falling number of registered apprentices; Carmona, 'Sull'economia toscana', 38. Francesco Ammannati has recently argued that the boom figures usually cited for wool production of the 1560s and early 1570s are too high and has estimated that levels only ever returned to where they had been in the early 1530s, somewhere under 20,000 pieces. But overall wool trends remain identical, and the question of numbers, as he acknowledges, remains open; Ammannati, 'Florentine Woolen Manufacture'. Also on the rise of silk, see Bettarini and Ciapetti, 'L'Arte della Seta'; Brown and Goodman, 'Women and Industry'. For the increasing importance of silk from the early 15th century, see Franceschi, 'Un'industria "nuova"'.

the Città Rossa both honoured a foundational moment of Medicean dynasty and borrowed it to underscore its own status, the ritual language of kingship framing the reciprocal bonds of patron and client.

However it did not turn out that way. There was an almost total divergence between the participants' unspoken belief in the legitimacy of Donato's coronation and the way it was read by the political centre, and, more importantly here, by the ecclesiastical authorities. The repercussions were swift. Archbishop Alessandro de' Medici's vicar immediately deposed the abbess of the Benedictine convent, Costanza Giuntini, who rejoined the rank and file of the sisters, and he had Mannucci and the sacristan locked up inside a room in the church. The Parte, seemingly unaware that anything was amiss, was informed of this by the vicar and then reported to the duke that "to them [the episcopal authorities] it did not seem fitting to mix the sacraments with *feste* and jokes ... we understand that it is not good to tolerate this manner of festivity with tumult and that they overstepped the limits".⁶ On the same day the Parte wrote this report, January 16, it rounded up Donato and flagbearer Stefano di Matteo and imprisoned them in the Stinche while awaiting orders. Giovanbattista Concino, Ferdinando I's principal secretary, informed the magistracy that the duke had been advised of the incident by the episcopal palace and that to him "it seems a bad example, both as regards the priest and the abbess; therefore it has been made clear to the Vicar that he should hand down exemplary punishment to the Priest, just as his disrespect, together with the simony of the money he received, was exemplary".⁷ Concino told the Parte to proceed against the "seculars". The prior Mannucci was suspended from sacramental duties and exiled from the diocese for a year, to be replaced by a chaplain from the cathedral itself. The sacristan and factor were also sacked.⁸ After almost a month in jail, Donato was brought before the Parte. His

⁶ 'Parendoli non convenga mescolare li sacramenti con le feste et burle, haveva deposto la badessa et costituito la casa per carcerare [sic] al prior di s[opra]detta chiesa. Il che inteso noi dal detto cancelliere parendo che non sia ben tollerar loro questa maniera di festeggiare con tumulto, et che habbino ecceduto li termini.' Parte, 769, f. 384r.

⁷ 'Gli pare di male esempio et per i Preti et per la Badessa però faccino intendere al Vicario che gastighi il Prete esemplarmente, come esemplare è stata la sua leggierezza accompagnata di simonia per lego denari che ne ha ricevuto et con e secolari proceda [il] magistrato [della Parte]; *Ibid.* This Concino was the son of Duke Francesco's principal secretary, Bartolomeo Concino, discussed in Chapter Two.

⁸ The election of a new abbess, Lodovica Busini, with reference to the sacking of Giuntini, is recorded in the episcopal archive. AAF, LC, 1590-1601, f. 248r (January 26, 1600). Not surprisingly, there is no word in the convent records of Giuntini's dismissal, the sacking of church officials, or the event itself. However, new arrivals in the following months are recorded. CS, 79, 4, f. 278r-v. Worth noting is that the disgraced Giuntini was re-elected abbess in 1612. The formulaic journal entry records that this took place 'con presenza et consenso' of a canon of the Cathedral, and one wonders if Giuntini's re-elevation signified a rehabilitation in the eyes of the episcopal authorities, a sincere penance on her part, or a sign that the sisters' believed the original dismissal was unmerited; *Ibid.*, f. 130v.

punishment was six months' exile: confined to Florence but forbidden to enter the parish of Sant' Ambrogio.⁹

When Donato was sentenced, he told his judges that "he was elected and called to that place, and, being at home, he was told he should go to Sant' Ambrogio to that effect, saying he did not think he was doing anything wrong".¹⁰ He was, perhaps, being a little disingenuous under questioning; the festive moment, after all, had always incorporated transgressions of everyday boundaries. Yet Donato should be seen as appealing to that very framework, one which allowed the *potenze* recognised moments at the centre of a local and civic stage and a presence in consecrated space. What comes into relief, then, is the sharpening conflict between certain long-standing practices and the imperatives and initiatives of the Catholic reform movement. And while the intervention at Sant' Ambrogio was, it appears, one of very few punitive actions against *potenze* per se, it spoke to – and was intended to affirm – a reformist ethos that not only opposed the sacralisation of artisan's kingdoms but undermined more widely the kind of ritual with which they were associated.

In the first instance, what galvanised the episcopal authorities at Sant' Ambrogio was the "mixing" of the coronation with the sacraments. It was the association of eucharistic rites with the kingship rituals of the Città Rossa that was illicit. Punishments were calibrated according to proximity to the holy: Stefano was not exiled with his king but only stripped of his role, because "he was not found in the church at the mass when the monarch was crowned but was in the piazza".¹¹ As others have pointed out, the eucharist was the supreme organising metaphor for the socio-spiritual ideals of Catholic reform.¹² Given Protestant denials of transubstantiation, it not only embodied an intense focus on the redemptive person of Christ, it stressed the mediation, and the theology, of the Roman Church in the attainment of salvation – thus it closely linked concerns to reinvigorate what was seen as the decayed state of Christian piety with anxieties over the transmission and policing of orthodoxy.

A few lines from the revised statutes of the silk weavers' confraternity of Santa Croce attest to the diffusion of eucharistic ideals in the decades following Trent. The confraternity reminded its members that "each brother should know that companies who do not have as their goal humility, penitence, frequent confession and the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist, are shadows, almost

⁹ The sentence, for which the Parte had gained Ferdinando I's approval a few days earlier, was handed down on February 18; Parte, 50, f. 204r.

¹⁰ 'Dice lui, et s'intende passò, che fu eletto et chiamato à quel luogo et gli fu detto essendo in casa che andassi in santo Ambrogio per tal effetto, dicendo non haver pensato far male.' Parte, 769, f. 384v.

¹¹ 'Pare non si esser trovato in chiesa alla messa quando fu incoronato il monarca ma era in piazza di Santo Ambrogio.' *Ibid.*

¹² See for example, Bireley, *The Refashioning*, ch. 5, esp. 107-8; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 346-62; Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, ch. 5.

bodies without a soul".¹³ Building on Tridentine decrees, Florentine synodal law of 1573 and subsequent decades vigorously emphasised the eucharist as the core of human relations with the divine as well as sacerdotal authority to police that rapport. Frequent confession and communication, the foundation stones of reformist thinking, were encouraged, and priests were to report those who refused to do so, at least at Easter, to the archbishop, where they could be excommunicated and, if they showed no remorse, be tried as heretics.¹⁴ As Weissman pointed out a generation ago, a special emphasis was given to the parish as the local topography of spiritual regeneration, not only with the renewal of old injunctions to take communion in one's home parish at Easter, but as a space of eucharistic veneration more broadly. The rise of parish sacramental corporations in the second half of the 16th century – to which *potenze* as we have seen became increasingly tied – was in significant part the result of synodal law, which called for such confraternities in every parish and for parish processions of the host at Corpus Christi, in addition to the civic procession in which many companies participated.¹⁵ The precedence of parish rites and parish clergy were bolstered with the synodal directive that on Sundays and feast days mass in the local church must take place before those of any lay confraternity.¹⁶ Attempts were also made to give each parish integrity as a ritual and charitable space by moderating rival claims on parishioners' spiritual and financial loyalties: clerically led processions or collections were prohibited from crossing parish boundaries; and priests and friars unaffiliated with a parish were banned from organising processions or supplications without episcopal approval.¹⁷ Within many parish confraternities, encouraged by the episcopal authorities and by the grand dukes, a newer form of collective eucharistic worship became diffuse, the *quarantore*, or forty-hours adoration of the consecrated host. A symbolic guarding of Christ's body between the Crucifixion and Resurrection, the *quarantore* – not only performed during Holy Week – joined these key moments in the Christian narrative with continuous contemplation and prayer.¹⁸ The Holy Sacrament of San Iacopo Sopr'Arno, which as we have seen became closely involved with the *potenza* of the Nebbia before 1610, obliged its brothers to confess not only at Easter, but at Christmas and Pentecost.¹⁹ At Easter they performed the *quarantore*; the brothers congregated for the "deposition of the sacrament, in their robes and with torches, and went to gather the men who should guard the most

¹³ 'E sappia ciascun fratello che le Compagnie le quali non hanno per scopo l'humilità, la penitenza, e la frequenza delle Confessioni e del Santissimo Sacramento dell' Eucharisita sono ombre, e quasi corpi senz' anima.' Capitoli, 190, f. 2 (1644).

¹⁴ Di San Luigi, ed., *Etruria sacra*, 149 (Synod of 1573, rub. 31, 5-8). On confession, see esp. De Boer, *The Conquest*, ch. 2.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* (Synod of 1573, rubs. 32, 2 and 46, 3).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 139 (Synod of 1573, rub. 18, 6)

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 226 (Synod of 1619, rub. 4, 2)

¹⁸ Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 229-33. See, too, Cajani and Saba, 'La notte devota'. The *quarantore*, which became popular in confraternities by the 1570s was performed in the cathedral for the first time in 1589. Lapini, 292-3.

¹⁹ Capitoli, 171, f. 42 (1589).

holy sacrament hour for hour”.²⁰ On the first Sunday of every month they begged in the parish for alms and, “because we believe that the holy sacrament is that true angelic food that continually nourishes and pacifies our souls”, processed the “host of S Iacopo Sopr’Arno through the parish”.²¹

Since it was necessary to inculcate the orthodox thoughts and beliefs that should accompany devotion, one of the most significant reformist initiatives was doctrinal education, and this was explicitly framed as the mission of the clergy and an educated elite to bring catechistical instruction to the ignorant and impoverished, especially their children.²² Florentine synodal law again put the parish at the practical centre of these efforts. In 1573, parents were ordered to send their children to the parish church for catechistical instruction on Sundays and feast days, legislation repeated in later synods with the punitive addition that parents who neglected to do so could not receive the sacraments and that anybody who did not know at least the Credo, Pater Noster and Ave Maria could not act as godfathers and would be denied communion except *in extremis*.²³

The episcopal authorities placed upon parish priests the primary obligation to teach the rudiments of the faith and monitor parishioners, but Iacopo Ansaldi, a Pisan lawyer who became Archbishop Alessandro de’ Medici’s doctrinal manager and published several key catechistical

²⁰ The governor ‘sia tenuto a far venire i fratelli alla depositione del sacramento con le veste indosso e torcie, e di trovare o fare trovare gl’huomini che stieno a guardia del santissimo sacramento hora per hora...’ Capitoli, 171, f. 45 (1589). The hatmaker Giovanni di Pasquale, Nebbia king in 1610, appears three years earlier on a list of confraternal men who organised and performed the *quarantore*. Also on that list were confraternal veterans Mariotto Marchi, the Nebbia’s 1610 *carmalingo*, and Giovanbattista Bolani, its *proveditore*. CRS, 1257, no.4, unpag (April 20, 1607). Giovanni di Pasquale appears only once, though from the mid-1590s a full *tratte* of officials is recorded only sporadically; lists of members involved in various rituals are similarly sparse. Giovanni, however appears to have joined the confraternity later, not appearing for example in a list of 68 brothers receiving candles at the Purification in 1603. *Ibid.*, no.3, unpag. For the Nebbia in 1610, Parte, 1478, ff. 215r, 261r.

²¹ ‘...considerato noi che il santissimo sacramento e quel vero cibo angelico che di continuo ciba e pascie le anime nostre servendo al grande Dio, ordiniamo essendo la nostra compagnia fondata e stabilita sotto un tal vexillo e stendardo e nome di sacro sia obbligata ogni prima domenica del mese andare a accompagnare il santissimo sacramento di Santo Iacopo sopra Arno per il popolo, e di dare le candele in mano a fratelli per detta precissione.’ Capitoli, 171, ff. 70-1. The confraternity also buried dead confraternal members and ‘others of our parish’, the poor without payment, and went out with the sacrament to confess and communicate the sick.

²² Grendler, *Schooling*, ch. 12. In this context, lay preaching in confraternities was more strictly controlled and in effect discouraged, with sermons ‘presuming about things concerning the Christian faith’ banned except by those who made a profession of their faith and obtained a licence from the archbishop. *Etruria sacra*, 164 (Synod of 1573, rub. 51, 2). Any ‘malice of intent’ by these ‘pious and approved’ men could bring confraternities under interdict: *Ibid.*, 196 (Synod of 1610, *De confratriis laicorum*); see also 239 (Synod of 1619, rub. 9, 2).

²³ *Etruria sacra*, 142 (Synod of 1573, rub. 21, 1). The later synods on doctrinal education are summarised in Aranci, *Formazione*, 125-9. In 1629 the synod reinforced to parish priests that they were obliged ‘to hand down faith to the uneducated and to children committed to their charge’. The church bells were to convoke the people, and after mass there had to be readings from the Gospels and instruction on the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Ten Commandments and the sacraments. *Etruria sacra*, 288-9 (Synod of 1629, *De doctrina christiana*).

manuals, also engaged the laity directly by promoting the establishment of doctrinal sodalities.²⁴ By 1585 six such groups had been founded, some within existing confraternities, and that year or shortly before Archbishop Alessandro made them a distinct element in the official civic cavalcade at Corpus Christi and San Giovanni.²⁵ All six were in the overwhelmingly lower-class neighbourhoods of the city's outskirts: the confraternity of San Michele della Pace ran a doctrinal school for the parish of Sant' Ambrogio; the Resurrection, now in the Campaccio (via Santa Reparata) and founded a century earlier by the *potenza* of the Macina at that streetcorner, played a similar role. Other doctrinal schools were formed by parishioners in Santa Lucia sul Prato, San Piero Gattolini, and the Camaldoli's Santa Maria in Verzaia. Perhaps the earliest lay-run "school of the spirit" was set up in 1575 by the confraternity of the Assunta in via Tedesca, the mainly wool-weaver sodality which, as discussed previously, had a good part of the *potenza* of the Biliemme's leadership on its membership roll by the beginning of the 1600s. Indeed, the desire to create confraternal teachers, who "should be like a glittering lantern that illuminates the children", leading them to a life consistent with Christian doctrine, frequent communion and confession, was behind the Assunta's new statutes of that year.²⁶ A decade later, in 1585, Iacopo Ansaldi enthused to both his patron, Archbishop Alessandro, and to the city as a whole about this "tender new plant" that had taken root among the weavers of San Barnaba, "which gives off around itself such a good fragrance and which has spread so sweet an odour among their neighbours".²⁷

Above all, the social topography of evangelism is evident in the episcopal support for the missionary ambitions of the "apostle of Florence" Ippolito Galantini, who succeeded Ansaldi as the city's doctrinal manager and set up the most important school in Florence. The son of a Santa Lucia sul Prato silk weaver, Galantini, born in 1565, was sent for training at the age of six or seven to the Jesuits, the missionary and teaching order which had established its own college in Florence in 1554, and which was later to warn the Medici dukes that the poor were especially sinful.²⁸ Educated by the Jesuits in the instruction of doctrine, Galantini took this message back to the poorer parishes, first as the spiritual guide in the 1580s for several artisan confraternities, perhaps including Santa Lucia. Later he founded the Congregazione di San Francesco della Dottrina

²⁴ The most significant of Ansaldi's publications was an adaption of a popular Jesuit catechism known as the "little doctrine" – 2,000 copies were printed in 1582 with a new run three years later. Aranci, *Formazione*, 95-105.

²⁵ An episcopal decree of 1585 on the processional order of the doctrine companies is published in *Ibid.*, 367-8.

²⁶ Aranci, *Formazione*, 367-8. For the Assunta, see Capitoli, 827, ff. 38r-40r. The confraternity established 12 *operai* as teachers, who should confess and communicate once a month, 'accio che imparando da loro si possa detti fanciulli impiegarsi alla frequentia de santissimi sacramenti per questi tali debbino essere come rilucenti Lucerna per illuminare tale Giovanetti'.

²⁷ Ansaldi's remarks were in his dedicatory preface to Archbishop Alessandro in the 1585 edition of the 'little doctrine'. Reproduced in Aranci, *Formazione*, 363-5.

²⁸ Aranci, Part 3, *passim*. For the foundation of the Jesuits, see *Ibid.*, 99f. For Jesuit schools in general, see Grendler, *Schooling*, ch. 13; for Florence, esp., 366-7. Paolo Segneri, a Jesuit advisor to the grand dukes in the 17th century, argued that the poor were especially sinful. Black, *Early Modern Italy*, 204.

Cristiana in his home neighbourhood, in the exclusively artisan via Palazzuolo. It was later claimed by Galantini's hagiographers that from the founding of the Congregazione in the 1590s to the time of his death in 1620 as many as 25,000 people had passed through its basic "general school".²⁹

It would seem that the famous Jesuit description of the rural outposts of the kingdom of Naples – "our Indies" – also voiced ecclesiastical and undoubtedly wider perceptions of the outpost neighbourhoods of other cities.³⁰ For reformers the sacrament was the catalyst that could, almost alchemically, "convert" the sinfully ignorant, and the impious sinner, into true Christians. Yet despite the view taken of the lower classes that coalesced in reformist discourse, or the inequality of power and resources between them and constituted authorities, it would be wrong to see artisans and labourers as responding to clerical directives like "passive receptacles", or to imagine that agency was simply stripped out of their associations.³¹ There is a case, forcefully put over the past two decades, that, rather than seeing reform as a hegemonic engine of "social discipline", one of the central processes between the pedagogy of the learned and local custom was negotiation, characterised by mediation and adaption rather than conflict or substitution.³²

In the first place, a number of abuses that Tridentine churchmen were anxious to correct were the very issues the laity desperately wanted addressed. The more or less successful struggles of the Santa Lucia sul Prato silk weavers/emperors over the supply of priests, for example, smacked of clerical absenteeism, a complaint high on the laity's catalogue of grievances.³³ The Camaldoli tailor Bastiano Arditi, while not typical in his quasi-millenarian zeal for Christian renewal, nonetheless voiced a deep current of ordinary lay criticism when, in 1574, he noted with approval Archbishop Alessandro's attempts to enforce the residency injunction for prelates. "One sees that they leave the city like snakes moving to a charm," he wrote, "though they left with great displeasure the comforts, both of gluttony and lust, found in the city of Florence."³⁴ In the second place, the clerical control of the laity's devotional life and its use of the sacred places and materials that was

²⁹ Aranci, *Formazione*, 263-5, and Parts II and III, *passim*.

³⁰ See, among others, Gentilcore, 'Adapt Yourself'; Selwyn, 'Procuring in the Common People'; *Eadem*, *A Paradise*, esp. chs. 1-2; Lazar, *Working in the Vineyard*.

³¹ The phrase in quotes is Natalie Zimon Davis's: 'Some Tasks and Themes', 309.

³² For this debate, and a powerful case for 'negotiation' see esp. Ditchfield, 'In search of', though as the analysis set out here argues, he greatly overplays his hand in concluding that Tridentine reform represented 'a remarkable popular victory' (293). For a more strident reaction to such 'revisionist' views, see Mullett, *The Catholic Reformation*, 213-14. In general, see the 1992 review of the field that helped establish 'negotiation' as a significant analytical idea in the anglophone historiography; Gentilcore, 'Methods and Approaches'. More recently, O'Malley, 'A Historiographical Frame'; and esp. Laven, 'Encountering the Counter-Reformation'. It was in the context of the wider reformation debate that Roger Chartier influentially set out the idea, in the 1980s, that common materials and concepts could be creatively appropriated by different groups: Chartier, 'Culture as Appropriation'.

³³ The 1575 visitation in the diocese of Siena, for example, reveals that the archbishop's representative was forced to listen to parish after parish complain about clerical residency. Cohn, *Death and Property*, 187-8. The Florentine synods' repeated demands for clerical residency offers some indication of how entrenched the culture of absenteeism was; Aranci, *Formazione*, 80.

³⁴ Arditi, 7.

envisioned in Tridentine laws, especially notable for confraternities, never necessarily translated into a simplistic model of power relations between the lower clergy – whose perceived deficiencies were, in any case, addressed at a very halting pace – and parishioners within the complex intimacy of the neighbourhood.³⁵ As we have seen, the Santa Lucians saw their eucharistic needs as their own concern, and something around which they could articulate lay ownership, autonomy and a vision of community – and it is clear that, in some respects, they saw the officiating priest as theirs, too. Indeed, the rise of sacramental artisan parish confraternities may well have strengthened artisans' sense of their own agency in the local arena. Reformist impulses certainly helped empower the dyers' labourers of San Onofrio to found their own "little company" in 1595, an act of self-assertion that the master dyers viewed with suspicion. Under the guidance of a friar from Santa Croce, the labourers dedicated their new confraternity to both San Onofrio and San Francesco and put up their own altar and two desks in San Onofrio's meeting hall, rather than its church. When the archbishop told the governors of San Onofrio that, since the hall was now being used for devotional purposes, they could no longer hold meals there, the parent confraternity appealed, successfully, for the removal of the altar. These labourers, San Onofrio's chancellor later, and revealingly, claimed, had "only wanted the said hall for their company to see if they could remove their *maestri e gentiluomini* from the university of San Onofrio, so that only the *lavoranti* remained".³⁶

At Sant' Ambrogio itself, the dramatic events of 1600 attest – at least in the first instance – to the capacity of local cultures to selectively absorb reform on their own terms. The district's population and the church were bound together in a number of ways. The Benedictine nuns who owned Sant' Ambrogio received rent from hundreds of parishioners who lived in the *piazza* and the streets fanning out from it, and a large majority of these tenants also ended up choosing burial at the church.³⁷ The placing of the Città Rossa's two markers stones into the fabric of Sant' Ambrogio,

³⁵ The slow and only partially effective re-education of the parish clergy is suggested by the case of the seminary established in Fiesole in 1575; see Comerford, *Ordaining the Catholic Reformation*, esp. Part 3. During Archbishop Alessandro's first parish visitations the same year, Arditi remarks that they found 'much imperfection and many abuses and much ignorance, among the canons, priors and other parish priests and they took the right to perform mass from some of them.' Arditi, 47. The tightening of ecclesiastical control over confraternities in particular was continuously codified in various local measures, as outlined here. Globally, Trent in 1562 (Session 22, canon 8) established the prerogative of episcopal visitation and correction of lay institutions and ordered them to present their annual accounts to the local bishop. The 1604 papal bull *Quaecumque* in effect only allowed the formation of new confraternities by clerical initiative. See, Black, *Confraternities*, 63.

³⁶ 'E il giorno in giorno andavano crescendo capricci che volevano che detto salone fussi compagnia solo per vedere se potevano cavare della università di Santo Noferi e loro maestri e gentiluomini e rimanere soli detti lavoranti'. Tintori, A.III.1. f. 100r.

³⁷ There were 65 properties and thus probably several hundreds artisan and labourer tenants in 1561. DG, 3783, ff. 153r-154r, 183r-188v (1561). Other, better known, examples of church property-owning and renting come from Santo Spirito, where the Badia in Camaldoli owned a swathe of rental property in that almost exclusively lower-class area, as did Santa Maria del Carmine. Diana, 'Il gonfalone', esp. 77; Boccia and Greppi, *San Salvatore*, esp. 42 for the

which must have been explicitly permitted by the nuns, speaks to this web of local relations, as does the tabernacle opposite, where one observes that the church is custodially placed inside the *potenza*'s walled city (figs 1 and 5). In 1514, in the same decade the tabernacle is thought to have been put up, an episcopal visitation to the church reveals the grand monarch of the Città Rossa's local profile, as well as the expectations of the Benedictines or church officials that this sanctified king act as an exemplar of Christian life: the *potenza* was the only matter singled out to the archbishop's representative, who duly recorded that "we heard that someone called the monarch of the Città Rossa, alias 'the Faith', keeps a concubine".³⁸

Indeed, artisans in the guise of *potenze* were involved in the veneration of the church's most sacred artefact, the "Miracle" relic – certainly by the 17th century, but quite possibly from as early as the 1470s, when it seems the *potenze* were first carving a presence on the local and civic stages.³⁹ The Miracle relic was a chalice said to have filled with blood after a mass in 1230, and every year at Corpus Christi the Guild of Judges and Notaries sponsored a local procession, led by the prior of the church. Officially, the laity's presence was in the form of the artisan confraternities of Santa Maria della Neve and San Michele della Pace – both of which were active by the mid-15th century, with tombs in the church and oratories close by (figs 13 and 14).⁴⁰ Yet the visual evidence suggests that the Città Rossa – which later evidence strongly connects to San Michele and which quite probably overlapped associationally with the confraternity from the beginning – positioned itself in reference to the cult of the Miracle. In the early 1470s, the cult was being promoted afresh by the Benedictines, with work on a new chapel to house the sacred chalice finished in 1474.

Camaldoli's property in 1579. For the 15th century, see also Eckstein, *The District*, 33-4. Between 1480 and 1510, at 85 per cent of parishioners elected for burial in Sant' Ambrogio, which reflects among other things a high rate of neighbourhood endogamy; Strocchia, *Death and Ritual*, 221-3.

³⁸ 'Et omnia se optime habere comperimus quo ad omnes et omnia, eos altro quod accepimus quemdam vocatum el monarcha di citta rossa, alias el fede, retinere concubinam.' AAF, VP, 4, f. 16v. The Città Rossa also saw itself as an association under whose aegis sacred theatre took place. Between the early and mid-1500s it commissioned the *Storia et rapresentatione di sancto Valentino et di Sancta Juliana nella quale vi si contiene assai martiri et begli et piacevoli*, adjacent martyrs in the popular *Golden Legend*; the colophon records, 'Stampata nella inclita monarchia di citta Rossa'. As with most *sacra rappresentazione*, the performative life of this play is unknown. The Città Rossa may have staged it, but it may also have been intended as a gift to the Benedictine convent and thus attest again to the web of local relationships that centred on the church. Sant' Ambrogio was part of a vibrant culture of convent theatre, with plays sometimes performed by nuns before audiences of noblewomen. On the only known copy of the Città Rossa's *sacra rappresentazione*, moreover, female names are penned in beside some of the characters – not uncommon on convent copies of sacred plays. BNF, Ms Palatino E.6.5.1.V.25; Kristeller, *Early Florentine Woodcuts*, xxi, 173; Weaver, *Convent Theatre*, 65, 68, 72 and *passim*. Dating of the play is uncertain. It is by Ser Antonio Benriscevuti da Prato, a notary and jobbing writer active by the 1510s; very similar versions by Benriscevuti are dated 1554 and 1568 (BNF, Ms Palatino, E.6.7.56.X.13 and E.6.5.1.V.26 respectively). My thanks to Nerida Newbiggin for her helpful comments on these documents.

³⁹ Borsook, 'Cults and Imagery'.

⁴⁰ San Michele della Pace existed from 1444 at the latest; Santa Maria della Neve from 1445. Capitoli, 45 and 606.

Above the oratory of San Michele, a plaque showing the eucharistic symbol of an infant rising from a chalice, probably the “sign of the miracle” as the confraternity later described one of its insignia, is inscribed with the date 1473, while wrapped around the corner of the oratory is a stone reading “Pauperorum societatis Sancti Micaelis delle Paci” (figs. 15 and 16). As Trexler pointed out, this streetcorner stone bears a strong formal resemblance to the lower stone of the Città Rossa on the other side of the *piazza*, as it does to the streetcorner stone on the nearby Canto al Monteloro, this one, as we have seen, also carrying the date of 1473 (fig. 3).⁴¹ Meanwhile, in the more sumptuous chapel of the relic completed in 1486, a fresco by Cosimo Rosselli depicts the church façade and a packed Piazza Sant’Ambrogio, the image intended to set out the foundation and civic prestige of the Miracle cult. Quite prominent in the foreground is the Città Rossa’s lower stone on the corner of the church (figs 17 and 18).⁴² If the case for the presence of the district’s then fledgling *potenza*, or *potenze*, in the procession of the Miracle rests there, by the end of the 1500s there is little doubt that an amalgam of processional identities circulated the holy chalice. The Canto alla Mela was on the chalice’s processional route through the parish, and it was the *potenza* of the Mela’s customary practice, as it explained, to raise its flag at Corpus Christi and accompany the relic, “to honour the most holy miracle of Santo Ambrogio”.⁴³

The parish of Sant’ Ambrogio was hardly immune to reformist currents. In 1560, San Michele della Pace revised its statutes to become the Holy Sacrament of Sant’Ambrogio. As noted above, San Michele went on to establish a parish doctrinal school, a foundation that took place in 1585 and which directly followed the second episcopal visitation to the church within ten years.⁴⁴ An apostolic 12 brothers of the company would teach children aged six to 15, “placing them on the straight road that will lead to true goals, and, following the example of Christ, for as he acted so should we, teaching them the exercises of a holy life”.⁴⁵ That none of this was seen, locally, as incommensurate with the sacralisation of a *potenza* king indicates that, to a significant extent, reformist initiatives could be assimilated into an existing neighbourhood micro-culture, and not only by Sant’Ambrogio’s artisans and labourers but by the Benedictine nuns and the prior of the church. Piero Mannucci was also the “father corrector”, or spiritual guide, of San Michele – a role the parish priest held in many parish sodalities – and he is recorded as being present at the company’s deliberations a few years before he officiated at the crowning of Donato Penneccchini.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Trexler, *Public Life*, 400-1; CRS, Capitoli, 45, f. 73.

⁴² The fusion of historical narrative and contemporary reference in Rosselli’s fresco has not yet been authoritatively decoded. See, however, Borsook, ‘Cults and Imagery,’ 181.

⁴³ ‘... per onorare il santissimo miracolo di Santo Ambrogio’, ‘... acompagnare il S Sacramento di Santo Ambrogio come a solito’ Parte, 1486, f. 24r (1624). For the route, CS, 79, 173, ff. 82r-86v (1543).

⁴⁴ The official visitation reports, primarily inventorial, are found in AAF, VP, 12, f. 24r (1575); 15.3 (1584). Yet the visitors found a great deal to correct in the confraternities, as discussed below.

⁴⁵ These statutes of 1584 and 1585 dealing with the doctrinal school are published in Aranci, *Formazione*, 368-73.

⁴⁶ Mannucci appears in 1597: Capitoli, 45, ff. 4-5, 78, 89. The Spada’s parish confraternity, one of many examples, took the prior of San Paolo as its corrector, and by 1600 decisions were

Yet, as the episcopal reaction to the Città Rossa coronation indicates, negotiation had its limits. When the Santa Lucians and their emperors grounded a rhetoric of local integrity in the eucharist their demands fell squarely within what all parties in that conversation understood as an authorised use of the sacrament; Iacopo Ansaldi himself briefly appears, in 1582, as a procurator taking up the cause of the parishioners.⁴⁷ However, as officially conceived, this world of the “sacraments” was becoming inimical to the world of “*feste* and jests”. To be sure, the carnivalesque genre with which *potenze* were most closely associated had always occupied unstable, contested ground, but arguably it was not reflexively envisaged as taking place outside the theatre of Christian salvation; many of its performative elements constituted a kind of social liturgy, a civic sacrament between ‘rich’ and ‘poor’, inflected with a theology of redress and collective redemption. But the ethos of reform was distinctly dualistic, hardening distinctions between sacred and profane places, behaviours and identities. Eucharistic devotion as it was promoted by reformers actively opposed carnivalesque practices; the parish, the newly privileged local topography of that devotion, in which community was to be sanctified and policed, stood in opposition to kingdoms of *feste* and jests. Both directly and indirectly, reform militated against the moral logic that underpinned the *potenze* as they had existed on the Florentine public stage.⁴⁸

Above all, the polarisation of the sacred and profane tended to radicalise the opposition between the spiritual and corporeal realms. The eucharist was the medicine that restored personal and social *integritas*, peace and unity, and that *integritas* was increasingly stressed as the discipline of the spirit over the body and its tendencies towards lust and greed.⁴⁹ With particular intensity, reform sacramentalism resisted feasting, the expression of material abundance so central to inversional tropes and their intimations of redress and contract. In effect reformist initiatives moved to sever the chain of analogy along which sacrality might migrate from communion and its original moment, the Last Supper, to other rituals of collective consumption.

As eucharistic rites were encouraged in and through the confraternities, banquets and “drinking parties” (*compotationes*), as the synods of 1573 and later put it, were prohibited, with the sole

sometimes being made by ‘[i] nostri padri capitani insieme el nostro padre chorettore el loro ufiziali’ CRS, 120, no.2, f. 48r, and *passim*. In 1580, the company of San Iacopo sopr’Arno was negotiating for a corrector among the Scopetini friars, who had arrived there in 1575 after quitting Santa Lucia sul Prato. CRS, 1257, no.3, f. 41v. In a very few cases, parish confraternities may even have been founded by priests, as the parish confraternity at San Lorenzo insisted was the case a century after its establishment. Capitoli, 586, f. 57. Not all of the parish sodalities took the local priest as their spiritual corrector, however, often because of his role as a mediator in internal disputes; confraternities were always anxious to find, as it were, a spiritual *podestà*. Santa Lucia, for one, explicitly ruled out the parish priest. Capitoli, 498, f. 58v (1652). See, too, Capitoli, 828, f. 13v. (Assunta e Pace Sacramento in S Piero Gattolini, 1610).

⁴⁷ CRS, 1770, f. 359v.

⁴⁸ For this reading of pre-Tridentine Carnival, see also Bossy, *Christianity*, 41-5. In some respects, the sustained militancy against Carnival in Counter-Reformation Italy was prefigured in Florence during the Savonarolan period of 1494-98 – see Ciappelli, *Carnevale*, 213-35, with extensive bibliography.

⁴⁹ On this theme, see for example, McGinness, ‘Roma Sancta’.

exception of a “reverent” meal commemorating the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday. Outside the oratory, lay brothers could only pay for a meal with their own, not confraternal, funds and with licence from the archbishop.⁵⁰ It was eating and drinking that most consistently drew ecclesiastical correction in the lay corporations. The Assunta at the Canto al Monteloro, possibly linked to the Monteloro *potenza*, came up against the authorities when it submitted its revised statutes in 1578. The little loaves it gave out at the Assumption remained in place but the “meal for men of the house” at San Martino and other feast days had to go. “And today, by order of the apostolic visitor, the Reverend Lord Vicar of the Archbishop instructed us that never in any way should that such a meal take place ... whereupon the men given full authority [over the revision] have decided that these rules should go further, so that not only the meal is removed but also the *rosette de berriquocoli* that were once used.”⁵¹ These rose-shaped cakes containing apricots, were sweets with a long association with Carnival.⁵² San Leone Papa, a confraternity of used clothes dealers and mattressmakers, also sidelined such meals and their implicit allusions in its revision of 1595. On its saint’s day in the church of San Leone, blessed loaves were to be distributed, but if the company followed the “ancient custom of the old statutes”, which also gave each brother a *berlingozzo*, a *mazolino* and two *melarancie* – more pastries with a carnivalesque flavour, and specifically referred to by the *potenze* – the brothers would have to pay for it themselves and “remember that they are in the house of God”.⁵³ In 1585, in the same statutory breath with which it set up Sant’ Ambrogio’s parish doctrinal school, San Michele della Pace recorded that the episcopal visitation had ordered it to scrap the feast of San Antonio da Padova, when it held masses for the company’s dead. Now only the popular small loaves – to be taken home – would represent the supper of the living and the deceased.⁵⁴ Sant’ Ambrogio’s other confraternity, Santa Maria della Neve, was

⁵⁰ *Etruria sacra*, 164 (Synod of 1573, rub. 51, 3); The law was repeated and tightened up in 1589 in an attempt to ensure that this one meal was not taken as an excuse for Easter feasting. *Ibid.*, p.181 (Synod of 1589, *De confraternitatibus*).

⁵¹ ‘E oggi per ordine del visitatore apostolico ci è stato commesso dal Reverendo Signore Vicario del Arcivescovo che in modo alcuno mai più si facci tale colitione, anzi si dispensi in qualche altra cosa quelle spese che avanzano al detto pane, dove àno gl[']uomini in dato piena autorità che questi capitoli si distenda, non solo levate le colitione ma etiamdio le rosette De berriquocoli che prima si usavano.’ Capitoli, 811, 16v.

⁵² The well known opening to Lorenzo de’ Medici’s *Canzona de’ confortini* reads: ‘Berricuocoli, donne, e confortini! / se ne volete, i nostri son de’ fini’. Brusciagli, *Trionfi*, 1, 3. The Crusca dictionary of 1612 defines the two pastries as virtually identical; the main difference perhaps was the fruit; the *confortino* was filled with apple. See *Vocabulario degli Accademici*; Florio, *Queen Anna’s New World of Words*.

⁵³ Ordiniamo per ricreazione spirituale a tutti i fratelli.... et far fare tanti panellini benedetti a ciaschino ne tocchi che sia in nostra compagnia in tal mattine et questo sia quanto all nuova riforma. Ma se detti festaiuoli volessino seguire l’uso antico, secondo i Capitoli vecchi, cide dare a tutti i fratelli i panellini, un berlingozzo, un mazolino, e dua melarancie, habbino da ciascuno de’ fratelli che tal parte vorranno solid tre pagati allora a detti che cosi è usato per l’addietro. Ricordando che sono nella casa di Dio, però mentre s’eserciteranno faccino il tutto con carita, et riverenza’. Capitoli, 5, f. 28r. Melarancie simply signified an orange.

⁵⁴ The statute is published in Aranci, *Formazione*, 368-73.

ordered to abolish the meal it held at the festival of the Miracle, when it and San Michele processed the sacred chalice, and it banned tavern stops during its annual pilgrimage to Impruneta. The works of God, the brothers now said, should be “far from any gluttony or drunkenness. Indeed those [works] that were introduced for the bludgeoning and mortification of the flesh, such as pilgrimage, processions and visits to holy places, should instead be carried out with some discomfort to the body ... And on feast days, introduced for the cult and for service to God, we should all the more abstain from wantonness and scurrilous talk and the lazy and idle behaviour that is encouraged by wine, the minister of jokes, laughter and acts unfitting to cloistered and holy places.”⁵⁵ Nowhere were reform’s eucharist ideals more clearly condensed than in the *quarantore*, which placed the accent of collective ritual on contemplation rather than physical consumption. One confraternity, in 1635, resolved to end its distribution of blessed loaves altogether because of the “disorder” and “confusion” it caused in their oratory and instead “expose the most holy sacrament with the oration of the forty hours”. In this it saw “the introduction of spiritual in place of corporeal food”.⁵⁶

Feasting and the other sins of the flesh perhaps represented for reformers the most naked opposition to the eucharist and the values it embodied. But feasting was closely linked to a panoply of practices that were seen to confront the reformed sacramental ethic. Other classic elements of *potenze* ritual – masking and jousting – were brought together by Archbishop Alessandro Marzi de’ Medici, very likely with times of public festivity in mind, when he addressed himself in 1619 to what he saw as the recalcitrant or insufficiently trained lower clergy, who were clearly failing to present the desired counter-example of Christian discipline. The Florentine synod of that year laid an outright ban on priests from “frequenting banquets of seculars, dinner parties and drinking parties, even if they occur because of a marriage”. Neither could they “lead or take part in public and private dances, and much less should they go around impersonating someone else; and they should absolutely avoid jousting [*hastiludia*] and other profane things, and inane spectacles”. Gambling, football, boxing and almost any other game were also banned.⁵⁷ The doctrinal manuals widely circulated in Florence by Iacopo Ansaldi in the 1580s sought to instil the same “civil and Christian habits” in the laity.⁵⁸ They urged “the leaving aside of unseemly pomp and vanity”⁵⁹, and instructed the young to avoid “spectacles”, “public games” and the “demonic deception of religious life”.⁶⁰ Those who progressed beyond the basic level of doctrinal schooling in the congregation of Ippolito Galantini and up towards “greater perfection” were forbidden from taking part in profane spectacles, dances and summer *palii*.⁶¹ The Assunta in via Tedesca directly linked frequent confession and communion with the obligation of its 12 lay teaching fathers and father corrector to

⁵⁵ Quoted in Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 224, and see Capitoli, 606, f. 52r-v. The episcopal injunctions on San Michele for its trip to Impruneta were very similar. Capitoli, 45, f. 75.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 224-5n.

⁵⁷ *Etruria sacra*, 236 (Synod of 1619, rub. 8, 4-5)

⁵⁸ Ansaldi, *Formazione*, 105-6

⁵⁹ Ansaldi, *Dottrina cristiana*, 106 (known as the *Dottrina piccola*).

⁶⁰ Aranci, *Formazione*, 111.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 216.

“make sure the children are removed from games or any other kind of immoral act”.⁶² The reformist reading of the world left little room for *potenze* ritual, in which the worldly pomp and spectacle of plebeians could be seen in an imaginative relationship with the humility of the wealthy, or as a legitimate language of asserting community within the civic world.

Ecclesiastical attacks on the profane infections undermining the sacred community coalesced on Carnival proper because it seemed to legitimise them by providing a quasi-official time on the Christian calendar – and a residually pagan time at that, a characterisation facilitated by the identification, explicit in the case of the *potenze*, between Carnival and Roman precedent.⁶³ Indeed, it was a common Jesuit practice to organise the *quarantore* during the last days of Carnival, articulating reform’s dualistic mindset of sacred devotion and its carnal antithesis.⁶⁴ In his influential condemnations of Carnival, the campaigning archbishop of Milan, Carlo Borromeo, warned his city in 1579 to forego such “monstrous madness and dissolution”, which he defined as “jousts, spectacles, tournees ... plays, pagan games, dances, banquets, excesses of pomp, inordinate expenditure, fights, arguments, killings, lustful and immoral things”.⁶⁵ For Borromeo and others masking or more broadly the adoption of alternative personae – central to inversional tropes – often headlined anti-Carnival invective. Calling for a perpetual ban on masks, Borromeo said they were the primary means “through which it is made licit that men speak immoral and dirty words, and make impudent gestures and acts; evil masks, assailant of morality, enemy of gravity and the ruin of every care, inside and out, that the soul of a good Christian should have.”⁶⁶ Indeed, masking went to the heart of the ontological anxieties that rippled through the reformist project. If briefly adopting an alternative persona could allow such irruptions of sin, could turn people into “the

⁶² ‘E questi tali [padri] sieno tenuti et ubligati come procuratori a tenere conto che fanciulli sieno levati da giochi o qual si voglia cosa disonesta e intradoti in tal lugo dove possino imparare la vita christiana e fargli confessare almeno quattro volte lanno’. Capitoli, 827, f. 38.

⁶³ See Chapter Two. Another kind of non-Christian imagery was supplied by missionaries, especially Jesuits, who made ‘two Indies’ analogies between European Carnival and the tribal rites they observed in the New World, thus to paganism adding animalistic primitivism. Walsh, ‘The Condemnation’; Gentilcore, ‘Adapt Yourself’.

⁶⁴ Cajani and Saba, ‘La notte devota’, *passim*. Reinforcing reform was the Jesuit use of the cheap ‘festive’ pamphlet to publicise and commemorate celebrations of the *quarantore* during Carnival season. Nussdorfer, ‘Print and Pagaentry’, 459.

⁶⁵ Borromeo, ‘Memoriale’, published in Taviani, *La commedia*, 26. See also his ‘Edito per la proibizione’, in *Ibid.*, 14-16. In the 1590s Carlo Bascape, the Barnabite acolyte of Borromeo and later bishop of Novara, gave a more explicatory account of this free-associating circle of ‘capital vices’ embodied by Carnival: the “pride of sumptuous banquets and festivals, the avarice of big gambling, the lust of the orgy, masking, dancing, the ire that comes as a result of games [of cards or jacks], the greed of the banquets, the envy of the competition of clothing and other excessive display”. Bascape, ‘Contra gli errori’, in *Ibid.*, 49-50. On Borromeo’s Milan, above all see De Boer, *The Conquest*, esp. ch. 6, which also discusses the limits of Borromeo’s ‘extraordinary social experiment’.

⁶⁶ Borromeo, ‘Memoriale’, in Taviani, *La commedia*, 29-30. See also the other documents in this collection from Borromeo and other clergy, *Ibid.*, 15-63, and the anonymous *Discorso contra il carnevale*, published in 1607, *Ibid.*, 70-81. More widely, Burke, *Popular Culture*, 289-35.

enemies of the cross of Jesus Christ”,⁶⁷ what was the truth of the person under the mask? Where was the pious “interior” that eucharistic ritual, frequent confession and doctrinal education were meant to fashion and which reformers wanted to drive “exterior” action and appearance, imagining that the two could be brought into a specular relationship? Masking seemed to mock reformers’ essentialist fantasies of a consistent and unified Christian subject – “inside and out”, as Borromeo put it.

Intrinsic to reformist thought was an ideal of substitution, which not only meant discarding confraternal banquets and festive excesses for devotional ritual, but switching the same resources to true charity. Censures of Carnival regularly drew attention to an idea of false expenditure, and there seems little question that the economic pressures mounting on artisans, as outlined at the beginning of this chapter, emboldened and legitimised reformers. When the episcopal authorities ordered feasts scrapped within artisan confraternities, they often specifically instructed that the money be redirected to charity. To complete two examples of the 1570s and 1580s cited above: the Assumption at the Canto al Monteloro replaced its forbidden meal by raising the provision of dowries to its members by 10 *lire* to 35 *lire* for each girl.⁶⁸ And when Santa Maria della Neve had to ban meals at the feast of the Miracle, it “exhorted the brothers, in exchange, to give alms or a make a collection for the poor of the parish, or augment the dowries that are normally given every year, which would be a greater service to God and of more use to one’s neighbour”.⁶⁹

These cases involved a degree of direct outside coercion, but in straitened circumstances the moral economy promoted by reformers also found a purchase within artisan associations. In 1602, the dyers confraternity of San Onofrio stopped running its annual *palio* to celebrate the feast of the saint, and instead “dispensed the said money in dowries and other works of charity among their people.”⁷⁰ A few years later, in 1606, when the Parte questioned why the *palio* had ceased, especially since it was subsidised by Ferdinando I,⁷¹ the confraternity’s *proeditore* explained: “Because our university has fallen into poverty due to the absence of work, and is overburdened by

⁶⁷ Borromeo, ‘Memoriale’, in Taviani, *La commedia*, 27.

⁶⁸ ‘In cambio di così fatte spese si creschino le dote delle fanciulle lire dieci per ciascuna che prima si dava lire venticinque....’ Capitoli, 811, 16v.

⁶⁹ ‘Esortando li fratelli in quel cambio a fare una lemosina o colletta per il poveri della parrocchia, o in aumento della dote che sono saliti dare ogni anno, il che sarà maggior servito d’Iddio, et utilità del prossimo.’ Capitoli, 606, f. 52r.

⁷⁰ ‘Et havere dispensato li detti denari in dote e opere di carita nelli stessi popoli come perle scritte del università appare et e di spesa di lire 20 in circa.’ Tintori, A.IV.4, ff. 45r-46v. According to Bocchi, writing in 1590, the dyers’ *palio* of San Onofrio was in fact run the Sunday after the saint’s feast day, June 11, so to not clash with the *palio* of San Barnaba that day, which commemorated the important historical victory of Florence at Campaldino. Bocchi, *Beauties of the City*, 106.

⁷¹ Parte, 1474, f. 411v; Tintori, A.IV.4, 45v-46r. It is unclear what the annual subsidy amounted to. The dyers said they had spent around 20 *lire*. The amounts seem to be already much diminished in comparison to the early 15th century: in the 1427 *catasto*, the hospital of San Onofrio declared that ‘fa l’anno la festa di S. Nofri e ’l palio, che vi si spende L150 e più.’ *Catasto*, 185, f. 628r-v, quoted in Trexler, *Public Life*, 405n.

the sick of our house and by [payments for] births and dowries given to the daughters of all our dyers who get married, and by many other continual expenses, it was forced to leave aside pleasures and *feste* and the *palio* and look to these things instead, at least until our university is in a better state to hold such *feste*, because pious works matter more than *feste*.”⁷² The *proveditore* immediately went on to make the link between the *palio* and the classic horseback ritual of the *potenze*. “In the time when they used to do [the *palio*], the dyers did it as their own festivity,” he said, “and [likewise] the other *feste* that they no longer do, such as *armeggerie* and jousting, and standing on horses and clashing lances, nor the *saracino* and other *feste* with which they delighted themselves and which today are not done. And all this used to be done at their own expense, just like the *palio*.”⁷³ The dyers had long been known for jousting, and while the Dyers *potenza* never became one of the five official civic *armeggerie* brigades of the 16th century, the Prato emperor nonetheless counted it as a sixth “*armeggianti*” group in 1577, and at one point during those festivities the Dyers did indeed perform “*armeggerie* in the ancient style of the city”.⁷⁴ When San Onofrio’s *proveditore* wrote about dumping the *palio*, he must have been almost inevitably drawn to think to the wider ritual scene, since *palio* and *potenza* seemed to be symbolically linked. Apart from the horseback connection itself, the *palio* had originally started at the Canto agli Alberti, the *residenza* of the Dyers *potenza*, and although the race was now run from Porta al Prato, as were all the city’s *palii*, the dyers *palio*, fielding the arms of the trade and those of the Medici, continued to be hung at the Canto agli Alberti the day before the race, before being moved up the Corso the next morning to the oratory of San Onofrio.⁷⁵ Indeed, the *proveditore* may only have been redacting the discussions held at an extraordinary meeting in 1606 to account for the *palio*’s demise. At that gathering the confraternal captains included Lessandro Savelli, *carmalingo* of the Dyers *potenza* four years later in 1610, and Giulio Carletti, a *potenza* counsellor. A 15-man *pratica* had also been brought in for the debate, including Iacopo Rondinino, another Dyers *potenza* counsellor, his

⁷² ‘... perchè essendo venuta la nostra università in povertà rispetto al pocho lavorare, e essendo sopraffatti dalli amalati di nostra chasa e dali parti e dalle doti che si danno alle fanciulle che si maritano di tutti i nostri tintori, e di molte altre spese che di continuo abbiamo, che c’è stato forza lasare li piaceri e feste e palio e attendere alla chose sopra dette insino che la nostra università trova meglio comodi di fare dette feste, perchè inporta più lopera pie che le feste.’ Tintori, D.I.1, f. 117v.

⁷³ ‘.... non lo facendo per che in quello temppo che si faceva e’ tintori per loro festeggiare lo facevano, e de l’altre feste che non le fanno più come armeggiare e rompere lannce, e in su e’ cavalli anndare ritti e rompere le lannce, ne il saracino e altre loro feste che si diletstavano che oggi non si fanno. E tutto facevano i loro spese, e simile il palio.’ Tintori, D.I.1, f. 117v.

⁷⁴ Depos, 987, ins. 68; Ricci, 226. The Dyers also received a 50 *scudi* ducal gift in 1577, equal to the other *armeggeria* brigades. As noted in previous chapters, dyers had appeared with a king on the feast of San Onofrio as far back as 1333; while in 1391, without doubt a reference to the dyers, ‘la brighata del Chorsso fano la festa di sancto Nofri, armeggiando tutto di per la città e ’n sulla piazza de’ Signoria, posto il saracino, e’ ruporvi molte aste’. Molho and Sznura, *Alle bocche*, 104.

⁷⁵ Tintori, D.I.1, f. 117v.

father, Mariotto, and Battista Golpi, counsellor in 1610 of the Mela, one of the five official jousting *potenze* that had performed to a civic audience for at least a century.⁷⁶

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Political theory of the later 16th century tended to stress the religious duties of the Catholic prince. As ‘absolute’ rule was naturalised as divinely ordained, the ruler was enjoined to act as the “vicar of God”, the guarantor of moral law. In one of his doctrinal tracts of the 1580s, Iacopo Ansaldi described the bearer of the decalogue to humankind as “Grand Duke Moses”, an identification the Medici liked to make themselves: in his first major painting commission for the Palazzo Vecchio, Cosimo I figured himself as a symbolic Moses, leading his people to the promised land, a theocratic image reappropriated by the new principate from the Savonarolans and the last republic.⁷⁷ In practice, the Medici dukes, like most temporal princes, were hardly at one with the more vociferous proponents or radical proposals of reform. Yet as the “example” made at Sant’Ambrogio in 1600 suggests, they supported many of its aims. Indeed, the worsening economic climate from the 1580s arguably pushed the ducal state into a closer alignment with the moral economy promoted by reformers, especially since it bound the early modern state and the city’s artisans and labourers ever more tightly in bonds of charity. In 1588, these reformist imperatives took their first big step onto the civic stage, becoming entwined with the festivities of the *potenze* and building themselves into the terms of transaction between artisans and prince.

As discussed in the previous chapter, in 1588, following his brother’s death, Ferdinando I sought the regeneration of the dynastic state and its contracts. Like his predecessors, he looked to renew relations with the states of the *potenze*, seeing them, as had his predecessors, as a channel through which artisan Florence could be granted public honour and recognition. “He made [plebeians] many alms, kindnesses and courtesies, and he had tips given to all the *potentie*; and thus on May Day there arose an infinite number of them,” wrote Giuliano de’ Ricci.⁷⁸ That traditional day of *potenze* festivity launched “festivity, dancing and drinking” that carried through

⁷⁶ Tintori, A.IV.4, f. 46v. For their names as *potenze* in 1610: Parte, 1478, ff. 163r, 222r (Tintori); 149r, 229r (Mela).

⁷⁷ Ansaldi’s *Discorsi spirituali et civili* of 1583; cited in Aranci, *Formazione*, 108. For the identification of Cosimo I with Moses in the chapel of Eleanora, completed in 1545, see Cox-Rearick, *Bronzino’s Chapel*, ch. 12. She also points out that Moses was a fairly common model for princes, and that Machiavelli had presented Moses as a model for the Medici in the 1510s. Savonarolan analogies had been used in key legislation in the Last Republic, and the Savonarolan underground of the 1530s, the Capi Rossi, identified Savonarola as the ‘New Moses’. *Ibid.*, 298; Stephens, *The Fall*, 215-6; Polizzotto, ‘Confraternities, Conventicles and Political Dissent’. The theme appears again in the 1630s, in the statue of Moses for the Boboli Gardens, where Moses bringing water from a rock, one of Bronzino’s images in the 1540s, is explicitly linked to Ferdinando II and his new aqueduct. Campbell, ‘Hard Times’, 189.

⁷⁸ Ricci, 514-6.

intermittently until San Giovanni, when they transformed the city centre with festive ephemera and displays of textiles, much of it donated by Ferdinando, and played out rites of status inversion with the textile merchants.⁷⁹ The centrepiece of ducal largesse was cheap grain: the state's warehouses had been opened up at well below the market rate after another poor harvest had caused prices to soar.⁸⁰

However, a discordant, or rather transformative, note was struck at the heart of these festivities – for directly after May Day a campaign against the city's taverns was brought to a head. To the reform-minded, the tavern – almost synonymous with the *potenze* – was in space what the profane *fiesta* was in time, a primary locus of sin, the negative image of the church or confraternal oratory. Customary injunctions in confraternal statutes to avoid the place “where God does not live” appear to have become more frequent and strident in the later 1500s.⁸¹ Galantini's congregation, among its many other prohibitions, banned tavern-going for its adepts, and this was clearly central to doctrinal schooling more widely. A “rule book” belonging to the Assunta in via Tedesca's school of the spirit, no doubt representative of the doctrinal literature circulating in Florence, warned: “Because it is a very prejudicial thing, they [the students] are above all prohibited when they are outside our meeting place from going to any place where you eat, drink, gamble and other such things, since many men are lost due to this, because greed destroys every good emotion.”⁸²

Now, one week after May Day, and in the wake of intense public preaching against the city's taverns over Easter, the silk weavers confraternity of Santa Croce, quickly followed by the other main textile corporations and several other occupational sodalities, took the extraordinary decision to place an outright ban on tavern-going for their members. “The use and frequenting of public taverns not only stands against all polite and civil life but also against Christian life,” the silk weavers wrote into their book of deliberations.⁸³ The textile confraternities voted to strip

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 519. Referring to the Nespola and Olmo.

⁸⁰ Lapini, 267-8. The duke's first interventions on grain had come in January. I also note here that Ferdinando I partially reversed his brother's policy of using forced labour, such as that at Pratolino; Butters, ‘Pressed Labour’, 75-7.

⁸¹ On previous statutes, see *Ibid.*, 88. To the litany of sins associated with taverns the later 16th century added heresy. For example, Capitoli, 45, f. 30; 494, ch. 11. The phrase in quotes, which was generic, can be found in the butchers' confraternity of San Antonio and the wool weavers confraternity of Santa Maria della Pietà: Capitoli, 623, ch. 8; 608, ff. 6v-7r. Synodal law extended older communal legislation, insisting that inns, like the homes of prostitutes, should be kept at a distance from churches and especially convents of nuns. *Etruria sacra*, 136 (Synod of 1573, rub. 13, 2). Of course, as the *potenze* amply illustrate, church and tavern were hardly so mutually exclusive for artisans in their everyday experience; see on this theme, Kümin, ‘Sacred Church and Wordly Tavern’.

⁸² ‘Sopratutti gli si proibisce come cosa molto pregiudichevole fuori delle nostre ogni ritrovata dove si mangi beva giuchi e simili che per questo verso molti huomini si sono persi per distruggere la gola ogni buon sentimento’. ‘Regole’, no.10, insert in Capitoli, 827.

⁸³ Atteso come sia non solo contro a ogni vivere politico et civili, ma etiam contro a vivere christiano l'uso et frequentia dalla publica osteria, et in danno delle anime christiane, destrutione delle proprie case, figli et famiglie'; CRS, 677, f. 9r-v (May 9, 1588). A well-informed report of the vote was made by the anonymous chronicler of the 1580s. BRF, Piccolo diario, ff. 116-7. See also

themselves of rights and benefits – “all the offices and honours they love” – if they were caught in a tavern, with expulsion for repeat offences.⁸⁴ Inside the corporations the votes were virtually unanimous: all but 18 of 597 silk weavers, 486 wool weavers and 140 dyers cast their beans in the affirmative.⁸⁵ Evidence underscoring that this was a decision taken by a social class – by “all the *plebe* in Florence”, as Giuliano de’ Ricci exaggerated – and that the campaign against the taverns had been primarily directed at artisans in the first place, is provided by the dyers’ confraternity. In San Onofrio, that social microcosm in which members of old and noble Florentine *casate* sat as *maestre*, tavern-going was *only* prohibited for *lavoranti*, the ranks from which the Dyers’ *potenza* came. The vote here was taken after “the invocation of the holy spirit and a devout exhortation” by the same friar from Santa Croce who, seven years later, would galvanise the labourers to form their “little company”. As San Onofrio’s chancellor later remarked, before he went on to condemn the labourers for their presumption, the founding of the little company had “revealed a righteous zeal, just in showing that they wanted to do a beneficial thing for their souls and remove themselves from gambling and the tavern”.⁸⁶

Along with the ban, the confraternities set up an enforcement regime that allowed police officials, as well as anyone of “good reputation” to collect a small reward for making denunciations against “transgressors”, and this encouraged brothers to accuse each other. In one of the first denunciations made in the confraternity of Santa Croce, in September 1588, seven silk weavers claimed to have caught another four, including a serving confraternal captain, drinking in the Trave Torta. Among the seven who bore witness was the young Alessandro Biliotti, the future emperor of the Prato, and two other members of the Biliotti weaving family from Santa Lucia sul Prato, probably his brothers.⁸⁷ What were Alessandro’s motivations? Ambitious opportunism? Sincere enthusiasm for the prohibition and the image of Christian renewal that it embodied? A little of both perhaps. In any event, his rise to prominence in the brotherhood coincided with his advocacy of the taverns ban. Two months later, in November, after Santa Croce’s four public procurators were dismissed over the alleged destruction of confraternal property, Alessandro was chosen as one of their replacements. In December he was appointed one of four assessors of Santa Croce’s

Ricci, 515; Lapini, 267-8. The ban on taverns is also noted by Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 203-5, though without reference to the simultaneous festival of the *potenze*.

⁸⁴ ‘.. privati di tutti gli uffizzi e honori che amano...’ The quote is from the dyers confraternity of S Onofrio. Tintori, A.IV.3, f. 129v.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*; CRS, 677, f. 9r; Cantini, *Legislazione*, 12, 364.

⁸⁶ ‘... e questo apariva buono zelo, solo dimostravano di volere fare cosa grata per l’anime loro e per levarsi da il guocho e osterie, di potersi ritirare da mattina e giorno nella chiesa della università di Santo Noferi e quivi fare orazione a modo di compagnia ... facendo tutto il consiglio di uno frate di santa croce loro protettore...’ Tintori, A.III.1, f. 100r. The chancellor was writing in 1603.

⁸⁷ CRS, 677, f. 13r (September 25, 1588). Apart from Alessandro di Andrea, the witnesses were Carlo di Andrea and Marco di Andrea. Alessandro apparently renounced his 3 lire reward for the denunciation.

membership for a new imborsation for office, a telling role at what was clearly a highly divisive moment.⁸⁸

The ban on taverns and its aftermath deepens our understanding of the process and politics of reform described over the previous pages. Firstly, it points to the diffusion of the new redemptive-disciplining ethic inside artisan communities, but at the same time it forces into relief the tensions this could generate within them, something that confraternal statute books often conceal. Indeed, the way the taverns ban regime encouraged surveillance and denunciation, and so furnished a mechanism around which all manner of other agendas could coalesce, makes it analogous in some respects to the Inquisition. Almost every person hauled before the office of the papal nuncio, which acted as Florence's inquisitorial court in the 1560s and 1570s, was an artisan or labourer, most of them from San Frediano; the denunciations against them came, overwhelmingly, from others of the same class, usually their neighbours.⁸⁹ Within artisan institutions themselves, meanwhile, the divisions that reform could generate, or consolidate, is suggested by the early trajectory of Ippolito Galantini, a man who emerged out of, and to some extent in reaction to, the weaver subculture of the Prato empire. In the two decades before he established his permanent congregation in 1607, Galantini was invited by several confraternities to provide them with his evangelical leadership, but then fell victim to the divisions that crystallised around him. Often he ended up being forced out.⁹⁰ Indeed, within the silk weavers' confraternity of Santa Croce, one important plank of the anti-taverns regime established in 1588 soon crumbled, unsustainable for an elective and participatory body whose sacred bedrock was peace. In 1591, the captains, implicitly acknowledging that the unity of the brotherhood was at stake, were forced to partially defuse the ban by reversing part of their original statute to prohibit weavers from testifying against each other.⁹¹ Clearly support for the taverns ban was never as universal, or at least not as committed, as the original vote suggested.

Yet the campaign against the taverns ramified beyond its failure, because it pushed forward – and again dramatically exposes – the shifts that were taking place within artisans' associations, shifts in part conditioned by ecclesiastical and ultimately ducal authorities, who privileged agents of reform. The episcopal palace was involved in the taverns ban from the beginning, and it was Archbishop Alessandro de' Medici who ordered that “any of the Bargello's police, and familiars or servant of any public office of justice of both ecclesiastical and secular courts of the city” were to

⁸⁸ For Alessandro as *agitatore* (November 8, 1588) and *accoppiatore* (December 20, 1588) *Ibid.*, ff. 17r, 18r. Alessandro's profile in Santa Croce, as well as Santa Lucia sul Prato, is documented in Chapter Two. For the incident involving the old procurators and destruction of property, see also Lombardi, *Povert  maschile*, 118. Previously, in 1586, Alessandro had been called upon to represent the quarter of Santa Maria Novella in the company's 20-man *pratica*. *Ibid.*, f. 6r.

⁸⁹ Prosperi, 'L'inquisizione fiorentina', 104, and *passim*. On divisions sparked by reformist zeal, see also Zardin, 'Relaunching', esp. 205-9.

⁹⁰ Aranci, *Formazione*, ch. 6, *passim*.

⁹¹ 'Nessuno tessitore, torcitore o filatoiaio possa o debba fare alcuna relazione o inquisizione di haver trovato alcuno o alcuni all'osteria et facendoli non gli sia adnessa'. CRS, 677, f. 33v (May 19, 1591).

be rewarded, by the confraternities, for denunciations – in other words, the “spies” whom artisans usually kept as far as possible from their associations.⁹² Before the vote, the word around the city was that new grand duke greatly desired an end to tavern going and that this was behind his heavily subsidised grain. Afterwards, the textile confraternities formally called upon Ferdinando I – without whom the police could not have been co-opted – to ratify the ban, which he duly did, and a year later the anti-taverns statutes of the wool weavers and dyers were incorporated into the general legislative reform of the Wool Guild.⁹³ Seeking confirmation for their new statute, the dyers said “they were moved to do this for their own universal benefit and in order to do something pleasing to Your Most Serene Highness and to honour God and San Honofrio”.⁹⁴

In the weeks after the vote was taken, the substitution of carnivalesque excess for charity was processionally presented to the city. The textile confraternities ritualised their renunciation of the taverns by marching with wax, “singing hymns and psalms with devotion”, to the Marian shrine at the Annunziata, to seal their pact with God and the prince.⁹⁵ On May 22, the dyers, at the culmination of their procession, reprised ducal charity with their own gift of grain, sending about four *moggia* (c1,500kg) to eight “poor monasteries” of nuns.⁹⁶ A week earlier, meanwhile, the wool weavers and woolbeaters, about 1,500 men, had joined together under the shadow of the Duomo to process up to the Annunziata together. “They met at the Canto alla Paglia and here made peace, since in the stone fight they had been competitors,” one Florentine wrote, “and then they united in pairs, a weaver and a beater, with eight candles and a Crucifix at the front”.⁹⁷ In other words, rather than resolving their rivalries with a feast, a classic element of *potenze* ritual was brought to a symbolic closure with peace figured as a pact of abstinence.

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⁹² ‘Si notifica a ogni et qualunque bargello, sbirro et famiglio, donzello o tavolaccino et qualsivoglia publico esecutore della justitia di qualunque corte tanta ecclesiastica quanto secolare della città.’ AAF, FC, 1, f. 871. In one case in 1590, the servants of the Otto denounced 27 men, though only nine of them turned out to be members of Santa Croce. CRS, 677, f. 32r-v.

⁹³ The wool weavers’ and dyers’ final position, approved by the duke in May 1588, was inserted into the general reform of the Wool Guild, ratified in July 1589. Both are published in Cantini, *Legislazione*, 12, 364-7.

⁹⁴ ‘Si sono mossi a questo per beneficio universale di fatti loro, et per fare cosa grata a V.A.S. et per honore Dio et di S Honofrio’. Tintori, A.IV.3, f. 130r (May 12, 1588).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 131r.

⁹⁶ Le Murate, Poverine, San Iacopo, San Giuseppe, San Orsola, San Onofrio di Foligno, Convertite, Santa Chiara. *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ ‘I Battilani e Tessitori di Lana ... si ricontrarono al Canto alla Paglia, e quivi fecero la pace, perchè nel gioco de sassi erano stati contrari ... e di poi si unirono insieme accoppiandosi un Tessitore, e un Battilano, con otto ceri innazi, e il Crocifisso’. BRF, Piccolo diario, f. 116. The chronicler who compiled this ‘diary’ could have been referring to a stone fight on or after May Day that year, but may have intended the well-known fight organised by Duke Francesco in 1584, which he also discussed: *Ibid.*, ff. 26-7.

By 1610, it appeared to take very little to effectively remove the *potenze* from the civic stage altogether. As set out in the last chapter, the familiar tensions were present, couched in the familiar language of licence and control by police officials, who were watchful as ever that rituals of collective self-assertion did not betray, or become, claims that threatened rather than created civic peace. The day after the future Ferdinando II's birth, July 15, the shops were closed, 1,000 *scudi* were thrown from the windows of the Palazzo Vecchio and Pitti, barrels of wine were opened in each Piazza.⁹⁸ All this seemed to signal the crossing of a well-understood threshold and the beginning of the reign of the *potenze*.

However, very quickly this was first constricted, and then interrupted. On July 16, in the single cursory account of these festivities, the official court diarist Cesare Tinghi wrote that artillery was fired from the Fortezza, another 1,000 *scudi* was thrown from the same palaces, and 80 prisoners were freed from the Bargello and Stinche – and, he added, “all the *potenze* of Florence had risen up and wanted to do *armeggerie* and make festivities; and so that tumult should not arise, as had already begun to happen, His Highness had them quietened down and ordered that each should stay within his own dominion”.⁹⁹ Less than four weeks later, on August 9, the captain of the Bargello reported to the duke that, as Cosimo II had instructed, “I have instructed all the *Potentie* of this City who are yet to make festivities that if His Most Serene Highness wants them to do so he will let them know. I have made them give me the banners.”¹⁰⁰ There was some degree of resistance. A few *potenze* gave the police chief their old flags and kept new ones made with money from the ducal gift, telling him they were still in the shops of mercers or painters; six brigades had not given him a flag at all. But by the last week in September all the banners were in his hands, and artisans were never to be in full possession of them again.¹⁰¹ Without great clamour, a minor watershed had taken place in Florentine civic ritual. Seven years later the Parte reminded a ducal secretary that the *potenze* had “made so much noise and some disorder that Your Highness ordered that their flags be taken away from them and kept here in the office of the Parte, with our *proveditore*, and should not be given to anyone without the express order of Your Highness – and that's what's been done with them.”¹⁰² Perhaps some particular act of violence precipitated the seizing of the banners, yet the sources suggest not, and in any case that would have represented only the most proximate of

⁹⁸ BNF, Ms Gino Capponi, 261, vol. 1, f. 294v.

⁹⁹ ‘Adi 16 di Luglio non si mancherà di dire che le potenze di Firenze tutte s'erano sollevate per volere armeggiare et festeggiare et perchè non nascere tumulto come già era cominciato S.A. li fece quietare ma che ogniuno stesse nel suo dominio.’ *Ibid.*, f. 295v.

¹⁰⁰ [H]o fatto comandamento a tutte le Potentie di questa città che restino di festeggiare, che quando S.A. Sma vorrà che e' festegino lo farà dire loro. Mi sono fatto dare le insegne.’ Parte, 1478, f. 112r.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² ‘Facevano tanti rumori ed qualche disordine che V.A. ordinò che si togliesse loro l'insegne e si serbassero qui nel ufficio della Parte dal nostro proveditore, ne si dessero a nessuno senza ordine espresso di V.A., e così n'è fatto.’ Parte, 787, f. 135r (1617). For the order to the Parte to store ‘tutte le Bandiere di tutte le potenzie’, as explained by a Parte functionary to the magistracy's *proveditore*, Parte, 1510, unpag (August 14).

causes.¹⁰³ Now “some *disordine*”, almost scripted into the performance, was enough for Cosimo II to push a ritual genre into collapse.

From the moment festivities kicked off, in fact, the erosion of carnivalesque ritual vocabularies was evident. The idea of a symbolic redistribution of wealth, of ducal tribute, to the kings of the poor in a notionally inversional universe had been supplanted to a significant extent by that of a rational charitable subvention to the poor as themselves. Thus the novel idea of the census of July 17. Before distributing the ducal gift a few days later, Parte *providitore* Raffaello Carnesecchi emphasised that he had taken into account “the quality and condition of each *Potenzia*, and the number of persons, and the money was dispensed very methodically”.¹⁰⁴ And indeed there were a few significant changes to the payouts in comparison to 1577. While rank on one hand became somewhat more delineated, it could be decisively overridden by head count. In 1577 all the *armeggerie* brigades got 50 *scudi*; in 1610 they received varying amounts, with the Nespola getting less than half of the 50 *scudi* given to the Prato emperor and far less than many ‘regular’ *potenze* due to the comparatively few people it claimed for its territory.¹⁰⁵ The census also underscored that this was no longer a transaction with *potenze* brigades as such, but with the entire population of the ‘poor’. As the government had called for, each *potenza* submitted two censuses, one of men, the other of women and children under 12. Half of Cosimo II’s gift of 1,600 *scudi* was given in cash given to the men, to “make festivities”, while the remainder was spent on bread, true assistential charity, which was distributed to the women and children at the major churches of each quarter.¹⁰⁶

There is little question that the economic conditions which provided a catalyst for the anti-taverns campaign in 1588 had become more entrenched by 1610. The pressures on artisans outlined at the start of this chapter became more urgent towards the end of the century. Rents spiralled upwards from around 1590 and, in the wake of the severe famine of that year, grain prices

¹⁰³ Supplications to the Otto di Guardia for 1610, a rubric that sometimes reveals events with criminal repercussions, have not survived; other rubrics, including formal case decisions, show no trace of the *potenze*.

¹⁰⁴ ‘[Ho] auto però riguardo alla qualità e condizione d’ ciascuna potenza et al numero delle persone e si son dispensati con regola assai’. Parte, 1478, f. 69r.

¹⁰⁵ The other *armeggerie* brigades – Prato 50, Città Rossa 40, Mela and Monteloro 35 – were the highest paid (along with the Woolbeaters on 40), but they were also in the top seven *potenze* for population numbers, the lowest being the Monteloro with 2,020. The Nespola only got 20 *scudi*, having submitted a number of 740, though its old status still pushed it higher than ten other brigades with larger population totals. Similarly, the dyers, a major textile *potenza* and the unofficial sixth *armeggeria* brigade, also got 50 *scudi* in 1577, but now received 25 *scudi* with a population count of 633. The Vice-emperor, who received 40 *scudi* in 1577 was down to 14 in 1610, on a population count of 1,422. Parte, 1478, ff. 291r-92v.

¹⁰⁶ A few days after the men were paid at the Parte’s palace on July 21, one of their servants was instructed to go in person ‘alli infrascritti Monarca, Duchetti et signori rispettivamente per ciascheduno di loro faccia intendere a tutte le donne et lo fanciulli et ragazze che insino in 12 anni della loro iuridizione che sabato mattina prossimo che saremo alli 31 del presente a ore otto si ritrovino tutte dette donne e fanciulli e ragazze nella chiesa di Santa Croce dove sara dispensato a loro il Pane’. Parte, 1478, f. 276r. Similarly for the churches of San Lorenzo, Santa Maria Novella and the Carmine. *Ibid.*, ff. 285-7.

remained very high into the early 17th century, prompting the ducal government to intervene more systematically, if not always effectively, in the supply of food.¹⁰⁷ No doubt the impoverishment of artisan men played a part in Cosimo II's decision to stop semi-armed associations from claiming the *piazza*. But in tandem with that, and underpinning the nature of the ducal gift, was a long process of cultural delegitimation. The claiming of tribute by tavern-based artisan kings, to be spent on regal pomp, jousting and feasting, was a ritual language that had been gravely undermined, sharply dissociated from the realm of the sacred and emptied of its ability to articulate a moral contract, or peace, for all Florentines on the privileged stage of the city. Indeed, the reformist undermining of lower class inversional ritual arguably informed the growing distaste of elites for symbolic inversions of status in general. As early as 1576, in Ronald Weissman's well-known example, the confraternity of the Arcangelo Raffaele transformed its Holy Thursday rite of washing the feet because too many of the brothers considered it "vile". From then on no *gentiluomini* were involved, but only 12 "poor men" of the company, who washed each other's feet before being given a meal.¹⁰⁸ Weissman suggested that the rise of the *potenze* may have compensated for the decline of liminal ritual in the confraternal setting. That may have been true up to a point. As set out in Chapter Two, the deepening social divisions of the 16th century were what underpinned the presence of carnivalesque worker kingdoms on the Florentine public stage. But the aristocratisation of elites also made the act of identifying with the uncivil and bestial poor one that required an imaginative effort, predicated on the implicit belief that doing so made moral, even salvational, sense. That, it seems, was no longer the case.

2. Outside the Gates of Florence: Survival and Transformations

After 1610, at the juncture where ecclesiastical and ducal discipline met lower-class strategies to preserve their distinguishing traditions, an accommodation quickly emerged. Artisans were usually granted their flags – not for any *armeggerie* or carnival feasting, but for what could be figured from any perspective as works of pious charity. With extremely few exceptions, the only use the *potenze* had from their banners after 1610 was for trips outside the city, to the Marian shrine of Impruneta or to mendicant convents, where, in exchange for cash, wax or other gifts, they received the advocacy of the Virgin or the intercessory prayers of the friars, who effectively solicited these trips

¹⁰⁷ Food supply is discussed at the beginning of this chapter; on rents, see Litchfield, *Florence Ducal Capital*, par 316.

¹⁰⁸ Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 225-8. As he points out, Archbishop Altovoti made the same substitution in the cathedral in 1569, replacing the canons with 12 poor men, who were then treated to a meal.

by coming to Florence to beg for alms.¹⁰⁹ These short pilgrimages, discussed briefly in previous chapters, represented both a legitimate spirituality and expenditure, sometimes practised by these same men with ecclesiastical approval (minus tavern stops) in the more formal setting of the confraternity.

Processing in groups to “holy places” in the *contado* was both a long-standing and a distinctly artisan tradition; or as one diarist put it in 1547: “In this time it was always more the custom of the *plebe* than the citizenry to go [to Impruneta], especially *en masse*”.¹¹⁰ Initially evident in confraternities, this practice had coalesced by the mid to late 15th century and is linked to the *potenze* from the moment they first emerge in the sources. The confraternity of the Resurrezione pointed to an already established practice when it told its brothers in 1485 that the barony of the Macina, not the confraternity, should pay “when the said king should want to make some gift either to Impruneta or Fiesole, or somewhere else” – and by Fiesole the Macina may have had in mind the Observant convent of San Francesco a Fiesole, a destination that later appears in the Parte records.¹¹¹ The men of the Biliemme, as discussed in Chapter Two, were partly inspired to build their own Madonna by the celebrated arrival in Florence of the powerful peace-making icon of Impruneta in 1522; but at the same time they placed the idea of pilgrimage to the Madonna at the heart of their tabernacle, with San Iacopo Maggiore, complete with pilgrim’s staff, directly flanking the Virgin (fig. 6). As well as representing a reverent spiritual appeal of the supplicant to the Madonna, San Iacopo arguably also spoke to, perhaps promised, the actual outward processions that the *potenze* undertook.

The artisans’ journeys to *contado* shrines and convents synthesised several strands of Florentine devotion. One probable impetus – and certainly a later prototype – for this pilgrimage culture were the pan-European “Bianchi” processions that entered and galvanised Florence in 1399. As contemporaries described it, men and women of every social class put on crude white robes – hence Bianchi – and marched, according to quarter, to towns outside the city, “and wherever they went they made peace and concord with great devotion”.¹¹² In the 16th century, Florentines looked back to the Bianchi processions as mass rituals of unity, undertaken, as one confraternity remembered in 1531 – immediately after the shattering war that ended the republic – because of the “many wars and disputes among the princes of the world”, but also, as another said, because of

¹⁰⁹ For the friars of San Michele alla Doccia near Fiesole coming to Florence, Levi, *A History*, 58, 95. There are 61 supplications in the Parte archive between 1612 and 1629 – of these only two do not concern pilgrimages to ‘luoghi pii’ outside of Florence, though several more request banners for this as well as something else.

¹¹⁰ Coppi, *Cronaca*, 67.

¹¹¹ ‘E ancora quando detto re volesse fare alcuno dono, o alla impruneta o a fiesole o altrove non vogliamo che la compagnia nè sia nè possa essere obrigata un cosa alcuna. ma faccino el re colla barona di loro borsa.’ Capitoli, 100, f. 9r.

¹¹² On the Bianchi in Florence, see Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 50-56. This contemporary chronicler is quoted at 55. See also Bornstein, *The Bianchi*, 82-93 and *passim*; Henderson, *Piety*, 51-4

civic factionalism and tensions between “noble and ignoble people” in the wake of the suppressed Ciompi revolution.¹¹³ The continuing potency of the Bianchi story is suggested by a penitential procession in 1570 organised by the company of San Lorenzo in Piano to placate an angry God who had “had taken up the sword of justice because of the vendetta arising from many offences”, sending severe rains, lightning damage to the Duomo and an earthquake to Ferrara. Twenty-six confraternities with 400 torches gathered behind the brothers of San Lorenzo and their miraculous crucifix, one of the crosses believed to have been brought to Florence by the Bianchi in 1399, and toured the city until it arrived at the Annunziata, where Duke Francesco, the duchess Giovanna and Cardinal Ferdinando de’ Medici were waiting to pay homage.¹¹⁴ San Lorenzo in Piano – which as we have seen had several *potenze* men among its membership – was one of four confraternities that traced their origins, or claimed to derive, from the Bianchi movement. Two of these were closely linked to prominent *potenze*. In Sant’Ambrogio, San Michele della Pace called itself a Bianchi company, and both it and its neighbouring company of Santa Maria della Neve obliged their members to process annually to Impruneta, the latter’s foundational statutes of 1445 providing one of the earliest notices we possess of the artisan pilgrimage tradition.¹¹⁵ The confraternity of Santa Lucia sul Prato also claimed to own one of the original Bianchi crucifixes brought into Florence in 1399, and in 1602 it wrote into its statute book a long account of the Bianchi story and the Florentine brotherhoods that had carried forward its legacy. The brothers said that the archbishop of the time had ordered it and the other Bianchi companies to expose their crosses for three days, pray for peace and then “go with the sacred images in pilgrimage to visit some holy place indicated by God”.¹¹⁶ When this was written, the customary destination of these men, in the guise of the imperial *potenza* was, again, Impruneta. Indeed, when the confraternity of Santa Lucia tried in 1582 to formalise its links to the empire, it intended to do so in a chapter titled “Of the wax for Santa Maria Impruneta, and of the emperor, the head of the district (*paese*), and of the banner”.¹¹⁷

The other thread of Florentine ritual that wove its way into processions of gift-bearing kings was the cult of the Magi. Emerging in the sources in 1390, not long before the Bianchi processions, it became a major festival of the commune, the urban landscape reimagined as the Holy Land. The

¹¹³ Historically, these ‘disputes’ referred to the Milanese threat against Florence of the 1390s; Capitoli, 537, f. 5 (Crocefisso di Santa Maria Maddalena dei Bianchi, 1531), quoted in Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 51. The Bianchi had in fact marched under their crosses during the siege of Florence the year before, in February 1530. Stephens, *The Fall*, ch. 6. For the second quote, CRS, 1769, no. 1, unpag (Santa Lucia sul Prato, 1602).

¹¹⁴ ‘Che lo onnipotente Dio fussi con il suo populo grandemente irato anzi per purgarci de nostri gravi falli havessi presa la spada dell iustitia per la vendetta di tante offese desiderosi adunque questi honorandi fratelli placare la ira di sua divina Maiestà’. Capitoli, 265, ff. 38v-39r.

¹¹⁵ Capitoli 606, ff. 38v-41 (Santa Maria della Neve); Capitoli, 45, ff. 47-48 (San Michele della Pace).

¹¹⁶ ‘che andassero con le sacre immagini in pellegrinaggio a visitare qualche luogo sacro dove Dio gli’ havesse ispirate’. CRS, 1769, no. 1, unpag.

¹¹⁷ ‘Del ciero di Santa Maria Improneta e dell’imperadore capo di paese e della bandiera’. CRS, 1769, no. 1, unpag. For later Prato *potenza* flag requests to go to Impruneta, Parte 1486, f. 13r (1626, with reference to previous trips ‘ogni anno’), f. 36r (1627).

cult of the Magi was heavily supported by the Medici, who controlled its staging at Epiphany each year and famously identified themselves with the three kings.¹¹⁸ Indeed, Medici support for the nascent *potenze* was almost certainly connected, at least in part, to this feast, in which they appeared to co-opt their neighbourhood realms into a Magian geography of the city.¹¹⁹ It was chiefly in the pilgrimages of the *potenze*, though, that the cult of the Magi in Florence, which was in decline as a civic feast by the end of 15th century, echoed into the 1500s and beyond.¹²⁰ Biliemme, as noted earlier, may well have been a corruption of Betlemme, or Bethlehem, making the connection between the brigade's Madonna and Child tabernacle and biblical narrative especially resonant. It would not seem coincidental that one of the Bianchi companies, San Michele della Pace, chose, unusually, a Magian analogy to frame the dues owed by its members: "The holy Magi offered to God gold, incense and myrrh, and this presents an image to us, who want to sustain our company and be able to meet our expenses."¹²¹ In fact, there was some blending of Magi and Bianchi traditions, in that the later 'invention' of the Bianchi tradition had the miraculous crosses arriving in Florence between Nativity and Epiphany. Santa Lucia's 1582 statutes ordered masses on the last day of December, since "it was on the morning of San Salvestro that those carrying the crucifix brought it into our company".¹²² The unveiling of San Lorenzo in Piano's cross in 1570, noted above, took place on the Nativity, and it led the penitential procession on the feast of Santo Stefano.

In the *potenze*, then, artisans refashioned civic movements and cults in their own image. In artisan hands, Magian motifs, in which wealth was displayed, indeed, flaunted, as it was offered up to the godhead and turned into spiritual credit, was, much like the civic rituals examined in the last chapter, an assertion of their collective economic-occupational identities in the city under the sign of inversion. Indeed, there is evidence that until the later 16th century artisan pilgrimages to Impruneta usually took place shortly after May Day, and thus it is possible the donations of *potenze* kings to the Madonna of Impruneta or the "poor friars" came directly from the pockets of their rich

¹¹⁸ Kent, *Cosimo de' Medici*, 305-28, with extensive bibliography; the fundamental article remains Hatfield, 'The Compagnia de' Magi'.

¹¹⁹ Trexler links the Medicean Company of the Magi's kingdom of Armenia, noted in a letter of 1471 elaborating the Magian dominions, to the kingdom of the Macina, whose later confraternal counterpart, the Resurrezione, met in San Basilio, the church of the Armenian monks. Magi connections to Medici support for artisan festive groups may have gone back much further, as Kent and Simons suggest with a letter of 1439, in which Cosimo de' Medici's brother writes to a secretary of Cosimo requesting that a peasant be dressed up and sent as ambassador to the emperor from the king of Armenia. This document lends support to Trexler's suggestion that the Macine brigade was the same 'company of Armenians' who staged the Resurrection in 1459 and the Council of Florence in 1439. Trexler, *Public Life*, 400-6; Kent and Simons, 'Renaissance Patronage', 10.

¹²⁰ Magian rituals appear to have become increasingly the provenance of the poor across Europe during the 16th century; Trexler, *The Journey*, ch. 5.

¹²¹ 'Che i santi magi offersono a Dio oro, incenso e mirra, a figurare a noi ch' volendo mantenere la nostra compagnia et a poter sopperire alle nostr' spese'. Capitoli, 45, f. 32.

¹²² 'Fu in tale mattina di San Silvestro si posorno in nostra compagnia quelli sudetti che arrecorno el crocifisso'. CRS, 1769, no. 1, capitolo 11.

“subjects”¹²³ In any event, the pilgrimage was another moment of social peacemaking or contract – themes intrinsic to both its Bianchi and Magi sources – in which artisans aimed to affirm the brigade and its leadership, engage participation and recreate the territorial kingdom-community. The final text of the confraternity of Santa Lucia’s statute on Impruneta, which of course never mentioned the empire, can nonetheless be taken as a more formalised version of what artisans, as *potenze*, were looking to achieve. The confraternal captains were to call on ten men, chosen from among “every one of the company or outside the company, provided they live in the district (*paese*)” – this unusually inclusive formula no doubt designed to smuggle in any *potenze* men who were not confraternal brothers – to collect donations from “the men and women of every house”.¹²⁴ Later, flying the flag in advance of a journey, “publicly unfurled to get together the money”, was a customary practice.¹²⁵ Before going to the Capuchins at San Francesco al Monte in 1619, the Cornacchia at the Canto della Badia explained that it “keeps the banner hoisted at the said streetcorner in order to gather together the men who should give alms”.¹²⁶ In this way, the brigade’s presence was felt as it gathered funds and marched to its destination. Of their trip to Impruneta in 1617, the Purgers said it was “normal when they take such presents to go with their flag, trumpets and drums”, while in 1614, the Dyers, in a rare example of a visit inside Florence, said that when they went to the church of San Romolo in Piazza della Signoria, they wished to “unfurl the flag and carry the usual tools of the workshops on the said day of San Romolo, and be able to beat drums for three days in advance in order to gather the said dyers”.¹²⁷

In the wake of the confiscation of 1610, however, it was not a foregone conclusion that the *potenze* would survive at all. Cosimo II may never have intended to release the flags again, except, as I shall explore in the next chapter, for civic festivity on very different terms. The initiative came entirely from artisans themselves and the convents they patronised. In June 1613, for example, the Bakers’ Labourers wrote: “Since every year they usually make a gift to some order of friars with their flag, and because the said flag is with the Parte like those of the other *potenze*, they appeal to him, begging him to concede it for the 30th of the present month to take the usual gift to the

¹²³ Santa Lucia’s 1582 final statute on Impruneta ordered the brothers to carry the neighbourhood’s gift of wax to the shrine on the first Sunday of May, as did Santa Maria della Neve and San Michele della Pace. For *potenze* referring to the ‘poveri frati’, Parte, 1486, ff. 24r (Mela, 1624), 50r (Tavenkeepers, 1628).

¹²⁴ ‘Ancora vogliamo et ordiniamo che ogni’uno della compagnia o’ fuora della compagnia pure che sia habitante in paese la prima tornata d’aprile e’ capitani che a’ quel tempo saranno chiamino dieci huomini e’ quali vadino pel’ nostro popolo all’ huomini et alle donne a’ ogni casa’ CRS, 1769, no. 1, capitolo 15, unpag.

¹²⁵ ‘Tenerla pubblicamente spiegata ad effetto di mettere insieme denari’. Parte, 1486, f. 76 (Sferza, 1628). See also *Ibid.*, f. 15r (Garzoni di Fornai, 1626).

¹²⁶ ‘Se ne vogliono servire per tenerla inalberata su detta canttonanta per mettere insieme gli omini che diano limosina’ Parte, 1483, f. 378r.

¹²⁷ ‘Perchè è stato solitio quando portano tali presenti andare con la Insegna trombe e tamburi’. Parte, 787, f. 135r (Purgers); ‘Spiegar la sua insegna; et portare le usati e soliti strumenti di bottega di tintori per il detto giorno di Santo Romolo, et di poter tochar tamburo per 3 giorni avanti per adunare detti tintori’. Parte, 1480, f. 512r. (Dyers).

reformed friars at S Francesco”.¹²⁸ The Franciscans they referred to were those at San Francesco al Monte, for the year before the head of that community had joined them in supplication. “The Company of the Bakers’ Labourers customarily make a gift every year to the above said church and convent, accompanying it with drum and flag,” the guardian said. “Now because it [the flag] was taken from them, as from the others, they will not bring it [the gift] without such formality.” He begged the duke that “for the love of God and benefit of the said convent you might wish to make them a grace that, in order to accompany the gift, they can, for that day only, take out drums and use their flag.” Beyond the fact that “charity would be carried out towards that poor convent” both friars and bakers would be obliged to perpetually pray for the duke’s happiness and exaltation.¹²⁹ Cosimo II, indeed, may not have been fully cognizant of this artisan tradition, or its importance to both sides of the transaction. However, the Parte, in close contact with the *potenze* for more than a half century, appeared to see that a social and spiritual utility, as well as the avoidance of civic tensions that a blanket repression might produce, were all served by allowing it to continue. In effect, the magistracy mediated favourably for the supplicants. As petitions were bounced from Parte to ducal secretariat for approval, the magistracy glossed the letters, explaining how these trips had a history and, as time went on, referring by way of justification to other brigades who had been granted their banners.

As it did this, the Parte also made clear the terms under which *potenze* could now gain that licence. Under one of several petitions it wrote: “One can say to Your Serene Highness that he has been asked many times, not only by this supplicant but by all the others, to concede [the flag],

¹²⁸ “Li garzoni tutti de’ fornai della città di Firenze umilissimo servi di V.A.S. con ogni debita reverenda ricoreno a quella suplicandola come sono solito ognianno fare un dono a qualche regola di frati con landare con la loro insegna e perchè detta insegna et nella parte come quella del altre potenze ricoreno a quella pregandola ... di concederla per tutto il di 30 del presente mese per andare a portare il solito dono a’ frati delle rinforma a S Francesco”. Parte, 1480, f. 164r.

¹²⁹ ‘Il Guardiano e frati di S Francesco al Monte S Miniato ... Con ogni humilità gl’ espongono come la compagnia de’ garzoni de’ fornai sogliono far ogni anno un donativo alla sopradetta chiesa e convento, accompagnandolo con tamburo e insegna. Hor’ perchè fu tolta loro, quando agli altri, senza tal solennità non lo portarebbono. I sopradetti frati ricorrono alla benignità di V.A.S. supp[licandolo] che per l’amor de’ dio e beneficio di detto convento voglia far lor gratia che per accompagnar detto donativo per quel giorno solo possino trechar tamburi e servirsi della loro insegna. Che oltra sarà causa che si fara questa carità a quel povero convento, restaranno i frati e i confrati per chi si supplica con perpetuo obligo pregare per ogni maggior felicità et exaltatione di V.A.S.’ Parte, 1479, f. 354r. The friars at S Michele alla Doccia expressed similar sentiments towards their benefactors. Referring to the Piccione in 1635, the guardian of the convent wrote that they were ‘molti devoti e benefattori del luogo’. Doccia, f. 47r. Similarly, in 1614 the Dyers supplicated for the ‘festa di Santo Romolo in piazza questo presente anno et essendo stati ricerchati da quel Reverendo Priore di rapresentar in quel giorno qualche attione da sua tintori li faccia gratia di Poder spiegar la sua insegna...’ Parte, 1480, f. 512r. The Osti in 1628 feared that without their flag ‘si verebe a raffreddare li animi de’ benefattori e detta carità andrebe a terra, e facendo V.A. tal grazia sarà chausa di maggiore aumento nel fare detta limosina’. *Ibid.*, 1486, f. 97r.

because from this arises the pious and good works that they carry out.”¹³⁰ Artisans themselves were clearly well aware of the framework in which they now could act as *potenze* and were careful to vouchsafe their intentions. The Corvo at the Ponte alla Carraia requested its flag on one occasion so it could be “hung outside, only on feast days, and carried, without any uproar, through Florence, only on the day they will take a gift to the most holy Madonna of Cercina”.¹³¹ After the Città Rossa had been to the Observant Franciscans at San Michele alla Doccia in 1628, it asked for its flag a second time the same year, an almost unique petition to “make festivities through the City”. The kingdom craved its banner “in order that they might celebrate with moral decorum, because it is the [will of the] holy mind of Your Most Serene Highness, promising that tumults will not occur but that they will be put on the road to moral behaviour”.¹³²

Yet if the ducal confiscation of 1610 cemented a field of exclusions, with the implicit and explicit pressures on the *potenze* thereafter shaping the politics of petition and making the substitution of “*fiesta*” for “pious works” a condition for processional identity, we have also seen that a reformist ethos had already been appropriated and, in some degree, interiorised by artisan communities in the preceding decades – at least when it came to collective public life. It is arguably this that helps explain why the adaption of the *potenze* appears so seamless. If the Monteloro, for example, had ever intended to spend the ducal gift of July 1610 on ephemera to fit out its *residenza*, on regal clothing, wine, coaches, sweets and banquets – perhaps what the authorities expected when they gave out cash to plebeian men “for festivities” – the brigade redirected the entire amount, 35 *scudi*, to buy a chasuble “with gold threading and flowers” to take to San Michele alla Doccia, or at least were keen to give the impression that this was how the entirety of the money had been spent when they told the friars to record the gift’s value. The guardian of the convent agreed that “I should remember them, and for their consolation both I and the brothers will pray to God for them”. The Monteloro arrived at the Doccia in late August, even as the *bargello* was confiscating the last of the flags, and two weeks later the Città Rossa processed to the convent with a silver lamp it valued at 40 *scudi*, an amount also identical to Cosimo II’s payout.¹³³ The city’s butchers, who dominated the Dovizia and were soon to become a separate, exclusively

¹³⁰ ‘Si dice a V.A.S. che gli è stato solito molte volte non solo al supplicante ma a tutti gli altri che l’anno domandata concederla perchè da questo ne nasce opera pia e buona che essi fanno.’ Parte, 1484, f. 18r-v (1621); also f. 70r.

¹³¹ ‘... per tenerla due mesi attaccata fuori, solo le feste, e portarla senza fare strepito per Firenze, solamente il giorno che porteranno un dono alla madonna santissima di Cercina’. Parte, 1486, f. 95r-v (1629). This was the miraculous wooden Madonna in the *pieve* of San Andrea a Cercina.

¹³² The Parte explained they wanted the flag for a month ‘ad effetto di festeggiare per la città’ and implicitly supported it on the basis that they had already made a pilgrimage and had returned the flag. The supplication: ‘Giovanni di Oratio Frassinetti, monarca della Città dal Santo Ambrogio ... sia concessa l’insegna di detta potenza per un mese acciò possino honestamente festeggiare si come è la santa mente di VAS, promettendo non seguira tumulti ma se ne verranno a honesto diporto’. Parte, 1486, f. 84r.

¹³³ Doccia, ff. 33r, 36r; Parte, 1478, f. 70. The Città Rossa and Monteloro arrived at S Michele on September 12 and August 29 respectively.

occupational *potenza*, had been one of the longer standing and more munificent patrons at S Michele. In October 1610 they arrived for their first recorded visit in eight years, and, using the ducal gift of 18 *scudi* and then more than doubling it with their own funds, they endowed a chapel and requested four new masses each year for their dead brothers.¹³⁴

Though the records of the Parte are far from complete, it is clear that not every group requested its flag and that particular brigades did not supplicate with great consistency, and this is partly attributable to economic pressures, which became acute in the 1610s, sucking alms inwards and towards a more material, assistential charity. Still, when artisans did invoke the *potenze*, processions into the *contado* became, increasingly, normative. As discussed earlier, the Mela regularly accompanied the Corpus Christi procession of the Miracle at Sant' Ambrogio. In 1624, the brigade, in addition, wanted to take a gift to San Michele alla Doccia and so requested its flag from the beginning of the June to the end of July rather than the standard release of eight days. "It can be conceded to them on Thursday to accompany the Most Holy Sacrament of Santo Ambrogio, as is usual," the Parte advised, "then they must place it back here with the Parte, with the promise that when they want to go to the Doccia, as they say they do, it will be given to them."¹³⁵ *Potenze* for whom *contado* visits may never have been part of their local repertoire now looked to participate. In its only appearance in the Parte archive, the Nespola wrote in 1628 that "they desire to have their flag again, just as it has been conceded to the others".¹³⁶ The Corvo, whose first recorded request was also 1628, asked for its flag to go to San Andrea a Cercina, "because the supplicant holds that the other *potenze* have obtained their flags from the Parte through the benevolence of Your Highness".¹³⁷

The typical pilgrimage destinations of the *potenze* had always been sites in and around Fiesole, north of the city, or the Madonna of Impruneta, to the south. After 1610 there was a degree of convergence on one convent near Fiesole, San Michele alla Doccia. In the 1590s, this convent had seen major rebuilding work by its founding patrons, the Davanzati family, as well as donations flow in from Duke Ferdinando I and other members of the Medici family. The *potenze* started to come in very small numbers in 1599.¹³⁸ Of the 51 surviving *potenze* petitions between 1610 and

¹³⁴ Parte, 1478, f. 70; Doccia, f. 32v. The building work they commenced that year is not specified but is clarified later when further decoration was carried out to 'la loro capella' in 1628. *Ibid.*, unpag.

¹³⁵ 'A me pare che ci possa conciedergliela per giovedì a compagnare il santissimo sagramento di Santo Ambrogio come a solito, e poi le devi rimettere qui all parte con prometergli che il tempo che vorranno andare alla Doccia come dice segli darà.' *Ibid.*, f. 24r.

¹³⁶ 'Li huomini della insegna della Nespola al Ponte Vecchio devotissima a VAS gli narrano come desiderebbono di riavere li loro insegna si come ad altri e stata concessa...' *Ibid.*, f. 82r.

¹³⁷ 'E perchè li supplicanti reggano che le altre potentie hanno ottenuto dalla benignità di VA dalla Parte la loro insegna.' *Ibid.*, f. 51r.

¹³⁸ For a history of the convent, noting some of the *potenze* visits, Levi, *A History*, esp. 58-90. Ferdinando I is recorded from 1598 as a benefactor, giving 4 *staia* a year of salt 'con carico di preghare dio per loro altezze'. Doccia, f. 1r. The butchers of San Antonio and the Piccione arrived in 1601, the friars referring in both cases to trips two years earlier; Doccia, ff. 9v, 10r.

1629 for which a destination is known, 22 were for journeys to these Observant Franciscans; Impruneta, the next most popular destination, attracted less than half as many visits.¹³⁹ The Mela, as just noted, sought in 1624 to add the Doccia to its other processional activities; the Tavernkeepers were drawn to the Doccia after previously petitioning to go to another convent, or simply to an unspecified “pious place”.¹⁴⁰ The grocers of the Mercato – the Dovizia after the early 1610s when they and the butchers separated – had always gone to Impruneta. In 1627, however, they supplicated to visit the Marian shrine but either went both there and to the Doccia or switched to the Doccia after receiving their flag. In any event, they brought the friars of San Michele 43 *lire* and three pounds of wax and returned with more gifts in each of the following two years.¹⁴¹ Above all, San Michele exerted its pull in 1628. Indeed *potenze* supplicated *en masse* that year: almost five times as many petitions, 28, survive as do for any other single year, with a number of *potenze*, as already observed, making their initial supplication at this moment. The Doccia saw at least 11 of these *potenze* arrive – the Dyers made their first known trip that year, while for the Biliemme, Spada, Gallo and Macine, 1628 petitions for the Doccia represent their first or only recorded flag request.¹⁴² Why 1628 was the apogee of the post-1610 kingdoms and why one convent became such a hub of *potenze* patronage are two parts of the same question.

No source spells out what impelled so many *potenze* to regroup that year, but the trigger was, as all previous patterns and the contemporary evidence indicate, a Medicean dynastic juncture. Cosimo II had died in 1621, when his heir was only ten. On July 14, 1628, exactly eighteen years after the interrupted celebrations at his birth, Ferdinando II came of age and officially took over the principate from the regency of his mother, Christine of Lorraine. In part, artisans were appealing to what had become a traditional identification, in which both ducal state and the states of the *potenze* were simultaneously renewed, and, with this, the webs of obligation between prince and plebeian. As observed in Chapter Two, the grand master of the Rondine, Piero Barbetti, had been elected on the day of his birth. Now Ferdinando was grand duke and Barbetti was ready again. This was the year that saw the Città Rossa ask for its banner a second time, unusually to make festivities in the city. The only other petition like it was also made in 1628, by the Vice-emperor at Porta San Frediano, the wool weaver Giusto Bambocci, another *potenza* king who had remained incumbent

¹³⁹ The principal destinations were: San Michele alla Doccia, 22 petitions; Impruneta, 8; Cappuchins at San Francesco al Monte, 5; San Francesco a Fiesole and San Andrea a Cercina, 3 each. The documents are spread through Parte, 1479-86.

¹⁴⁰ The Tavernkeepers supplicated to go to San Michele a Castello in 1612, to ‘un luogo pio’ in 1626-7, and to the Doccia in 1628-9: Parte, 1479, f. 352r; 1486, ff. 26r, 38r, 50r, 97r. For the brigade at San Michele; Doccia, unpag (1627, 1628), f. 6r (1629).

¹⁴¹ Parte, 1486, ff. 39r, 69r; Doccia, unpag. (1627, 1628), f. 18v (1629).

¹⁴² Parte 1486, ff. 63r, 59r, 71r, 64r, 57r, respectively for these groups. The suggestion that these were first requests has only been made if that does not clash with the Doccia’s record of arrivals. The Woolbeaters also appear for the first time in the Parte archive in 1628, petitioning for the Doccia, but they had been going there since 1616, if not before. *Ibid.*, f. 67r; Doccia f. 11v. The records of the Doccia also show that 1628 was their biggest year for arrivals, with 19 groups in total recorded as arriving. These additional groups are discussed below.

since 1610. His brigade said it wanted to “put up [its flag] for their festivities, in order to honour the city”, adding, with allusion to Ferdinando’s succession and in an echo of the petitions of 1577, that “they have always been ready to celebrate when commanded by their Serene Highnesses and are now in great readiness to serve Your Serene Highness, wherever he commands”.¹⁴³ Yet the paradigm of civic ritual invoked by these last two *potenze* was already dead. The new grand duke did not seek to realise any special transaction, either ritually or financially, with the *potenze* in 1628. No great civic exchange, exemplified and mediated by the prince, took place, no temporary rule for plebeian kings through rites of inversion and redressive tribute, nor the neo-chivalric horseback spectacle which had accompanied that. Nor even was there, as in 1610, the ambivalent privileging of *potenze* as the representatives of the ‘poor’. Ferdinando’s only handout, as far as I am aware, was money for the release of about 40 small debtors from the Stinche on July 14 itself.¹⁴⁴ This was, as we have seen, typical of princely charity at such moments, once part of a larger repertoire of gestures, which included, most visibly, an exchange with the *potenze*. In 1628, however, the sole communication to the *potenze* kingdoms to emanate from the Palazzo was the bare acknowledgement implicit in the now-mundane granting of their banners.

Artisans themselves ultimately well understood that the theatre of the *potenze* had been displaced permanently, as some brigades put it, to “some place outside the gates of Florence”.¹⁴⁵ The Vice-emperor also supplicated to take a gift into the *contado*, and only two of the other 27 petitions even hint at any city festivity.¹⁴⁶ The image of bands of artisans marching beyond the walls of Florence in the summer of 1628 seems to condense a process of cultural change. It encapsulates the displacement of the ritual that had once re clothed the urban fabric, the performative grammar of competition, diplomacy, conciliation and hierarchy that had transformed the city into a space that the *potenze* collectively defined and occupied. It was precisely that collective, inter-relational logic that, arguably, generated the magnetism of San Michele alla Doccia that year. The church the *potenze* entered in 1628 was already deeply marked with the

¹⁴³ ‘Vicimperio in Camaldoli alla Porta a San Friano insieme con tutti e sua ufiziale reverentemente espongono a quella come sempre sono stati pronti nel festeggiare quando dalle Altezze Serenissime gliè stato comandato et ancora sono prontissimi sempre servire VAS dove quella gli comanderà per pregano quella che gli vogli fare tanti grazia che dalla parte gli sia consegniato la loro insegna sicome sono state consegniate a tante altre potenze ... la possino inalberare nelle lor feste per onorare la città’. Parte, 1486, f. 62r. For Bambocci in 1610, Parte, 1478, f. 232r. The majority of Ferdinando II was clearly central, but it worth noting the wider dynastic context of that year, the marriage of his sister, Margherita, to Odoardo Farnese, which was in preparation throughout the summer. This main celebrations were in Parma though the wedding itself took place in the Florentine cathedral on October 11.

¹⁴⁴ Depos., 1017, no.159.

¹⁴⁵ ‘... portare un dono a qualche luogio fora delle porte di Firenze’. This was the Garzoni de’ Fornai in 1627. Parte, 1486, f. 37r. A very similar formula was used by the Osti in 1626. *Ibid.*, f. 26r.

¹⁴⁶ The brigade went to Quintole between Florence and Impruneta, probably to the church of San Miniato. Parte, 1486, f. 62r. Apart from the Città Rossa, the other brigade to indicate some city procession was the Macine, who asked for their flag in 1628, for the day of San Lorenzo, the parish saint, and for the Assumption, to go to the Doccia. *Ibid.*, 57r.

signature of their patronage: communion chalices, a censer with a little silver boat, gilded sconces, a pluviale, an organ, a copper cross, a stone step for the high altar, walnut choir-stalls, a silver bell, brass candlesticks, chasubles, altarcloths and frontals. Now some made especially significant donations. The butchers of San Antonio decorated their own chapel in gold and supplied a frame, a frontal of leather and two copper sconces.¹⁴⁷ The Piccione at the Porta alla Croce – who along with butchers appear to have been the earliest artisan groups to patronise the convent – came “united” with Piazza Sant’Ambrogio’s Città Rossa, its closest neighbour, the combined groups arriving “with more than 130 people”. These two brigades brought another silver lamp to join the one the Città Rossa had given in 1610, this time valued at 62 *scudi*. It was the most expensive gift the friars ever recorded, and, the guardian added, “they made us other presents”.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, as reconstructions of empire inside the walls of Florence crumbled after the confiscation of 1610, the Città Rossa appears to have snatched back its ancient, quasi-mythical supremacy, and it started to be described by the Parte, and by itself, as the “principal *potenza* of this city”. The events of 1628 clearly reveal that it had positioned itself as the leading brigade in the pilgrimage to San Michele alla Doccia, a destination that had never been on the Prato’s itinerary.¹⁴⁹

This transfiguration of carnivalesque into charitable rivalry at the Doccia, a muted *armeggeria* of the spirit, was not only a displacement in space, but in time. Ferdinando II’s ascension may have provided the impulse for the soaring numbers of 1628, but rather than the dynastic moment itself the *contado* excursions of the *potenze* were now dictated by the liturgical calendar. The Città Rossa and Piccione came specifically for Pentecost in June, ahead of the duke’s formal investiture. All the others, the Piccione a second time, arrived, as was common, in August – and several of their petitions made explicit reference to the Assumption, a feast that, with its emphasis on the Virgin’s uncorrupted body, and the taking up of her intercessory role for the Catholic dead in Purgatory, had taken on new significance in the context of reform.¹⁵⁰ Only in such transmuted terms, and in the microcosm of a countryside convent, were the dynamics of empire now evoked.

¹⁴⁷ Doccia, unpag. Levi assumed this was the chapel dedicated to San Antonio held by the Davanzati, the major patrons of the convent and responsible for its reconstruction in the 1590s. The friars, however, clearly ascribe the chapel to the butchers – ‘Messono a oro la loro capella...’. Levi, *A History*, 48ff.

¹⁴⁸ The Piccione supplicated on June 5 ‘in compagnia di quell del monarca che portanc una dono a frati di detto luogo e con essi sono uniti’. Parte, 1486, f. 52r. The friars recorded the June 14 arrival of the ‘Monarca della rossa con più di 130 persone’. Doccia, unpag. In September 1619, the guardian of the convent recorded another unusually expensive gift from the Città Rossa: ‘Molti huomini congregati intitolati la potentia del Monarca di Firenze portano una campana d’argento valeva 35 scudi e mi pregorno facessi fare oratione per loro e mi promessero portarne un altra più grande con questo si dicessi una messa de’ morti loro ogni anno.’ *Ibid.*, f. 10r.

¹⁴⁹ ‘Il Gran Monarca della Città Rossa la principale Potenza di questa Citta residente a Santo Ambrogio’. Parte, 1484, f. 70r (1621); also Parte, 1483, f. 418r-v (1619).

The Prato even seems to have abandoned its regular destination of Impruneta in 1628, and instead petitioned to go to the Madonna of Montigniano; only one *potenza*, the Luna, supplicated for Impruneta. Parte, 1486, ff. 65r, 74r.

¹⁵⁰ Of the other nine requests for the Doccia, five were for the Assumption of August 15, one for the last Sunday in August and two for the last day of August, though in one of these, from the

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As this post-confiscation story unfolded, the *'potenze'* themselves disappeared. With the halting and minor resumption of pilgrimages after the plague that struck in 1630 and again in 1633 – the worst epidemic in Florence since the Black Death and responsible for about 10,000, almost exclusively lower class, deaths – the term *potenza* virtually vanishes from the sources.¹⁵¹ But the caesura of the plague and the hiatus that followed only consolidated a transformation already talking place. After 1610, and indeed before, 'states', 'kingdoms' and '*potenze*' – the 'powers' – were becoming problematic currency. That language encoded, above all, the genre of status inversion and its exchanges, made flesh by artisans' regal and militaristic expenditure, display and consumption. It was, or was increasingly seen to be, a lexicon of temporal power that no longer spoke to the pursuit of spiritual goods that now ostensibly defined the brigades' activities.

Throughout this study we have seen that a *potenza* could be the alter ego of a specific confraternity. Now, in terms of the ethos they projected, there was little to distinguish them. Occupational associations, particularly, often had no special *potenza* name and shared a single banner. These identities were becoming subsumed into confraternal personae and, with this, the use of '*potenza*' became unstable. The "innkeeper men and their *potentia*", the Tavernkeepers, were another time the "brotherhood of the tavernkeepers of the city of Florence".¹⁵² The "flagbearer of the Bakers' Labourers" could present himself "together with the brothers of the company", the group could call itself the "Company and men of the Bakeries", or it could appear as the "*potenza* of the Lord of the Bakers' Labourers".¹⁵³ The "men of the *potenzia* of the Dovitia of the Grocers of the Mercato Vecchio" also supplicated as simply the "Company of the grocers of the Mercato Vecchio"¹⁵⁴ The Woolbeaters, in their only surviving flag request, presented as "the men of the devout company of Santa Maria degli Angeli of Florence, advocate [of the] woolbeaters".¹⁵⁵ An element of real or perceived coercion arguably informed decisions of this kind, the apprehension

Tavernkeepers, the brigade in fact arrived on the day of the Assumption. The Woolbeaters had asked for both the Assumption and the Nativity on September 8. Overall, there was a tendency for visitors to the Doccia to arrive around that late summer axis of Marian feast days. The Piccione's second arrival in August, with 12 *scudi* cash and three *scudi*, or about 14 pounds, of wax, is recorded by the friars; their flag supplication is lost (if they made another rather than simply retaining their banner for the interval). Doccia, unpag.

¹⁵¹ Calvi, *Histories*, 255.

¹⁵² 'Li huomini, osti e potentia loro'. Parte, 1479 f. 352r (1612). 'Fratellanza delli osti della città di Firenze'. Parte, 1486, 97r. (1629),

¹⁵³ Parte, 1486, ff. 37r (1627); 58r (1628); 96r (1629).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 39r (1627); 1484, f. 18r (1621).

¹⁵⁵ 'Li homini della veneranda compagnia di Santa Maria delli Anggioli di Firenze, avochata battilani...' Parte, 1486, f. 67r.

that '*potenza*' and its lingering connotations of joust and tavern were freight perhaps better dropped. Iacopo Bossi, flagbearer of the Purgers *potenza* in 1610, received the same banner seven years later for "the Brothers of Santo Andrea of the Purgers", who petitioned to go to Impruneta with a chasuble and *mantellino*.¹⁵⁶ The Parte's comments on the disturbances at the 1610 celebrations that had led to the confiscation, quoted earlier, were in fact part of the gloss on this supplication of 1617, and they merit a more complete citation in this context. "At the birth of the Grand Prince, these *Compagnie*, or really *Potenze*, made so much noise and some disorder that Your Highness ordered that their flags should be taken away from them and kept here in the office of the Parte [apparently writer's underscore]."¹⁵⁷

Neighbourhood brigades, meanwhile, usually maintained their distinct names and held different corporate symbols, but a close association with a specific confraternity also brought a closer identification with it. The *gran maestro* of the Rondine emphasised how he wanted to take a gift to the Capuchins "together connected [with] his *compagnia*", very likely the Assumption and Holy Sacrament of San Piero Maggiore.¹⁵⁸ When the Città Rossa sought its flag a second time in 1628 for city festivities, it was "especially for the day of San Michele Arcangelo, when they have their *fiesta*".¹⁵⁹ In other words, the Rossa, closely linked to San Michele della Pace, the Holy Sacrament of Sant' Ambrogio, had by now orientated itself principally around that confraternity's saint day. The neighbouring Piccione, which joined the Rossa in 1628 to go to the Doccia, also included that saint among its heavenly advocates: in 1601 it requested two annual masses from the Franciscans, for San Francesco and San Michele.¹⁶⁰ The company of San Michele della Pace, which ran doctrinal education for the whole parish, with little doubt attracted members from Piccione territory. Records are sparse, but we note that a certain Bartolomeo Martini was among the men who paid for the redecoration of S Michele's oratory at the close of the 16th century, which

¹⁵⁶ 'Li confrati della compagnia di Santa Andrea de Purgatori ... hanno fra tutti li huomini della detta Compagnia fatto un vanto per potere comperare una pianeta di drappo ed un mantellino simile, quale voglion portare, cioè la pianeta alla Madonna del Impruneta et il Mantellino al crucifisso In detto luogo...' Parte, 787, f. 135r. For Bossi in 1610 and again in 1617: Parte, 1478, ff. 218r, 244r; 1482, f. 145r.

¹⁵⁷ 'Nella nascita del Gran Principe queste Compagnie o vero *Potenze* facevano tanti rumori ed qualche disordine, che VA. ordinò, che si togliesse loro l'insegne, e si serbassero qui nel ufficio della Parte dal nostro provveditore'; Parte, 787, f. 135r.

¹⁵⁸ 'Suplichia a VAS a farli grazia che la Parte di Firenze conceda la sua insegna dela Rondine acciò possino portare alli frati capuccini uno dono, insieme conesso la sua Compagnia' Parte, 1486, f. 85r (1628). Almost no documents survive for this parish confraternity, but it is the best candidate for a link to the Rondine, which met opposite the church of San Piero Maggiore. Parte, 1478, f. 153r.

¹⁵⁹ '... sia concessa l'insegna di detta potenza per un mese ... e maxime per il giorno di S Michele Arcangioli [September 29] che hanno la loro festa'. Parte, 1486, f. 84r.

¹⁶⁰ Doccia, f. 10r. The friars recorded that the request was satisfied six times between 1601 and 1613.

included his family arms, and that an Antonio di Bartolomeo Martini, quite likely his son, was lord in 1628 of the Piccione.¹⁶¹

That such examples involve parish sacramental confraternities is unsurprising given the tendency for these sodalities and neighbourhood *potenze* to overlap closely as associations. In at least one case their ritual focus elided completely. In 1610, perhaps even before the confiscation, the men of the “lordship of the Sferza in the parish of San Felice” argued over how to spend Cosimo II’s 21 *scudi* and left it with the Parte. A month later, in September, a large number of them, without their baker king, came before the magistracy and successfully claimed the cash “to put it together with another larger sum for a canopy to accompany and honour the holy sacrament of the church of San Felice in Piazza”.¹⁶² The Holy Sacrament of San Felice, clearly more or less the same group of men, was obliged from 1560 to process the host at Easter and Corpus Christi and take it to the homes of the parish sick as part of a contractual arrangement with the nuns of San Piero Martire, who ran the church and had granted the confraternity a property.¹⁶³ In 1628, when the Sferza *potenza* emerges in the sources again, it wanted its banner to gather cash to “construct an altar around a holy Pietà of stone which exists in a wall of the church, which would be a pious and devout work and pleasing to the most reverend nuns”.¹⁶⁴

Yet whether connected to a specific confraternity or not, ‘*potenza*’ began to be replaced by another nomenclature. One of its terms, also increasingly used by confraternities, was *congregazione*, a word that belonged to the vocabulary of reform. Bartolomeo Cutini, the dyers’ labourer who described himself as a “captain of fortune” and “prince of the Mela” in 1610, was in 1624 “prince in the *congregazione* of the Mela”.¹⁶⁵ In 1635, the friars at San Michele alla Doccia recorded the arrival of “the men of the Piccione, who at present call themselves the Congregazione

¹⁶¹ The dates of the paintings in the oratory are not noted, but the work must have taken place not long before 1597, when the men who had paid for it are listed with the injunction that their family arms could not be removed in the event of future restorations by new benefactors. Capitoli, 45, ff. 87-9. For Antonio Martini, Parte, 1486, f. 52r.

¹⁶² ‘... li denari depositati dal Signore di detta potenza in mano di Camillo Lanfredini Carmalingo dell’ officio [of the Parte] havuti nella nascita del Gran Principe, s’impreghino con altra maggior somma in un baldacchino per accompagnare e honorare il santissimo sacramento della chiesa di San Felice in Piazza.’ Parte, 55, f. 43v.

¹⁶³ The house given for an oratory was on the corner of via dei Preti and Piazza San Felice. For the contract, CRS, 1880, Part A, unpag. The Sferza is documented earliest in 1577 (Depos., 984, ins.68.) and, like the Spada, discussed earlier, it may have emerged out of the existing organisational context of the confraternity.

¹⁶⁴ ‘Il signoria della Sferza nel popolo di San Felice in Piazza... offrendosi di spendere quello occorrera in ridurre ad altare una santissima pietà di pietra esistente nella Chiesa di San Felice in Piazza in una muro, che sarà opera pia et devota et di contento alla reverendissime monache di detta chiesa.’ Parte, 1486, f. 76r.

¹⁶⁵ ‘Io bartolomeo di Andrea Cutini Capitano venturiere della Mela’. Parte, 1478, f. 149r. ‘Bartolomeo Cutini principe nella congregazione della Mela’. Parte, 1486, f. 24r. In 1626 Giovambattista Salucci called himself the ‘lord of the *congregazione* of the Butchers’. *Ibid.*, f. 14r.

of the Holy Cross".¹⁶⁶ Initially interchangeable with *potenza*, *congregazione* was in fact the standard appellation for visitors arriving at the Doccia, including groups that had never manifested as *potenze* in the older sense but embraced this model of artisan ritual as it reached its zenith in the late 1620s. A "Congregatione of the Grocers at Porta alla Croce" was recorded in 1627 and 1628.¹⁶⁷ The employees of the customs office came from 1628 as the *potentia* or *congregazione* of the Dogana; there was a *potentia/congregazione* "of via Gora" (via Montebello) from 1627, a *congregazione* "of via Porciaia" (via San Antonino) and "of via San Zanobi" in 1628, and a "*congregazione* of the souls of Purgatory" from 1627.¹⁶⁸ As promoted by reformers, particularly the Jesuits, *congregazione* carried a sense of *rinovatio* in corporate spiritual life – and more particularly, it signified a lay sodality with a focused devotional, charitable or educative function.¹⁶⁹ The ideal is well exemplified by Ippolito Galantini's Congregazione di San Francesco della Dottrina Cristiana. Indeed, while not envisioned in its statutes, that *congregazione* made a decision to join the annual procession into the *contado* sometime after 1607, insinuating itself in classic Jesuit style within the traditions of its perceived constituency, a constituency out of which, as noted earlier, Galantini himself emerged. The brothers usually went to San Francesco a Fiesole, one of the lesser pilgrimage destinations for *potenze*, where they confessed and communicated and heard readings from the saints or performed a sacred play – but at least once, notably in 1628, a small delegation, an apostolic 12, took part in that year's major convergence on the nearby convent of San Michele alla Doccia.¹⁷⁰

The sobriquet of *congregazione*, widely appropriated as a mark of orthodoxy and devotional discipline, was joined, often interchangeably, by another description in the early 1650s, when after 20 years of greatly attenuated activity there was a resurgence in pilgrimages to the Doccia, possibly a call for divine help after the exceedingly severe famine of 1648 and the trail of typhus, death and impoverishment it left its wake.¹⁷¹ The Piccione, as the friars said of several groups, "started coming again", this time as the "Recreatione of the Piccione". Similarly, along with such groups as

¹⁶⁶ 'Gl' huomini del Piccione li quali al presente si chiamano la Congregatione del Santissimo Crocifisso...' Doccia, f. 47r. The holy cross, the guardian explained, referred both to the feast days (the Invention and Exaltation) around which the Piccione was now orientating itself and to a crucifix that the group placed that year next to the high altar, in a chapel it had reconstructed.

¹⁶⁷ Doccia, unpag. Was this the confraternity of Santa Maria della Neve, who are described as 'huomini hortolani al canto a Sant' Ambrogio' in a 1589 list of Florentine confraternities? If this is correct, it further illustrates the collapse of *potenze* into confraternities. Doccia, unpag; Aranci, *Formazione*, 335.

¹⁶⁸ Doccia, f. 17v, and unpag. In 1628 the Anime di Purgatorio donated 30 *scudi* for the stone benches in the loggia: The inscription on them reads: 'The florentine benefactors had these seats set for the Frati of the Convent in order that they should remember them in their prayers, and in their sacrifices implore mercy for the souls of the deceased'. Quoted in Levi, *A History*, 85.

¹⁶⁹ For a discussion of the congregational model, see, for example, Weissman, 'From Brotherhood to Congregation'; Terpstra, 'In loco parentis'; Bireley, *The Refashioning*, 116-7.

¹⁷⁰ Aranci, *Formazione*, 288-9. In 1628, the Doccia recorded the 'congregazione di S Francesco in Palazuolo' with 21 *lire* and one pound of wax. Doccia, unpag.

¹⁷¹ Balducci, *Quaderno*, 107-11.

the Souls of Purgatory, the Woolbeaters arrived as a *recreazione*, as did a group described as the *congregazione* or *recreazione* “of the Prato”, which appears at the Doccia for the first time during this 1651-54 burst of renewal.¹⁷²

Recreazione appears to have emerged as a collective noun from its more verbal usage, not greatly removed from our ‘recreation’. In 1629 the Tavernkeepers had supplicated to take alms to the Doccia for the Assumption “in these days of this, their *recreazione* ... because on that day the brotherhood is accustomed to enjoy itself, since they spend all the rest of the year in the shop”. This, they had added, would “give great satisfaction and joy to the youth of the trade”.¹⁷³ The notion of *recreazione* thus incorporated the classic opposition between the quotidian world of the work day and the hiatus of the *festa*, a temporal passage that had once also announced – always with the closure of the shops – a transition to carnivalesque time and its practices. However as the term was used here, and later employed as a descriptive title, the idea of festive release it suggested was located mainly within a distinctly devotional register; it was closer to the “spiritual *recreazione*” held by the mattress-makers of S Leone Papa on their main feast day and from which, as we saw earlier, they marginalised the consumption of food and drink.¹⁷⁴ Indeed the Tavernkeepers implicit argument that the right sort of *recreazione* taught good Christian living to the young was perhaps a knowing nod to the doctrinal movement, which typically framed Sunday prayer and education as a substitute for gambling or drinking. It was under the sign of *recreazione* that Galantini had attempted to convert such profane habits into spiritual exercises. As idealised shortly after his death by Dionisio Baldocci Nigetti, Galantini’s collaborator and first hagiographer, “a little *recreazione*” meant leaving the *congregazione*’s building to recite prayers in the open. Baldocci Nigetti continued that Galantini also used to take the boys to some “spacious meadow for some honest pastime, like playing football or jacks, to give them some spirit, and he was the first for some time to practise such a *recreazione*. From this, like an ingenious bee, he knew how to draw out the honey from the spiritual fruit, as he ordered that instead of cash, what was won or lost were Avemarias, Corone [recitations of the Rosary] and similarly devout things for the suffrage of

¹⁷² Doccia, ff. 49r-51v for all these entries. The formula, ‘ripiglio a venire’, was also used for a group described as the brandy-makers, Santa Maria degli Angeli degli Aquavitai, in 1651, who first appeared in 1637 (*Ibid.*, ff. 36r, 49v); and the Woolbeaters in 1652 (*Ibid.*, f. 50v).

¹⁷³ ‘Fratellanza delli Osti della città di Fiorenze ... li esponghono chome per chonsueto antico sono usati a portare ungni anno una elemosina secondo la loro possibilità alla chiesa di S[ant]i France[scani] alla Doccia in il giorno della santissima asunta della madonna. Perchè in tal giorno sono consueto detta fratellanza a ralegrarsi per istare tutto il restantte del’anno a bottega, supplichano di VAS che in detti giorni di questa loro recreazione li far grazia di potere alberare la loro insengnia chosì chome ànno fatto sempre insino ad esso con la buona grazia di VAS; perchè non danno tal sodisfazione e alegria alla gioventù del mestiero.’ Parte, 1486, f. 97r. See also Doccia, f. 6r. *Recreazione* was used in the same way by the Guelfa brigade, who in 1628 wanted their flag ‘per la prossima e terza domenica di agosto per fare recreatione e portare una dono a capuccini’. *Ibid.*, f. 61r. On this theme see also Burke, ‘Invention of Leisure’, esp. 140.

¹⁷⁴ See above. Similarly, the cloth-finishers’ confraternity of San Piero, who every third Sunday of the month held a ‘recreatione insieme overo fratellanza o divotione a laude dello omnipotente Dio’. BRF, Ricc., 2577, f. 5r (1543).

the Souls in Purgatory. And with such things they sweetly enriched the celestial treasure, benefiting the body with no harm to the spirit.”¹⁷⁵

3. ‘A *potenza* of women’: Gender, Work and Piety

The post-1610 pilgrimages into the *contado* tenaciously maintained an old and distinctly lower-class practice, at some cost given pressures on artisans to divert funds to more assistential charity. Even after 1630 the *congregazioni* and *recreazioni* maintained some of the aspects of the old *potenze* model, with for example the election of new “*signori*” at the culmination of their trips.¹⁷⁶ They also remained by and large outside of confraternal statutory regimes – and both this and the fact they took themselves beyond the city walls to holy sites and people of their choice suggests a desire to preserve a more self-determined vision of the sacred community than was becoming available within the counter-reformation urban parish. Yet a major re-orientation of artisan corporate life and the social world that shaped it had taken place. *Congregazioni* were devotional and charitable groups only, and severely reduced in number and resources after 1630.¹⁷⁷ They had also ceased to recreate ‘states’ or ‘kingdoms’. Many trade groups/confraternities clearly did not mark out distinct physical boundaries at all; while the single-street groups that emerged after 1610 suggest that the aggressive territoriality of the old neighbourhood kingdoms no longer obtained, leaving space for such micro-associations to organise. However, one fact above all signals the transformation of this artisan subculture: by the 17th century the *potenze*, and their successors, were no longer exclusively groups of men.

A detailed account of the female ‘*potenze*’ and their emergence begs an archival investigation that lies beyond the scope of the present study. Nevertheless a provisional analysis can be built around the records of the Observant Franciscans at the popular San Michele alla Doccia. The female groups, that source reveals, were more or less identical in form to the men’s sodalities – they were led by an elected “*signora*” who at the end of the pilgrimage would offer alms in exchange for prayers for their deceased. Whether they ever called themselves *potenze* is not

¹⁷⁵ Baldocci Nigetti, *Vita*, 19-21. The *Vita* was first published in 1623. Nigetti’s account was something of a defence, as the playing of games and ‘gambling’ by a supposedly devotional group was denounced from the pulpit by one of Galantini’s detractors. Aranci, *Formazione*, pp.154-5. Fundamentally, though, this was a methodological disagreement over how the same goal, conversion, should be achieved

¹⁷⁶ See, on elections, the Prato and the Aquavitali in 1651, and the Anime di Purgatorio in 1651 and 1652. Doccia, ff. 49r-50r.

¹⁷⁷ The friars noted, for example, that in 1652 ‘ripiglio di venire la recreatione del Piccione e forno pochi ma quest altro anno se piace al Signore saranno in buon numero’. In 1651, the Recreatione di Santa Maria degli Angeli detta gli Aquavitali ‘promessono di fare il paliotto che manca al paramento questo altro anno 1652 e di tirar la compagnia con piu frequenza e numero’. Doccia, ff. 49v, 50v.

presently known, though it seems likely. At any rate, the model they took up was so familiar to the friars that they recorded female groups with this description before 1630, and on a single occasion afterwards, before it was completely supplanted by *congregazione* and, like their male counterparts in the 1650s, *recreazione*.¹⁷⁸

Women appear only once at the Doccia before 1627. But from here until 1629, the years which mark the height of *potenze* patronage at the convent, they surface annually. They appear again in 1649, two years before the wider resumption of pilgrimages described above, and it was female groups that outlasted this brief renaissance and continued going, intermittently, until at least 1685.¹⁷⁹ The most sustained bond with the friars was forged by the “women of the Porta alla Croce” in the parish of Sant’ Ambrogio, their numbers in the mid-Seicento swinging between about 20 and 50.¹⁸⁰ They are first recorded in 1616, bringing ten yards of green carpet “for the love of God”.¹⁸¹ In the late 1620s two distinct Porta groups materialised. In August 1628, “a new *congregatione* of women from the Porta alla Croce” arrived a couple of weeks ahead of their neighbours; and in 1629, after one group had come in late July with 59 *lire*, “that is, Alessandra with her companions”, two weeks later “another *potenza* of women at the Porta alla Croce came with 17 pounds of wax”.¹⁸² The two groups re-appear together in 1649. One was now the “Women of the Porta alla Croce titled the Holy Conception and Souls of Purgatory”, its *signora* a certain Maria Passerini. The other was guided by Caterina Nuti – related to the later prior of Sant’ Ambrogio – who was newly elected that year after the previous *signora* had died.¹⁸³ These women led their respective groups until at least 1660, after which the friars did not record individual identities. By name, and by spiritual advocate at this point, the two associations were difficult to distinguish. Nuti’s women were also devoted to the Madonna of the Conception by 1651, though on two occasions they came as the Recreatione of San Michele – perhaps taking up the dedication of the convent itself, but more likely, as I shall return to shortly, an identification with Sant’ Ambrogio’s principal confraternity.¹⁸⁴ Apart from the Porta alla Croce groups, another *congregazione* from the parish of Sant’ Ambrogio appeared at the Doccia in 1628 and 1629, the “women of via Pentolini [via de’ Macci]”; and in 1653 and 1654 came the *recreazione* or

¹⁷⁸ For that solitary use of *potenza* after 1630, in 1649, see Doccia, f. 49v.

¹⁷⁹ After 1654 no male groups appear in the volume of Doccia records now in the BNF. The records consulted here end in 1675. However, Baldocci referred to the woman of the Porta alla Croce in 1685 and pointed out that occasional ‘congregations of men and women’ still came but that fervour for the convent faded after 1630. Levi, 90.

¹⁸⁰ Numbers are recorded only for the decade from 1649. In that moment of renewed trips they begin at 25, trend upwards to 48 in 1652 and fall to 20 in 1659. Doccia, ff. 48v, 50r, 51r.

¹⁸¹ Doccia, f. 11v.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, This ‘congregatione nuova di donne dalla Porta alla Croce’ brought 10 ‘bandinizi per la mane.’ *Ibid.*, unpag (1628). ‘Vennero le donne dalla Porta alla Croce cioè l’Alessandra con le conpane’; ‘Venne un altra potenza di donne alla Porta alla Croce e portono libre 17 di cera’. *Ibid.*, ff. 6r and 17v respectively (1629).

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 48v. Giovanni Nuti was prior from 1660; Artusi and Patruna, *Ora et Labora*, 47.

¹⁸⁴ For Nuti’s group as dedicated to San Michele in 1654 and 1660, *Ibid.*, ff. 44v, 51r.

congregazione of “women from the Campaccio [via Santa Reparata] and via San Zanobi” in the north of San Giovanni.¹⁸⁵

Immediately apparent is that female groups crystallised in the same communities and places, the poorer, outlying neighbourhoods of Florence, that had sustained some of the most prominent *potenze* for well over a century. The parallel streets of the Campaccio and via San Zanobi, for example, were dense with textile workers. It was where the woolbeaters’ confraternity, which had now fully subsumed its old *potenza* alter ego, was located and owned a significant amount of property.¹⁸⁶ The Woolbeaters, as we saw before, was among the male groups that started returning to the Doccia in the early 1650s, just before the female group of that neighbourhood appeared, as was the male “Recreatione of Via dell’Acqua”, a street that joined the Campaccio and via San Zanobi.¹⁸⁷ Via Pentolini connected the Città Rossa’s Piazza Sant’ Ambrogio and the Mela’s Canto alla Mela and, like so many lower class families in that parish, a good part of the street’s inhabitants shared both bonds of tenancy with the church of Sant’ Ambrogio and some part in the community life focused around it. The Porta alla Croce, meanwhile, was precisely how the Piccione located itself; indeed, in 1628, the men of the Piccione made their second trip to the Doccia on the same day, August 27, as the “sisters” of one of the Porta’s female groups.¹⁸⁸

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That women founded associations – plausibly around the turn of the Seicento¹⁸⁹ – in the mould of *potenze* is, in the first instance, linked to the transformation of the male brigades. The diffusion of reformist paradigms and the disintegration of the rhetorical and ritual edifice which that entailed had important implications for how *potenze* were gendered. As observed in previous chapters, a *potenza* was in its older form almost by definition male, not only a group of men but a masculine domain. The image of kingdom and state condensed and idealised oppositions of government and governed, actors and audience, public and domestic along, among other things, lines of gender. The term *potenza* itself, to some degree interchangeable with *stato* but more broadly signifying a power or force, was part of a gendered vocabulary elaborated in the brigades’ militaristic language and in

¹⁸⁵ For the via Pentolini group, *Ibid.*, unpag (1628), f. 17v (1629); for via del Campaccio, f. 51r.

¹⁸⁶ For an indication of the property owned in via del Campaccio and via San Zanobi by S Maria degli Angeli dei Battilani, see DG, 3783, f. 18r-v (1561); Parte, 1483, ff. 321r-324r (1620).

¹⁸⁷ A *potenza* of Via dell’Acqua (via Guelfa between via San Gallo and via San Zanobi) was recorded in 1629, a *recreazione* from 1651-2. Doccia, ff. 18v, 49r-50r.

¹⁸⁸ This was August 27, 1628. Doccia, unpag., and 51r. The Piccione had always been located at the Porta alla Croce and was explicit about it in its flag supplications of 1627 and 1628. Parte, 1486, ff. 43r, 52r.

¹⁸⁹ The sources here cannot tell us precisely when female groups of this kind first emerged. An incidental reference, discussed below, suggests that women were taking gifts to convents outside Florence before 1607.

rituals such as stone fights and jousting, the latter a well-understood element of chivalric performance that blended military and sexual competition and prowess. Women had always been one of the ideal audiences of such display, and among its actual witnesses, never its protagonists.

Thus as *potenze* elided with reformed confraternal identities and/or became *congregazioni*, a ubiquitous and long-standing model of public association among Florentine artisans and labourers became far less aggressively codified as masculine. Indeed, the reformist battle against carnivalesque festivity and the sinfulness it was seen to endorse was a highly gendered discourse in the first place, framed explicitly as a fight against undesirable facets of male urban culture. And that homosocial world was not only held to corrupt the souls of men but militate against his obligations to his wife and his daughters. It was a threat to women.¹⁹⁰ This was true above all for the milieu of the tavern. The anti-taverns campaign of 1588 turned precisely around the idea of male negligence towards his family. Two years earlier, in fact, the silk weavers of Santa Croce found that officials charged with delivering alms to the “poor of the house” were going off with the recipients and drinking the money in the tavern. The cash was immediately diverted to increase the payment made to members’ wives after childbirth.¹⁹¹ Their 1588 statute itself brought the issues into focus. Tavern-going, the weavers said, was “damaging the souls of Christians and destroying their houses, children and families; and they want as much as possible [to remove] such evil and disorder to the health of their souls and those of their brothers and others of their company”.¹⁹² The dyers, meanwhile, spoke of wanting to “promote the universal peace and quiet of each person, that they should have more chance of living in a Christian fashion and enjoying the [fruits of their] labour with their poor families”.¹⁹³ For these two confraternities, as well for the wool weavers, the loss of office and benefits for a member, even his expulsion, specifically excluded the dowry for his daughter and alms to his wife.¹⁹⁴ In 1610, Cosimo II’s gift to the *potenze* was charged with the same thinking, the men as we have seen getting half the money “for festivities”, the women and children directly receiving the other half in bread. Indeed, the 1610 payments were foreshadowed in 1590, at the birth of Cosimo II: while the customary small change was thrown from the windows of the Palazzo and barrels of wine were placed on the *ringhiera*, three days later “money was

¹⁹⁰ On this, see Novi Chavarria, ‘Ideologia’; Selwyn, *A Paradise*, 166ff.

¹⁹¹ An increase of 10 soldi to 3 lire. CRS, 677, f. 5r.

¹⁹² ‘Atteso come sia non solo contro a ogni vivere politico et civili, ma etiam contro a vivere christiano, l’uso et frequentia dalla publica osteria et in danno delle anime christiane, destrutione delle proprie case, figli et famiglie, et volendo in quanto possano a tanto male et disordine insalute dall’anime loro, et de loro fratelli, et altri della loro compagnia’ *Ibid.*, f. 9r.

¹⁹³ ‘Item, considerati molti inconveniente che nascono per la frequenza dell taverne e hosterie e volendo a quelli oviare et provvedere alla quiete e pace universale di ciascuno ... che piu si habbino occasione di Cristianamente vivere e di godersi le fatiche di .. con le loro povere famiglie.’ Tintori, A.IV.3, f. 129r.

¹⁹⁴ For the wool weavers of San Giovanni Evangelista, see the guild reforms of 1589; Cantini, *Legislazione*, 12, 364-6.

distributed all day from the Palazzo de' Pitti, and the payment was distributed only to the women".¹⁹⁵

In fact, the charitable substitutions enforced by reformers or implemented by artisans themselves in the confraternities were gendered in a similar way. The cash saved from men's feast-day meals was overwhelmingly redirected to dowries, to an ideal of female and family honour. In fact an explosion of confraternal dowry funds in artisan sodalities – symbolically underwritten by the duke's own fund for artisan girls set up in 1592 – was a marked development in Tridentine Florence: between the 1570s and the early 1600s such funds became virtually universal.¹⁹⁶ In trade confraternities, where the assistential function had always been paramount, dowry funds had been common by the late Quattrocento, but they were also part of what motivated the push for new sodalities (or, successfully or not, the push for compulsory membership and taxation) in the second half of the Cinquecento. As the wool weavers of San Giovanni Evangelista put it in 1576, their new confraternity would offer money "in old age, for wives after childbirth and for the marriage of our girls, so for the lack of a virtuous dowry they should not be left by their fathers and mothers in danger of having to give themselves in prey to the immoral and abominable desires of others".¹⁹⁷ There was little new in that formulation, but economic and demographic pressures were forcing greater number of women into prostitution, and the figure of the prostitute loomed large in the reformist imagination. The converted prostitute, like the increasingly popular exemplar of Mary Magdalen, was a powerful symbol of wider ideals of personal and social purification: tougher regulation of prostitutes was introduced from the 1550s and new taxes on them were funnelled directly to the monastery of the Convertite, where they were transformed into nuns.¹⁹⁸ For most, however, marriage was vaunted as the antidote to prostitution and essential to an honourable state for women. In short, the moral economy of substitution described in the first part of this chapter became not simply one of sinful expenditure for charity, but of male sin for female honour.

¹⁹⁵ The heir was born on May 12, the money from the Pitti on May 15. Lapini, 299-300.

¹⁹⁶ Fubini Leuzzi, *Condurre*, ch. 4, esp. 151. As for the ducal fund, by 1595 Ferdinando I had established a confraternity at the convalescents' hospital of San Paolo to administrate state-funded dowries for around 150 artisan girls a year. The program was for the entire Florentine territory, with about half the money going to Florence. In 1601 there were around 141 dowries given a year, with an additional 75 added from the will of Cosimo II. *Ibid.*, 181ff.

¹⁹⁷ 'Nelle nostre infirmità, nè i parti delle nostre donne, e nel maritare le fanciulle nostre, a causa che per mancamento di qual che honesta dote non fussero da i padri e madri loro lasciate ... e in pericolo successivamente di esser necessitate a darsi in preda al' altrui disoneste et abhominevoli voglie'. Capitoli, 799, f. 1v. In 1573 the used clothes dealers and mattressmakers of S Leone Papa and the Arte de' Rigattieri established a tax on all artisans in these trades to help the 'poveri infermi et fanciulle da maritarsi di nostra compagnia'. Capitoli, 5, f. 31r. On earlier dowry funds within textile confraternities, see Taddei, "Per la salute", 139. The confraternity of San Andrea dei Purgatori said: 'In fra gli huomini di nostra universita et compagnia sono molte persone bisogne et miserabile poste insomma calamità et miseria, che hanno le loro figliuole senza alcuno aviamento di condurle a honore, et per la loro povertà et indigentia non le possono maritare'. Capitoli, 843, f. 25r-v. (1515).

¹⁹⁸ Cohen, *The Evolution*, ch.2; Brackett, 'The Florentine Onestà', 290-7.

By itself this does not explain the seizing of the *potenze* model by groups of women. But equally significant here is that complementary threads in reformist social and religious thought, combined with the economic shifts taking place around 1600, tended to open a space, and indeed to encourage, women to act on their own behalf. In the first place, one can point to the structure of gender relations in artisan household. As the Tridentine Church more or less successfully pushed to make the sacrament of marriage an ecclesiastically controlled and ritualised contract, matrimony was stressed as a spiritual union between individuals. As elsewhere, Florentine synodal law in the century following Trent increasingly emphasised “mutual charity and benevolence” between the spouses and, though it was often ignored, inveighed against the forced marriage of daughters.¹⁹⁹ Galantini’s doctrinal *congregazione* gave classes specifically on marriage, instructing husbands to respect and “love the wife perfectly and with the heart”, a sentiment echoed in a host of advice tracts from the second half of the 16th century.²⁰⁰ A notion of the family became diffuse towards the end of the Cinquecento that thus tended to focus closely on the nuclear unit and the emotional and moral bonds between its members, a formulation that competed with, or modified, hyper-masculine definitions in terms of patrilineage. Giulia Calvi has found practical effects of this in the 17th-century rulings of the Florentine magistracy of the Pupilli, which intervened when parents died intestate and guardianship of the offspring was at issue. The government consistently put the bond between widowed mothers and children at the centre of its concerns, often no more than reflecting the wishes of the deceased father. Even if a mother remarried she could often retain the guardianship of the children of her first marriage, including males, as long as the wellbeing of the child and the transmission of the patrimony were assured.²⁰¹ In fact such thinking about the nature of the family appeared to inform changes in the structure of inheritance itself. While comparative research for Florence is lacking, Samuel Cohn’s study of Sienese wills has detected a warping of the ancient patrilineal code of property transmission, which usually made sons or others in the male line the universal heirs and gave the widow only her dowry and the run of the property during her lifetime. From the end of the Cinquecento, not only were ties of affection and reciprocity more frequently entering the language of testaments, by the later 17th century two-thirds of widows were nominated as universal heir, with ultimate control of all property, double the percentage of the previous century. At the same time there was a jump in reciprocal wills made by husbands and wives together, each with identical property rights.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ The emphasis on the sacrament of marriage and its regulation can be followed through Florentine synodal law in Fubini Leuzzi, ‘*Condurre a onore*’, 121-39. The quote is 137n.

²⁰⁰ Aranci, *Formazione*, 221-3, 232-3; the quote on 221. For the literature on marriage, see Richardson, ‘Amore maritale’.

²⁰¹ Calvi, ‘Reconstructing the family’, and *Eadem, Il contratto morale*, chs.1, 2, 4.

²⁰² Cohn, *Death and Property*, 202-9. In this context it is worth noting that 1600 saw the publication of the first major critiques of women’s inequality, in regard to both monastic enclosure and marriage, by women themselves – Lucrezia Marinelli’s *La nobiltà et l’eccellenza delle donne* and Modesta Pozzo’s *Il merito delle donne*, both Venetians. Virginia Cox has persuasively linked the emergence of these books to the massive dowry inflation of the 16th century and the

This last development was most pronounced for artisans and labourers, whose households in the city had always tended to be more nuclear and for whom the patrilineal ideology of the *casata* had never carried the same political or social freight as it did for citizens and nobles, something as true for Florence as for Siena. It also reflects, and certainly lends a qualitative dimension to, the fact that artisan households were often labouring units, both husband and wife working. Indeed, the structural transformation of the textile industry in Florence between the late 16th and early 17th centuries arguably strengthened the economic position of artisan women. In weaving, they became prevalent in wool by around 1600 and in silk over the following 50 years, a reversal of the pattern of previous centuries. But it was the demise of wool and the continuing rise of silk that decisively turned textiles into an industry comprising mainly female labour. By 1663, four decades after the wool sector had collapsed, about 84 per cent of roughly 14,000 silk workers were women. Their jobs, especially winding which employed the largest numbers, were on the whole the lowest paid and least skilled – yet the social resonance of women’s work was arguably more significant than their meagre earnings and status in the productive hierarchy suggests. Firstly, we know that increasing numbers of women, mainly widows, were *capofamiglie* of their own households, their income generated by textile work; secondly, as I will explore in detail in Chapter Four, this transformative period in the Florentine cloth industry witnessed chronic, principally male, unemployment.²⁰³

A shifting domestic ideology thus combined with, and was in part shaped by, economic factors to strengthen women’s position and potential for agency – perhaps especially among artisans.²⁰⁴

consequent contraction of the marriage market, which laid bare the lack of alternative roles for women in patriarchal society: Cox, ‘The Single Self’. While largely in reference to the conditions of educated patrician women, their critiques of inequality in marriage may reflect a socially wider discourse.

²⁰³ For the 1663 Silk Guild census, see Bettarini and Ciapetti, ‘L’Arte della Seta’. The use of female labour in weaving is in part explained in terms of a general shift to less diversified and simpler cloths that required less training. Highly skilled labour for decorated cloth tended to remain the province of male weavers, though this became a minor part of the Florentine cloth business. The conclusions of Brown and Goodman, that as textiles became a largely female industry, men *en masse* moved to other skilled trades remains to be proven, and if true was a gradual and partial development. Brown and Goodman, ‘Women and Industry’; Goodman, ‘Cloth, Gender and Industrial Organisation’; Malanima, *La decadenza*, 83ff. For earlier male-female ratios in wool, see Franceschi, *Oltre il ‘tumulto’*, 121-2. In the 1632 census, 25 per cent of households were headed by female *capofamiglie*, overwhelmingly widows, a 7 per cent increase from 1562 – 77 per cent of these women who had an occupation listed (65 per cent) were in textiles, 60 per cent of them spinners, 15 per cent weavers. Litchfield, *Florence Ducal Capital*, pars. 280, 288. According to Daniela Lombardi, however, for early modern women ‘female work is an ability, not a profession’, as it was for men, though in my view the extent to which working women identified with their labour remains open. Lombardi, ‘Work and Gender’, 158 and *passim*.

²⁰⁴ Elizabeth Cohen has recently stressed that questions of agency and subordination for early modern women can only be meaningfully addressed with attention to social status, and that very often it was artisan women who had more room to manoeuvre: Cohen, ‘To Pray, To Work’, and *Eadem*, ‘Evolving the History of Women’, the latter providing an in-depth survey of the historiography. In this context, see esp. Chojnacka, *Working Women*.

Reformist social thought also promoted a role for women that, in effect, complemented the image of tavern-going men in need of discipline. While the position of fathers and husbands as governors of the household was never directly undermined, women were figured as missionaries of the faith, “openly elevated to the role of collaborator in the discipline of the family and the city”, as Gabriella Zarri has put it.²⁰⁵ Zarri has argued that such ideals informed the spread of the Ursuline congregations, which, under episcopal mandate, appeared in cities throughout northern Italy towards the end of the 16th century. Somewhere between a female consoriority and a Tertiary order, these small groups offered a choice that was neither the convent nor marriage but rather the possibility of remaining “virgins in the house”, bearers of doctrine and holiness into the domestic setting.²⁰⁶ Ultimately far more significant here is that the literature and preaching that addressed the relationship and obligations of spouses ascribed a similar role to wives. “The holiness of a wife,” said one mid-Seicento preacher, “is such a force that by itself it is often transfused into the husband, extirpating evil”.²⁰⁷ According to the bishop of Verona, Agostino Valier, “good mothers of the family are the firm foundation upon which the discipline of the city rested”, out of which came good government and social peace.²⁰⁸

The encouragement of an apostolate for lay women, within the domestic context in the first instance, arguably informed the collective and public activities they were taking up from the middle of the Cinquecento, activities suggesting that some women were keen to claim the Christian formation of lay women and girls as women’s work. Wider movements provided opportunities. The anxiety to protect female honour, discussed earlier, saw the establishment of orphanages for lower-class girls “in danger” in cities across Italy, their ultimate aim to provide these girls with a dowry and a suitable marriage. Such conservatories were sometimes set up and run by upper class laywomen, such as Florence’s Ospedale delle povere fanciulle abbandonate, a short-lived orphanage for poor girls founded in 1541, or the Conservatorio della piet  of 1554, which was also begun by noblewomen, though by 1558 it had attracted 320 donor-members, most of them artisan and virtually all of them female.²⁰⁹ A similar kind of space was created by the doctrinal movement. Catechistical schooling offered women the opportunity for an educative role in a public forum and, moreover, created routines of lay female association at the neighbourhood level, especially among those of a more humble background. Despite some criticism that it was inappropriate for women to

²⁰⁵ Zarri, ‘Dalla profezia’, 213-14; the quote is 214.

²⁰⁶ Zarri, ‘Ursula and Catherine’. Eadem, ‘The Third Status’. In this context, see also, focusing on the Daughters of Charity in France, Dinan, ‘Overcoming Gender Limitations’.

²⁰⁷ Quoted in Novi Chavarria, ‘Ideologia’, 684, and *passim* for her analysis of changes in the ideology of domestic relations in late 16th and 17th century Italian sermons.

²⁰⁸ This was Valier’s *Istruzione per le donne maritate* of 1575. Quoted in Zarri, ‘Dalla profezia’, 213.

²⁰⁹ Terpstra, *Abandoned Children*, 222-35; *Idem*, ‘*In loco parentis*’ and ‘Mothers, Sisters and daughters’. Another conservatory founded in 1589, the Casa di Carit , ran a home for abandoned girls and boys, with a group of 40 women initially running the girls’ home. See also Lombardi, ‘Poveri a Firenze’, 165-70.

teach in church, an imperative to segregate the sexes in the public sphere and, one suspects, women's sense of their own role in civic reform, meant that it was female "*maestre*" who normally educated girls. As elsewhere, it is reasonably clear that this became common practice in Florence as the movement gained momentum in the 1580s.²¹⁰

Putting these factors together begins to provide some context for the other role that spiritually inspired artisan women started grasping for themselves – gathering money and followers, electing a *signora* and processing along the same path of pilgrimage, charity and salvation as their brothers. However, this did not take place without at least implicit tensions. In the case of the conservatories for abandoned girls there was a deep social uneasiness about laywomen autonomously operating public institutions outside the conventual model. It seems that each of these ventures was marked by a history of struggle along gender lines that the women ultimately lost; by the early 17th century these institutions ended up becoming more enclosed and under far stricter clerical control. The wider scene of lay corporate piety in Tridentine Florence also suggests that women formed independent groups in the face of at least implicit resistance, and that this was a factor prompting them to take up the model of the *potenze*.

There is a great deal of evidence that women wanted to participate in the mainstream of collective devotion. In Florence, as in cities across Italy between the mid-16th and 17th centuries, there was a major influx of women into lay corporations, especially marked among lower-class communities.²¹¹ Almost every artisan confraternity discussed in this study enrolled women by the end of the Cinquecento. Overwhelmingly these were the female relations, mostly wives, of the *confratelli*, and in fact the ecclesiastical hierarchy and several religious orders encouraged confraternities of the family. The profile of women, however, was marginal, indeed more so in Florence, it seems, than in many other cities, where sometimes after open challenges to their husbands women won at least the right to form a separate sub-sodality with its own elected prioress and in some cases a significant participation in the ritual life of the confraternity.²¹² In Florence no

²¹⁰ In general, see Grendler, *Schooling*, 335, 342. Synodal law assumed separate classes for boys and girls and Iacopo Ansaldi noted in 1584 that when the numbers had become too great at Santa Lucia sul Prato the previous year the female masters went to the church with the girls and the boys were taught in the adjacent confraternal oratory – 'tanto le donne a ciò atte alla fanciulle, quanto gli huomini alli putti, essendosi fatto li Maestri, et le Maestre della Dottrina'. Quoted in Aranci, *Formazione*, 364.

²¹¹ In general, see Black, *Confraternities*, 34-8; Zardin, 'Confraternite e comunità'. For Florence, Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 212-13. For Bologna, Terpstra, 'Women in the Brotherhood'. For Siena, Cohn, *Death and Property*, 187-8; Casagrande, 'Confraternities' for Perugia; Esposito, 'Men and Women', for Rome.

²¹² In Bologna in 1547 a group of 30 women confronted the men of one of the city's most prestigious confraternities, S Maria della Pietà, as they gathered before a shrine at the city walls. They demanded to be subject to all confraternal statutes, though were willing to have a male guide as long as it was not one of their husbands. What they gained was an affiliate consoriority with an elected prioress, but were ultimately subject to the administration of the men's sodality, and in this case with almost no public devotional role. Terpstra, 'Women in the Brotherhood', 193, 201-2. For Perugia, see Casagrande, 'Confraternities', 64-5; for Rome, Esposito, 'Men and Women', 93-5. In

offices of any kind for women in the mixed confraternities have yet been brought to light. They were usually accorded burial rights and were obliged to say prayers for the souls of the deceased, often to be carried out at home. With few exceptions, their only physical presence in the ritual community was at the popular Marian feast of the Purification, where hierarchies were signalled by the weight of candles distributed to officials and members. Women universally received the smallest candle.²¹³ Florence, furthermore, appears to have developed almost no consororities, formal lay sisterhoods, a smattering of which have been unearthed elsewhere.²¹⁴ Whatever ideals of an evangelising role and the active prosecution of pious works that were created for and by women, men on the whole remained reluctant to see these activities pass from the home and into the street or oratory, to see their wives, autonomously or on an equal footing, present themselves and their example to the neighbourhood without their guidance and authority.

Curiously enough, one of the very few consororities that emerged in Florence was founded in the parish of Sant' Ambrogio, about 70 years before we hear about the female *potenze* or *congregazioni* in that same largely lower-class parish. This was the short-lived Company of the Holy Miracle founded in 1534; indeed its membership included an ancestor of Caterina Nuti, the mid-Seicento *signora* of one of the two groups based at the Porta alla Croce.²¹⁵

What this consorority attests to, firstly, is that largely local female networks existed or could quickly coalesce to seize opportunities in propitious circumstances. Indeed, as Sharon Strocchia has observed, it appears to have been slightly precocious in respect to the general emergence of consororities in Italy a couple of decades later. At the time of the establishment of the Holy Miracle, soon after the devastating siege of Florence, lay associations were in turmoil, many suspended altogether. The old "company of the most precious miracle" was not operating and the ancient eucharistic cult was not being properly "honoured". In an attempt to reclaim Sant'

France, a climate of struggle, muted or otherwise, between men and women appeared to mark the formation of independent consororities and the entry of women into existing confraternities.

²¹³ The Compagnia di Corpus Domini di Sancto Frediano explicitly prohibited women from entering its oratory except at Corpus Domini in order to stop them 'exposing and slandering us'. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 212-13.

²¹⁴ It is still true, as Christopher Black observed a decade ago, that details of female consororities remain 'tantalisingly meagre'. Black, 'The Development', 15. Both the absence of female confraternities and the character of male-regulated organisations appears to have a constant in Florence. See De La Roncière, 'Les confréries', 303-4. The two institutions spoken of earlier, founded by noblewomen for orphans or poor girls, might be considered as structurally quite closely related to confraternities. To these can be added another consorority of noblewomen, dedicated to Santa Caterina di Siena, which was first founded before 1365 and refounded before 1553. It maintained an altar in Santa Maria Novella and, from the 1620s, ran a small refuge for needy women in a house it owned on that *piazza*. Only two others have come to light and we know little about them: Santa Maria del Popolo, a consorority of patrician women dedicated to the eponymous image in Santa Maria del Carmine and founded in 1460; and San Lorenzo delle Donne, first referenced in 1303. See Eckstein, *The District*, 119-20; Sebregondi, 'A Confraternity'; Henderson, *Piety*, 451, 460.

²¹⁵ 'Brigida donna fu di Raffaello Nuti' paid taxes to the consorority in 1550 and 1551. CS, 79, 144, f. 35r.

Ambrogio's civic visibility, and in the hope of an improvement in its dire finances, the Benedictine nuns, who instigated the consorority, their servants, several relatives and, for the most part, parish wives and a few widows mobilised to fill a breach, "resuscitating" it as an all-female sodality. The sisters decorated the chapel of the relic and held monthly masses there, at which they offered alms to the convent.²¹⁶

While the company of the Holy Miracle was instantly popular, enrolling at least 66 women at the outset, participation declined precipitously by the end of the 1530s. By the early 1550s it was defunct.²¹⁷ The reasons for this are not completely clear but they are strongly suggested by the wider context of corporate worship and its power-gender structures. The consorority's decline took place just as the cult's customary observance was being re-negotiated. In 1543 the nuns and the traditional sponsors of the cult, the Guild of Judges and Notaries, sealed a contract to hold the apparently lapsed procession of the relic at Corpus Christi. The contract also re-established the central participation in this procession of the two confraternities with old and close links to the church, San Michele della Pace and San Maria della Neve.²¹⁸ Both were typical 16th-century confraternities of the family. Wives were accepted as members, perhaps even encouraged to enter, but had no authority and little public role. Santa Maria della Neve had long ruled out the participation of women in the Miracle procession and women were unwelcome in the pilgrimages that both sodalities made to Impruneta.²¹⁹ The celebration of the neighbourhood's most prestigious

²¹⁶ My outline is drawn from the confraternal records and Sharon Strocchia's account of the establishment phase of the consorority. Strocchia, 'Sisters in Spirit'. That the nuns were helping to refound an older Corpus Christi company is clear from the first entry of the *entrata*. 'Da suora Ghostanza de Chochi monaca in Sancto Ambrosio ... soldi dieci per limosina per aiutare dare principio a ttali devota et sancta opera di resuscitare la compagnia del pretiosissimo miracolo'. CS, 79, 144, f. 28r. Strocchia finds that in the first list of 66 entrants in 1534, almost one-third were the wives of artisans and labourers, identified by trade, the second largest group were women with surnames, some of whom were also of artisan families, and the smallest group were the nuns and their servants. See also Borsook, 'Cults and Imagery', 181f.

²¹⁷ After the initial entry of sixty-six women, the next recorded annual tax, 10 *soldi*, is 1539, where 21 women paid. In 1540, this dropped to 16 women and in the 1550 and 1551, 13 and six women respectively are recorded. The pages remain blank from this point. CS, 79, 144, ff. 28r-35r. This *entrata* is repeated later in the same book under each women's name. The numbers do not correspond to the earlier records: double as many women are initially recorded here, perhaps suggesting a wider base of support and a smaller active membership. However the trend is identical. In 1534, 125 women offered money, of those only 30 gave again. From 1540 until payments end in 1552 only a handful of women are recorded. *Ibid.*, ff. 94v-143r.

²¹⁸ CS, 79, 173, ff. 84v-86v. The procession of the relic was never part of the obligations of the Holy Miracle consorority, and here one senses the limits of what was considered publicly appropriate for women.

²¹⁹ In the 1493 redaction of its statutes, Santa Maria della Neve noted that names had to be ticked off in the books of men and women before the annual Miracle procession, but then women are scored out. It is not clear if their inclusion was a writers' slip, then corrected, a debate at that time, or if women had at some later point been excluded from the ritual. Capitoli, 606, ff. 38v-41v. In both statutes only *fratelli* are involved in the Impruneta trip and S Michele della Pace explicitly excluded women from any payments for personal pilgrimages. *Ibid.* and Capitoli, 45, f. 44 (1560) and f. 74 (1584).

cult decisively returned to male hands and the women of the parish were pushed back from the threshold of organised public devotion, some of them probably absorbed, if they were not already members, into these apparently resurgent confraternities.

The later *congregazioni*, led by and, like the Holy Miracle, probably mainly comprising married women, not only emerged against this institutional culture of corporate piety but, in part, because of it.²²⁰ Here, too, an opportunity had presented itself to women seeking a more public role. As we have seen, *potenze* and later *congregazioni* existed outside the statutory structure of confraternities, even when they were by and large the same group. This was almost certainly also true for the female *congregazioni* – there are no archival traces to indicate they represented statutory consororities. Instead all the evidence points to less formal neighbourhood associations with more limited activities. What this ‘*potenza*’ model offered was a space for collective female spirituality that did not entail a direct challenge to the male-regulated confraternities, to which some of these women, alongside their husbands, surely belonged. We recall that one of the Porta alla Croce groups dedicated itself on occasion to San Michele, the advocate of the parish’s principal confraternity. And if the female *congregazioni* usually paid the Franciscans at the Doccia to say masses for their dead sisters, this was not exclusively the case. In 1659 Maria Passerini’s women from the Porta arrived after the Assumption with 41 *lire*, “to redeem the souls of purgatory, with four masses a month for Giovanbattista, their brother” – language suggesting that this Giovanbattista had been a member of, or benefactor to, a sodality in which these women were also enrolled.²²¹ The two Porta alla Croce groups may well have represented the female members of San Michele and Santa Maria della Neve, circumventing the position allotted to them in statute.²²² In any event, they certainly appropriated the *potenza* model with an enthusiasm that ultimately outstripped that of their male counterparts – in the last years of recorded male visits to the Doccia, the early 1650s, women arrived in greater numbers and with more money than any of the men’s

²²⁰ That the *signore* were married women is indicated by their names, the standard formula for which was to follow the women’s first name by that of the husband’s first name and his family name. This is the case for all the names presently available. One Porta alla Croce group was led by Maria di Francesco Passerini, the other by Caterina di Mariotto Nuti, usually accompanied by Nannina di Lorenzo Sestini. The women of the Campaccio and via San Zanobi were led by Margherita di Domenico Gantanini and then Margherita di Niccolò Lapini. The question of their extraction and thus of socio-economic hierarchies within the groups remains open. They certainly were not noblewomen, though one suspects the *congregezioni* did include the wives and widows of better-off artisans and even small merchants and citizens. It is worth noting here that the earlier Holy Miracle consorority made no distinctions on a class basis for office-holding.

²²¹ ‘... per sofragare lanime del purgatorio con quattro messe a mese per Giovanbatista lor fratello’, Doccia, f. 51r.

²²² The absence of significant membership data for either of these confraternities has meant that the formal and informal corporate formations in Sant’Ambrogio cannot be elaborated with any precision.

groups, and as noted above, they continued going to the Doccia for at least 25 years after the men's groups had ceased to make visits.²²³

Finally, it must be asked if this transformation took place in an atmosphere of hostility. At times, perhaps. There is some evidence that men could feel women were intruding into the culture of the micro-pilgrimage and its well-trodden routes and destinations. In 1607, a large faction within the Bakers' Labourers, including its *signore*, tried to stop this *potenza*/confraternity from going south to San Francesco al Monte, instead taking it in the opposite direction to the Carmelite convent of Santa Lucia a Castellina, miles outside the city. Their main argument was "to avoid the chaos, which is caused by women when [the brothers] go to San Francesco".²²⁴ Yet if by the middle of the century trips by groups of women into the *contado* had become unremarkable to Florentines, an implicit tension still remained – for without challenging the male-run confraternities head on they pushed their collective presence and spiritual authority through the gendered barricade these ubiquitous corporations projected between domestic life and the public sphere.

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Stefano Rosselli, whose tentative remarks on the tombstone of the Prato emperor in 1659 began this chapter, did not appear to recognise that the imperial *potenza* at Santa Lucia sul Prato was a close relative of that neighbourhood's *congregazione / recreazione*, which had been processing up to San Michele alla Doccia a few short years before he wrote and may still have been making journeys into the *contado*.²²⁵ For him, as for many contemporaries, the artisan pilgrimage groups,

²²³ As noted above, female groups continued to arrive from the city long after male groups had stopped making trips. Their greater numbers is an inference. While only female numbers are recorded regularly, this appears significant given the friars' remarks at the same time about the very small numbers of men. Before 1650, gifts from women were unextraordinary, but from here until 1654, the last record of any male *congregazione*, the offerings of the two female Porta alla Croce groups exceeded all others.

²²⁴ On one side before the Parte were two counsellors, on the other was the *signore* and the flagbearer, each with 'molti altri'. The latter 'dicono volere portare questo presente anno detto presente overo limosona a S Lucia alla Castellina per levare confusione che fanno le donne quando si va a S Francesco'. The Castellina faction continued by stating that it was more costly to go to S Francesco and that they had already gone 'accattando per la Città' for S Lucia. They resolved to take 20 *scudi* to S Lucia, with the recipient of the rest of the money collected to be decided by a general vote. Parte, 54, f. 10r. (June 13, 1607). The convent of S Lucia alla Castellina, built in the 16th century, is on the via Castellina east of Quinto, north-west of Florence, while S Francesco al Monte is just south of the city. The men later returned to San Francesco, as observed earlier in this chapter.

²²⁵ I stress here that the Doccia's records are incomplete, and I have not been able to consult Fra Bonaventura Baldocci's *ricordi* at the church of Ognissanti, referred to in Levi, *A History*, 79, 90.

male and female, of his generation must have seemed entirely unrelated to bands led by stone-fighting kings, the image presented to him by the emperor's grave.

Such a narrowly drawn image of the *potenze* was, to be sure, not uncommon – the chroniclers and diarists of the 16th century had never wasted any words on the local pilgrimage culture when they wrote of the *potenze*. Yet this was more a function of their focus on civic ritual, and the person of the prince, rather than complete ignorance, which could hardly have been so profound. Rosselli's apparent unawareness of these linkages, on the other hand, may speak to a deeper politics of cultural memory, conditioned by the experience of reform. Some support for this hypothesis comes from a document in the archives of the citywide silk weavers' confraternity of Santa Croce, which suggests that artisans themselves had 'forgotten' the *potenze* by the late 17th century and were more or less happy to accept an outside account of their culture of their grandfathers. In Santa Croce, whose members had once been key figures within several neighbourhood kingdoms, especially the imperial brigade of the Prato, the governors placed in their records a verbatim copy of a passage on the history of the silk business from Ferdinando Migliore's *Firenze città nobilissima illustrata* of 1684 under the rubric, "The foundation of the company".²²⁶ Migliore introduced the *potenze* to suggest that the present economic straits of silk weavers were partly a moral consequence of their "public spectacle". "The Weavers, who had the Empire on the Prato, overcame and defeated in many rituals and festivities the two kings of the Dyers and Beaters, so much so that they were blinded by foolish ambition or, better, arrogance without limit, to the point of idiocy," he said. According to Migliore, it was for this that Ippolito Galantini's first biographer Baldocci Nigetti wrote that Galantini, "in order to repress and put a stop to the aggression of the Weavers who lived in Prato d'Ognissanti, often included in his orations the following words: 'Prato, Prato now you're flowering, but very soon you will be silenced'". That, Migliore now continued, following the same line as Baldocci Nigetti, "was a prophecy fulfilled, with their great destruction, because ... few of them possess the goods required for a little house, so that today you could swing a sword inside their dwellings, as the expression goes in Florence for places that are empty and bare of household goods".²²⁷

Not every silk weaver, surely, subscribed to this prophetic narrative of sinful pride, violence and its punishment, spoken, after all, from within the framework of a formal devotional organisation. Nevertheless the confraternity of Santa Croce was the weavers' principal representative body in the city and thus Migliore's account was being incorporated as a quasi-official history of the trade. It was not simply a reformist reading of carnivalesque ritual, but effectively an erasure of the charitable and devotional practices that, since their beginnings, had also defined the *potenze*. One wonders if the belief, or at least the desire to assert, that individuals and their associations had

²²⁶ CRS, 673, CLXVIII, section B, ff. 7-13. The date of the copy is uncertain as this section of the *filza* contains a diverse collection of documents, though all are from the second half of the 17th century.

²²⁷ Migliore, *Firenze*, 361-3. The passage Migliore lifted from Baldocci Nigetti, who was writing in the 1620s, never made any direct reference to *potenze*; Baldocci Nigetti, *Vita*, 99.

attained some greater purity had radicalised perceptions of change, to give the impression of a present uncontaminated by the past.

Chapter Four

Coda: Public Works and the Theatre of State

In Jacques Callot's well-known etching of the 1619 festival on the Arno, the *Fan*, there is a figure on the left of the cartouche gazing at the spectacle through a telescope (figs 19 and 20). The performance he is depicted observing through Galileo's recently invented lens was, as Callot's inscription says, the *Battle of the King of the Weavers and the King of the Dyers*. With such a title, this event, unmistakably, was meant to resonate with the *potenze* and the civic festivity of the past – and, in fact, the *potenze* were the spectacle's main protagonists, in a sense now to be unravelled.

Such an event, coming nine years after the interrupted battles of the *potenze* and Cosimo II's confiscation of their flags, appears strangely anomalous at first sight, a fragment of a ritual world that had spun beyond its limits. And indeed contemporaries of every social order may have shared something of that perception. For, along with a less extravagant spectacle on the Arno exactly one year earlier, the river battle of July 25, 1619 was a calculated revival of the idea of the "*potenze*". It was also to be their last major outing on the privileged city stage of early modern Florence. By looking closely at this festival, and excavating around it, we will widen the analysis of the previous chapter and provide a fuller understanding of the economic, social and ideological vectors reshaping urban culture in the early 17th century.

Cosimo II had set events in motion about a month earlier. Andrea Cioli, a key ducal secretary, informed the Capitani di Parte in late June that the duke "has ordered Giulio Parigi that for the next *fiesta* of San Iacopo, further to the usual Palio on the Arno, other games should also be prepared," and told to carry out Parigi's instructions.¹ This superimposition of other events onto the *palio delle fregate*, the boat race held every year on the feast day of San Iacopo, July 25, was not new – nor was the presence of Giulio Parigi.² Like many festivities staged by Cosimo after he became grand duke in 1609, this one was imagined and executed, recorded and framed in word and image, by a tight group of artists, mainly salaried clients of the court. All the usual suspects were together here. Parigi was Cosimo's chief set designer, architect and engineer, a position he assumed definitively after Bernardo Buontalenti died in 1608. Cosimo, indeed, had briefly attended Parigi's

¹ 'Havendo S.A. ordinato a Giulio Parigi che per il giorno della prossima festa di San Iacopo, oltre al solito Palio in Arno, si preparino anche altri giuochi, e comanda che il Provveditore della Parte somministri per tale effetto quanto di mano in mano dirà il sudetto Giulio Parigi.' (June 26, 1619). Parte, 1483, f. 404r. A similarly worded order, dated the previous day, appears in the grand-ducal correspondence: MDP, 1848, f. 434r, partially published in Blumenthal, *Theatre Art*, 125n.

² For example the 'L'arrivo d'Amore', a conceit staged, as the official court diarist Cesare Tinghi said, 'mentre il superbo teatro d'Arno era pieno di popolo per vedere correre il palio delle fregate, trattamento solito farsi ogni anno per la festività di S. Iacopo'. Quoted in Solerti, *Musica*, 97. See also Blumenthal, *Theatre Art*, 92.

studio on the via Maggio, learning the mechanics, as it were, of his own spectacular statecraft. Parigi was also the mentor and collaborator of Callot, who joined the court payroll in 1614 after two years in Parigi's *studio*. Less well known is Andrea Salvadori, a jobbing Florentine poet who had been orbiting the court since the mid-1610s, had started working with Callot and Parigi in 1616, if not before, and who wrote the script for 1619.³

The set that Parigi had the Parte build between the Ponte Santa Trinita and Carraia – the usual place for the *palio* and most other river festivals, as it was only here that both banks had a *lungarno* for spectators – principally involved an artificial island with two mountains, “one for fireworks, the other for musicians”.⁴ The island represented Sicily, the mountain of fireworks Etna. Salvadori tells a story that begins prior to the spectacle and offstage, on a mythical island in the Ethiopian Sea called Sudicera: Sweaty Filth. This island is ruled by the supposedly beautiful young Queen Barulla, or Fool, and the Weaver and Dyer kings are in fierce competition for her hand. At a feast, the drunken Dyer king declares that he will gather Mamaluks, ferocious Egyptian warriors, under his banner and perform an act of valiant chivalry. He will sail to Sicily, where the altar to Vulcan under Etna is tended by cyclopes, and steal the inhabitants' sacrifice, a calf and some wine, “the liquor of Bacchus”, and bring it back to Queen Barulla. The Weaver king flies into a jealous rage and the two sides get into a fight. A furious Queen Barulla interrupts, tells them she has no use for fights or bravado in her land, and orders them to leave and fulfil their boasts or she will have them led through the streets on a battle horse and executed. At the same time, however, she promises her hand to the victor. Now on the Arno – the Tyrrhenian Sea – the two armies in their boats approach Sicily. About 50 artisans a side were involved, on one part the labourers of the Dyers' *potenza*, on the other the Santa Lucia weavers of the Prato emperor; both had been called to collect their flags a few days before from the palace of the Parte.⁵ When they land on Parigi's island they battle with sticks and fists until, as it turned out, the Dyers win and snatch the sacrifice. This profanes the sacred rites of the Sicilians and the cyclopes around the altar of Vulcan, which had been taking place as the raiders approached. Distraught, a hundred of Vulcan's priests – represented by the musicians and singers – call on the god to avenge himself. The spectacle ends with an enormous display of fireworks and the torching of two boats, for Vulcan answers the prayers of his servants and causes thunder, smoke and a river of fire to erupt from Etna, engulfing several of the retreating ships.⁶

³ The three appear together for the ‘Guerra d’Amore’, an equestrian ballet staged on Piazza Santa Croce for Carnival 1616; *Ibid.*, 95-6, and see in general 30ff. Also, *Idem*, *Giulio Parigi's Stage Designs*, I, 21-5, 345-55; Rothrock, *Jacques Callot*, ch. 1. See, too, Nagler, *Theatre Festivals*, chs. 8, 11, 12.

⁴ Parte, 1483, f. 403r (July 4, 1619). These instructions for the island specified that it had to be about 15 yards square and raised two and a half yards out the water, with ‘2 monte, uno per fuochi l' altro per musici’. The island was also decorated around the outside with twigs and branches. *Ibid.*, f. 453r.

⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 454r.

⁶ This account is drawn from the printed pamphlet of the description and poem that was produced separately for the event, with a slightly different title to Callot's, and from the report of the official

With the customary marriage of work identities and mock chivalric forms, artisans found themselves, in a certain sense, on familiar ritual territory. However, in crucial respects, the *Battle of the King of the Weavers and the King of the Dyers* was different to the *feste* discussed in previous chapters. It was entirely produced from within the world of the court, the role of the worker kingdoms attached to an elaborate script that they themselves had no part in formulating. Indeed, it is by no means certain that the artisans involved had any more than a rudimentary awareness of the story outlined above. Generated within courtly circles, it was, in the first instance, also staged for the consumption of a courtly elite. Salvadori's plot came in the form of a narrative description and a poem: one thousand copies of the narrative were handed out to upper-class women, while the poem was pasted on the reverse of Callot's *Fan* engraving, which was presented as an actual fan with a silver-coated handle to a more select group of about 500 aristocratic ladies (fig. 21).⁷

This was, then, a curious experiment in public festivity, and any reading of it must begin with the question of why it was staged in the first place? Why bother to bring back the *potenze*, in this manner, and on the Arno? I want to argue that both the fact and, to a significant extent, the form of the 1619 festival are directly linked to the economic crisis of the early 17th century and the ducal government's response to it. In other words, one of the forces that helped to sweep away the *potenze* of the Cinquecento was also in part responsible for their brief revival. That scenario needs to be set out before the spectacle itself can be examined in more detail.

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The previous chapter discussed how two paired sets of issues began pressing hard on Florentine artisans and labourers towards the end of the Cinquecento: the transformation and decline of textiles and the resulting absence of work, and an erratic and expensive supply of grain. These problems, as we have seen, became endemic in the 1590s, but in the second half of the 1610s they combined with particular intensity. Extremely poor harvests returned in 1617 after several years of respite and continued through to 1620 and beyond – indeed, so severe was the famine of 1619 that, besides the usual grain imports, Cosimo II tried to resurrect a policy of his father's, creating a special commission to encourage private, communal and ecclesiastical landholders to reclaim unused land for cultivation.⁸ Meanwhile, the collapse of the wool sector can be dated to the mid-1610s. Cloth output, drastically reduced but reasonably steady from around 1590, plummeted by 50 percent in 1615-16 to around 6,000 pieces, rallying to 10,000 pieces over the next five years but dropping again to this new low by the mid-1620s.⁹

court diarist Cesare Tinghi. Salvadori, *Battaglia tra tessitori e tintori*; Tinghi, in Solerti, *Musica*, 146-7.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Diaz, *Il granducato*, 400-4.

⁹ For wool figures, see Malanima, *La decadenza*, 295, 302; in general, see the relevant section of Chapter Three of this study.

As outlined earlier, the ducal administration supplied subsidised grain or simply distributed it as alms. In conjunction with this, however, the government also became increasingly active by the late Cinquecento to try to ensure that the “poor”, if at all possible, sustain themselves through work. The expansion of building projects and other “*lavori pubblici*”, public works, and their real and perceived importance for providing, and forcing, employment is a chapter in the history of early modern Florence that largely remains to be written, yet the outlines are becoming clearer. Cosimo II’s commission of 1619 to encourage cultivation, for example, also explicitly sought to make work for *contadini* and the urban unemployed, the main victims of the famine. That was only one of many projects to have the additional and highly desirable value of job creation. There was a string of Medici building schemes. At Duke Francesco’s new villa at Pratolino, starting in the early 1570s, *contadini* were brought in as unskilled labour, and more were later drafted to Francesco’s La Maglia, the villa near Poggio a Caiano. As economic conditions worsened, Ferdinando I pointedly promoted the virtues of job creation in projects such as the extension to the Palazzo Vecchio and the creation of the Ambrogiana villa and Forte di Belvedere.¹⁰ Labour was brought in under Francesco, then Ferdinando I, for the Piazza Pitti, while the massive extension of the Palazzo itself was begun in the 1620s under Cosimo II, as was the extension of the Boboli gardens.¹¹ In addition to such ventures, a more general program of *lavori pubblici*, such as repairs to roads and fortresses, for example the Fortezza da Basso, became more intensive towards the end of the 16th century. From the early 1590s onwards the biggest of these schemes was river work, the dredging of river beds and fortification of banks to ensure the safe supply of water for agriculture, to reclaim river plains for cultivation and to try to stop the perennial flooding that could destroy, among other things, a crop within a few hours. The principal focus of this work was the Arno itself.¹²

The transfer of unemployed textile labour to various *lavori pubblici* has not gone unobserved prior to now, but it has not been appreciated just how early this began or the degree to which it constituted a systematic and long-term policy. In 1603, at the very latest, the jobless of the cloth industry started to make their appearance on the Arno, carrying the “*corbello*”, a wicker basket loaded with raw materials such as stones or earth.¹³ In February 1604 the Parte reported that Ferdinando I’s order to Gherardo Mechini, the scheme’s overseeing engineer from the late 1590s, to employ “those many poor Woolbeaters, Weavers and Artisans of the Wool Guild who do not have any work was executed, and the enterprise is being carried out, with the carrying of stones on the banks of the Arno and on the Ripoli plain outside Florence”.¹⁴ Projects “above and below

¹⁰ Butters, ‘Pressed Labor’, 61-78.

¹¹ Cochrane, *Florence*, 195-207; Campbell, ‘Hard Times’.

¹² The state *lavori pubblici* carried out from 1574-1609 are extensively described in Cerchiai and Quiriconi, ‘Relazioni e rapporti, I’; Gallerani and Guidi, ‘Relazioni e rapporti, II’. On the pre-eminence of river work under Ferdinando I, see, esp. 261.

¹³ Previous students have noted the appearance of textile workers, usually in the 1620s and later. Lombardi, ‘1629-1631’, 8; Campbell, ‘Hard Times’, 167f.

¹⁴ ‘Comandò V.A. che ai lavori a farsi in Arno che fussero ordinati da maestro Gherardo Mechini si impiegassi in essi molti poveri battilani tessitori e manifattori d’Arte di Lana che non havevono da

Florence”, principally for the defence of the city itself, constituted a key element of the Arno – and, to a lesser extent, Mugnone – work, and typically it was here that urban labour was deployed.¹⁵ Two months later, in April 1604, there were 159 Wool Guild *sottoposti* on the Arno: half were woolbeaters, weavers were the second largest category and there were a number of *divettini*, purgers and dyers.¹⁶

While the surviving documentation does not afford an ongoing chronicle, it is clear that the use of textile labour, like the Arno work itself, fluctuated, that it was fairly regular, but with periods of heightened activity; in effect, the river schemes were flexible projects that could react not only to exigencies such as flooding, but to the shifting pressures of unemployment. Though the textile presence continued after 1604, Cosimo II, for example, renewed his father’s injunction in July 1611. A month later the Parte said it had now put to work the men nominated by the Wool Guild, “the most needy of the trade”, adding that the numbers were constantly increasing. By September that year there were 344 men, “weavers, woolbeaters and others”, and they remained until March 1612.¹⁷ It was in the middle of another such bout of work that the Battle of the King of the Weavers and the King of the Dyers of 1619 took place, a long period of activity that started in July 1618 and did not taper off until March 1620. At its height, in late 1619 (by which time expenses had reached more than 10,000 *scudi*), about 300 wool trade men were on the Pian di Ripoli and Mugnone works, and at least 50 other urban unemployed were involved, including silk weavers, tailors, barrel and rope makers, plus those described as “without trade”. Predictably, there was a preponderance of men from the peripheral parishes of the city, such as Borgo San Frediano in the Camaldoli, the Prato in Santa Lucia, or the north of San Lorenzo, around via Ariento and Biliemme territory.¹⁸

lavorare fu eseguito e si va seguendo l’opera de’ quali è portar sassi ... in sulla riva d’Arno così in Pian di Ripoli come sotto a Firenze’. Parte, 1473, f. 66r. On Mechini, see also Gallerani and Guidi, ‘Relazioni e rapporti, II’, 268-9.

¹⁵ For the words in quotes, which appear often in the sources, see for example, Parte, 1483, f. 86r (1620). From the 1570s, the Florentine part of the Arno scheme focused on Rovezzano to Porta San Niccolò and from Porta San Frediano to Golfolina. In 1594 came the first works on the Arno bank of the ducal *cascine*. The general intensification after 1600 included extensive work on the Pian di Ripoli to the east of the city, also because of its importance to milling and fishing. A wall securing the entire plain was erected in 1607. Cerchiai and Quiriconi, ‘Relazioni e rapporti, I’, 199, 236-7; Gallerani and Guidi, ‘Relazioni e rapporti, II’, 279-80.

¹⁶ There were 80 woolbeaters, 32 weavers, 17 *divettini*, 17 purgers, seven cloth checkers, five dyers and a miller. Parte, 1473, f. 64. In general, see *Ibid.*, ff. 58r-68r.

¹⁷ The Parte said the original order of July 18 to put textile workers on the Arno ‘che mi saranno mandati in nota dal Cancelliere della detta arte che saranno e più bisognosi di tale esercizio – fu subito messo ad effeto, ma perchè il numero va del continuo crescendo e la spesa grossamente moltiplicando...’. That was September 12, with about 250 men reported. Parte, 1479, f. 264r. The number of 344 was reported a fortnight later on September 28: *Ibid.*, f. 262r. The men were there until at least mid-March, 1612. For the correspondence between Parte and duke around the issue of standing them down, *Ibid.*, ff. 238r-46r.

¹⁸ Parte, 1483, *passim*. The key documents are as follows. The wool trade numbers at their height in December 1619, f. 177r; the winding down of textile labour in March 1620, ff. 84-86. Here, the 73

Lavori pubblici thus became state factories of alternative employment for the impoverished. In this, they constituted a significant manifestation of ideological currents that had been reshaping perceptions of poverty and the poor, and the nature of charity, for over a century. Crucial, firstly, was the notion that pauperism and the begging that accompanied it were social evils that pointed to a poorly run state and which governments had a direct responsibility to alleviate. Such ideals had deep roots in the north Italian communes, but they became more emphatic across Europe in the first half of the 16th century, in concert with the centralising, state-building ethos that animated governments in this period.¹⁹ An early declaration in Florence of these fresh impulses can be found in the magistracy of the Bigallo, established by Cosimo I in 1542. The Bigallo's proposals, very much in step with poor relief initiatives in other cities, made a programmatic link between the disciplining of mendicancy and the value of work: those deemed able to work were in fact to be prohibited from begging altogether. The Bigallo never realised its plans for the city's "begging poor", instead remaining absorbed with hospitals for abandoned children – though there, as in other lay charitable institutions founded in 16th-century Florence, work was heavily underscored; trade apprenticeships were found for boys and, later, silk weaving was established for girls inside the hospitals.²⁰ However, amidst the sustained pauperisation of the early Seicento, a more concrete nexus between work and mendicancy crystallised under the aegis of the state. In 1621, two years after the Arno festival, public works schemes were joined by a new government hospital for beggars in the old church of San Salvatore in the Camaldoli. Through partial and, in theory, forced enclosure, the Ospedale dei Mendicanti sought to address the most visible face of poverty, the growing number of beggars in the streets. Sustenance inside the institution was accompanied by the teaching of trade, usually textile, skills, while able-bodied adults, primarily men, were fed out to the *lavori pubblici*.²¹

The moral superiority of work to survival on alms was central to the emergence of this paradigm of poor relief. In one reference to works at the Fortezza da Basso in 1630, an example that could be multiplied, a ducal official said that Ferdinando II "wanted in such times of penury to give some help to the weavers of the Silk Guild, who stay idle (*otioso*), to give them the chance to help themselves with their own labour".²² Indeed, the provision of work, as both Parte and Wool

unemployed remaining on the project, which included 27 from wool, are listed with trade, or without, and by place.

¹⁹ These ideas are perhaps best codified in Juan Luis Vives' influential *De subventionem pauperum* of 1526. See the discussion in Black, *Confraternities*, 130-47; Alves, 'The Christian Social Organism'; Maureen Flynn describes how the implicit argument over the social meaning and status of mendicancy became a major subject of public debate in Spain; Flynn, *Sacred Charity*, ch. 3.

²⁰ On the Bigallo, see, esp. Lombardi, 'Poveri a Firenze'. See too Terpstra, 'Confraternities and Public Charity'; *Idem*, 'Competing Visions'.

²¹ Lombardi, *Povert  maschile*, 173ff.

²² 'Volendo S.A. in tempi tanto penurioso porgere qualche aiuto alli tessitori del Arte della Seta che si stanno otioso, et dar loro occasione che con le proprie fatiche si possano aiutare.' Fabbriche medicce, 126, f. 118v. About 200 weavers were involved here.

Guild said of the river schemes, was itself “a charity”, a “pious and holy enterprise”.²³ Giving alms, the Wool Guild argued, merely “renders these plebs lazy”,²⁴ while work, as the Bigallo had already put it back in the 1540s, was the solvent for the “vain and damnable sloth (*otio*)” that led to “an infinity of [other] sins”.²⁵ As such statements indicate, the redemptive charity of work was an idea that went hand in hand with a more or less negative typology of the ‘poor’. Indeed, the commission that set up the Ospedale dei Mendicanti understood its task in unambivalently punitive terms: the city’s beggars were described as lazy, irreligious and bestial (a rhetoric that coalesced above all in the figure of the “false mendicant”).²⁶ In this context, pejorative images of the ‘poor’ tended, once again, to be gendered male – something no doubt sharpened by the ongoing transformation of the textile industry, which, as we have seen, offered women marginal livelihoods in the world of work while male unemployment rose. The Silk Guild claimed that wives and children were left at the looms while the men spent their time in the tavern. One silk merchant voiced a widespread view when he said, “It is necessary to find a way to stop the many gatherings of labourers and the poor, who instead of working to help sustain their wives and children gather around the walls outside the city and in a thousand other places to gamble, often spending what their wives and children earned the week before”. He called for the idle to be forced onto public works projects.²⁷

The image of a *plebe* in the grip of slothful corruption, no doubt fervently believed in some quarters, served to take complex social fears – about chronic unemployment and the presence of disgruntled, occupationally castrated, men in the city’s streets and taverns – and put them in terms of the brute nature of artisans and labourers themselves. It became part of the construct, discussed in the previous chapter, of a morally uninstructed and spiritually deficient ‘poor’. Work, in turn, became an ideal that could be bolted on to reformist discourse and its tendency to frame charity in redemptive and disciplining terms. All of this served to legitimise the work schemes, as well as the radical step of enclosure, in the face of traditional charitable models, which held the begging of the destitute to be normative and ascribed a Christology to the figure of the mendicant. Furthermore, and sometimes in a highly calculated fashion, such ideas could be used to shift responsibility for economic upheaval, which the guilds understood only too well to be a structural problem, and indeed one that was exacerbated by the abandonment of the textile business by at least some of the city’s wealthier citizens.²⁸

Instead, occupation and the ability to work were, it is by now abundantly clear, crucial concerns for most male artisans, both in terms of basic economic needs and their status and gender self-

²³ Parte, 1479, f. 242r (1611); 1483, f. 180r (1618).

²⁴ Quoted in Lombardi, *Povertà maschile*, 107 (1632).

²⁵ Quoted in Lombardi, ‘Poveri a Firenze’, 166.

²⁶ Lombardi, *Povertà maschile*, ch. 2.

²⁷ Quoted in Lombardi, ‘1629-31’, 12n; *Eadem*, *Povertà maschile*, 110-12.

²⁸ As far as the Wool Guild was concerned, the problems were caused by the absence of nobles involved in trade and of foreign merchants; Lombardi, ‘1629-1631’, 8. As others have pointed out, this flight of Florentine capital to land has been exaggerated: Malanima, *La decadenza*, 121ff; Berner, ‘The Florentine Patriciate’.

fashioning. As the grand dukes, and many of his officials and the guilds all knew, the deviant type was thin on the ground. The Silk Guild's invective against silk weavers in 1629, quoted above, was, to put it in its immediate context, a strategic reaction to silk weavers' attempts to assure the provision of work or subsidies when there was none. As pointed out in Chapter Two, this dispute was characteristic of the culture of negotiation in ducal Florence: artisan grievances were raised, claims launched, and an idea of public good invoked, with the weavers summoning the figure of the just prince, "our boss", into this process in order to prosecute their claims. Increasingly, however, the weavers' talk of the prince as their boss was not only a rhetorical ploy but a social fact, since it was to the state that artisans looked amidst the more extreme conditions of the early Seicento. An institution such as the Ospedale dei Mendicanti, for example, may have been founded on a wave of disciplinary polemic, but it never had effective powers to stop begging or enforce enclosure, and, on the ground, beggars (a good number of whom were unemployed textile workers) simply treated it – and to an extent recast it – as a resource, *requesting* temporary internment for their families, whom they said they were unable to support, or for themselves.²⁹ As for the *lavori publici*, often these projects, and the use of textile labour, were pushed forward on the petition of artisans themselves, rather than having been achieved by any press ganging of the supposed indolent. One finds supplications such as that of Piero Mugnaini, a spinner from Castello, who explained in May 1619 "how he has no work in wool and has an old mother and pregnant wife who are dying of hunger", and therefore begged Cosimo II "to allow him to carry the *corbello* on the Arno, just as those woolbeaters are doing."³⁰ In fact, it was the collective petition of the woolbeaters themselves, "to labour on the works of the commune", that initiated the large-scale reappearance of textile workers on the river the year before. They asked the grand duke to "put to work up to 100 men who have wives and children and do not have the ability to sustain their poor families, because in their trade there is no work".³¹ Hard on their heels came the wool weavers, with the Wool Guild apparently taking the lead in their case – not out of any concerns about idleness, but because they feared weavers would abandon Florence in search of work.³²

None of this is to say that there was no forced labour, or that relations were harmonious on the river schemes. On one hand, these were men pushed by circumstance to perform hard and tedious labour, work bereft of *virtù*, at least in its sense of skill; on the other hand, overseers saw them, at

²⁹ Lombardi, *Poverta maschile*, ch. 3.

³⁰ 'Piero di Giuliano Mugnaini filatori di lana da Santo Michele a Castello servo di vostra Alteza Serenissima suprica come lui non [h]a da lavorare di lana e [h]a sua madre vecchia et la moglie gravida e si more di fame, in però si [e]spone a piedi di V.A. che per l' amor di Dio gli faccia tanta grazia di potere entrare a portare il corbellino ad Arno, come fano questi batilani'. Parte 1483, f. 523r.

³¹ 'Battilani di la citta di Firenze umilisimi servi di vostra A.S. li esponghono e suplichano a vostra A. S. che per l' amor di Dio li voglia a chonciedere una grazia e si mettere a lavorare insino a numero 100 omini che anno moglie e figlioli e non anno da potere sostenere le loro povere familglie perchè loro mestiero non si lavora ... di meterli a lavorare in su lavori di il chomune dove piacerà a Vostra A.S. per potere aiutare loro poveri figlioli.' Parte, 1483, f. 181r (June 22, 1618).

³² *Ibid.*, f. 180r (petition of the Wool Guild, August 25, 1618)

least in part, through the social imagery associated with the word *plebe*. The disciplinary ethos is neatly encapsulated by one document of December 1606, which offers up the panoptical image of Ferdinando I looking down upon a group of five ditch diggers on the Arno from Vasari's corridor above the Ponte Vecchio, and then having them fired "because they weren't working".³³ In one of his reports, Mechini said work was going well but complained that among the woolbeaters and weavers "there are insolent men and people who don't want to work, or let others work, and they exhort all the others to want to leave in good time in the evening".³⁴ Overseers took the view that it was "necessary to deal with these people very rigorously, because many of them are insolent and they are people who are desperate, and because of this we often hear about some uproar".³⁵ Yet even such one-sided comments hint at a familiar social politics, of textile workers attempting to organise in their 'new trade' around ideas of a just provision guaranteed by the good prince. In one instance, in 1607, the knight Rafaele Carnesecchi, the Parte's *proeditore* or chief bureaucrat, explained to Ferdinando I that a wage rise had already been conceded – to 1 *lira* or 1 *lira* 2 *soldi* a day, a rate comparable to the bottom end of wool earnings and described by the Wool Guild as "very decent (*onesto*)" – but now they were demanding more. "They are so insolent that they not only try to intimidate the wise minister in charge," he said, "but even use impertinent words towards me, saying that the mind of Your Highness is that they should be given enough earnings that both they and their families can live."³⁶

*

Florentine occupational communities had traditionally brought their work on to the city stage as *potenze* kingdoms. Now, with significant numbers of textile trade men on the river, labour was once again transformed into performance, the day of the annual *palio* on the Arno the perfect moment. Indeed, in one respect, the Battle of the King of the Weavers and the King of the Dyers connected work and play more closely than ever before, since the Capitani di Parte, which had long

³³ On petition, the men, whom the Parte said were poor, had families and 'per il passato hanno quasi del continuo vissuti su lavori d'Arno' were reinstated, though only on a piecework basis. Parte, 1473, f. 313r.

³⁴ 'V'è delli insolenti e gente che non vogliono nè lavorare nè lassare lavorare a li altri e sollevono tutti li altri a volersene la sera partire a buon ora.' Parte, 1483, f. 441r (1619).

³⁵ 'È bisogno trattare con queste gente chon molto rigore, che sono molto insolenti e gente disperata, e però si sentirà spesso qualche romore'; Parte, 1483, f. 179r.

³⁶ '... sono tanto insolenti che vogliono non solo soprastare a savvi ministri ma usono anco parole impertinenti contro di me, dicendo che la mente di V.A. è che si dia da guadagnare loro tanto che possino vivere loro e le lor famiglie et per ciò domandono nuovo agumento di prezzo.' Parte, 1475, f. 1r. The rough rate for semi-skilled workers such as woolbeaters in the late 16th through early 17th century was 1 *lira* a day; see Malanima, *La decadenza*, 217-18; Goldthwaite, 'The Florentine Wool Industry', 544-5.

overseen the *potenze*, and now held their flags, was also the magistracy that co-ordinated most *lavori pubblici*. It would even seem likely that among the labourers the Parte used to construct the platforms on the Arno there were, if not the festival participants themselves, a number of textile industry workers. Public works and public spectacle were similarly linked for those at the top end of the 1619 production. Like Buontalenti before him, Giulio Parigi not only concerned himself with set design and court spectacle – he also oversaw all the duchy’s civil engineering.

As Cosimo II revived this performative topos and gave it a new form, the *potenze*, as observed earlier, were now expected to do nothing except stick to their assigned roles “in the theatre”, as Cesare Tinghi described the detached space offered by the Arno (a space broadened out and regularised in Callot’s engraving). There were precedents or models of a sort for all of this. As outlined in Chapter Two, the idea of a confrontation between the city’s weavers and dyers was imagined by Antonfrancesco Grazzini in his *Canto di fare a’ sassi* – included in the ‘canon’ of carnival songs he published in 1559.³⁷ In terms of practice, meanwhile, one finds Duke Francesco (to whom Grazzini dedicated his collection) attempting to slot a stone fight somewhat along these lines into a series of staged events in 1584 for the state entry of Vincenzio Gonzaga, prince of Mantua. Two squads were formed on the via Larga, outside the old Medici palace – on one side the Prato emperor, Vice-emperor of the Camaldoli, Colomba and Biliemme, “all weavers”; on the other, a mixture of dyers, purgers and woolbeaters. As in 1619, each side was led by a noble, with Bande commissioner Averardo de’ Medici, documented shortly afterwards as overseer of all the *potenze*, acting as the weavers’ *maestro di campo*. In a printed commemorative pamphlet for the Gonzaga entry the stone fight appears entirely unremarkable among the other elements of the festive program, but in fact it had quickly got out of control. Some 20 artisans were seriously wounded, as were a few of Duke Francesco’s German troops after they had been ordered to break up the battle. For Ricci, this dangerous “ancient game of the city”, the first official, regime-sponsored stone fight since that of 1549, also on the via Larga, should never have been revived again.³⁸ Indeed, for more than a century one of the implicit stress points between the *potenze* and their Medici patrons was around the extent to which the former could be placed into the cultural programs of the latter. Now, however, in 1619, reviving the *potenze* no longer raised this issue: here they were far more fully domesticated to the theatrical culture of the court. As each side was again guided – stage-managed – throughout by a “protector”, a *cameriere* from the inner circle of the court, it was not really the *potenze* that Cosimo re-presented, but the ‘*potenze*’ now properly reified as two iconic textile kingdoms: of course there never was a single weavers’ brigade, and

³⁷ Brusciagli, *Trionfi e canti*, 2, 378-9.

³⁸ Ricci, 407-8; For the fight in Carnival 1549 (1548sf), Plaisance, *Florence*, 135. For 1584, see also the description in BRF, *Piccolo diario*, ff. 26-7; Deti, *Descrizione della pompa*. For Averardo de’ Medici, see 1588 list.

though that role was played on the river by the men of the Prato emperor, when it was discovered that the imperial banner was in tatters it was simply exchanged for the flag of the Biliemme.³⁹

Essentially Cosimo II and his courtier-artists offered up an *intermezzo*, transposing motifs from recent court productions but putting artisans centre stage instead of, as was quite common, a selected nobility and the prince himself. Vulcan, for example, had been present at the Palazzo Pitti as part of the celebrations for Cosimo's wedding to Maria Maddalena in 1608, the cyclopes displaying armour that the god had forged at Etna for the young groom.⁴⁰ For Carnival of 1613, a joust was staged, again inside the Pitti palace, that pitted a squad of four nobles, unleashed by the Medicean Jupiter, against the barbaric cyclopes, who were threatening the Tuscan golden age.⁴¹ Those sets had also been Parigi's designs, as was the *Argonautica*, the mammoth finale of the 1608 wedding, and the benchmark for subsequent river spectacles (fig. 22). Here, the ships of the Argonauts, manned by aristocrats and with Cosimo playing Jason, fought against their enemies, the golden fleece being offered to the bride at the end of the performance.⁴² Indeed, the wedding of 1608 also provided the point of departure for the first appearance of the "*potenze*" on the Arno, in 1618. At Cosimo's wedding, Pisan knights of Santo Stefano had performed that city's noble *gioco di ponte* on the Ponte Santa Trinita in Florence. Ten years later, just as the new bout of river work was getting under way, this was reprised with artisan protagonists. Executed and scripted by Parigi and Salvadori, a temporary wooden copy of Pisa's Ponte di Mezzo was built across the Arno and squads of Weavers and Dyers knocked each other off with their fists: the conceit had them as the armies of Europe and Asia battling on the Hellespont. As with the more elaborate and original spectacle one year later, each side was led by nobles of the court (the same two), and the prize was a fatted calf and a barrel of wine.⁴³

³⁹ As ducal secretary Lorenzo Usimbardi noted on July 21: 'l'insegna sopradetta del'Imperatore non è ricevuta perchè era tutta stracciata, et in quel luogo s'è dato loro l'insegna del Re di Bilieme.' Parte, 1483, f. 454r. The two *camerieri* were Rodorigo Alidosi and Fra Ianolfio Bardi; Solerti, *Musica*, 147.

⁴⁰ Blumenthal, *Theatre Art*, 50-4.

⁴¹ Solerti, *Musica*, 71-2. This event was linked to the official state baptism of Cosimo's second son, Giovancarlo.

⁴² Blumenthal, *Theatre Art*, 57; Nagler, *Theatre Festivals*, 111.

⁴³ As would also be the case in 1619, the Dyers won. The 1618 conceit conflated two ancient stories to forge a narrative of war and peace. One story concerned the wars of the Persian king Xerxes against the Greeks, when he built a bridge across the Hellespont, between the islands of Abydos and Sestos, thus linking Europe and Asia in war. The other was the story of forbidden love between Hero, on the Asian side on Alysos, and Leander, who lived on Sestos. In the best known version of the story, Leander swims to see his lover every night, but drowns, prompting Hero's suicide. In the Parigi-Salvadori version, the bridge in fact was built by Venus to allow the lovers to see each other without risking the swim – but Europe and Asia see this as an opportunity to recommence their struggle. The armies are separated by the goddess of love, who shows them how they should follow the example of Hero and Leander and make peace. Ducal secretary Curzio Picchena clearly recalled the 1608 template – and he informed Cosimo II's sister Caterina de' Medici in Mantua that the crowd preferred this river spectacle to the costlier version at her brother's wedding. See Salvadori, *Descrizione della battaglia del ponte* (no reference to *potenze*); Tinghi, in Solerti, *Musica*, 136-8; and the letter of Picchena, published by Molly Bourne at

At one level, the noble audience that Salvadori and Callot addressed in their media for the *Battle of the King of the Weavers and the King of the Dyers* was invited to laugh. They were encouraged to experience the comic charge long associated with the vista of artisans in the guise of kings. Simply having plebeians quote the noble *Argonautica*, one hears echoes of the laughter that exploded from Cosimo I in 1545 at the sight of the Prato emperor Pierone's mangled signature. Salvadori's verse piles this on. He draws a strong link between his offstage island, where the Weavers and Dyers come from, and the kingdoms of the *potenze* in the city. Indeed, apart from the protagonists, several other brigades appear in the poem, all their lords mad for Queen Barulla: "This [queen] wrenched the heart from the armoured chest of Bufaldo, lord of the Biliemme / made Martin the glory of the Woolbeaters go mad / and the king of Monteloro challenge Bohemia".⁴⁴ Salvadori begins by depicting the island as a carnivalesque no-place, a land of plenty, "fatter and more fertile than Cockaigne ... where the good people customarily like to stuff their mouths from dawn to dusk" – a trenchant inversion of realities.⁴⁵ But with this image he also played to very real courtly notions of a vile and uncivil *plebe*, subject only to the excesses of their untutored bodies. There was no inversion of perceived realities in his decision to call this supposed place of abundance Sudicera, Sweaty Filth, and to place it beyond European civility and religion in the Ethiopian sea: this was no more than to give fictional shape to the 'ghettos' of the urban periphery and see their otherness in pagan and primitive terms. The Dyers king, who "of the regal lovers / is filthier, and even more the royal residence" – depicted as a grubby tavern where the "barony makes festivities" – talks with a "ferocious accent" as he throws down his challenge. In his response, the king of the Weavers goes on to compare his mouth, which would kiss Barulla, to that of a troll and his hands, which would touch her, to the trotters of a pig. Moreover, it is with a keen satirical eye for the social and economic context that Salvadori has the island ruled by a woman, in fact still a girl, who orders them to stop their useless fighting and show their real *virtù* by stealing the sacrifice to Vulcan of meat and wine: in a sense she is sending these lazy, drunk and brawling men out to work, to bring home the bacon. Utterly cowed by Barulla – "the will for a stone fight falls away at the sight of her" – but intent on winning her "refined beauty" (though it is implied that she's a gorgon), the textile kings are "obedient to the command of their Lady".⁴⁶

Salvadori thus played to the prejudices of his narrow readership, yet the *fiesta* was intended for a far larger audience. A few hundred fans, with attached poem, had been given to noblewomen, but the textile kings fought for their prize of meat and wine in front of as many as 30,000 spectators.⁴⁷ Indeed, as Callot's engraving itself indicates, it was not only the Weavers and Dyers, "artisan

www.medicini.org/news/dom/dom022000.html (MDP, 6108, ff. 787-8). One other obvious model for artisan fist fights on bridges was the Venetian tradition; Davis, *War of the Fists*.

⁴⁴ 'Questa dal petto armato il Core ha tratto / A Bufaldo Signor di Bilemme, / Martin gloria del Batti andar fa matto / E Re del Monteloro arde Buemme'.

⁴⁵ 'Più grassa di Cuccagnam e più ferace / ... Ivi a gente beuona, a cui sol piace / Dall' alba boccheggiare fino alla sera'

⁴⁶ 'Della lor Donna obbedienti al cenno, / E dell' altra Bellezza al premio intenti'.

⁴⁷ Tinghi, in Solerti, *Musica*, 147.

Florence”, who were “in the theatre”. Cosimo had ordered one of his courtier-knights to distribute Callot’s fans to the “beautiful ladies” – as Salvadori addressed them in his poem – including one to the duchess, who watched from the windows of the Bardi palace while Cosimo enjoyed the spectacle from a coach beside the river.⁴⁸ Thus one of the basic chivalric elements upon which the story of the Weavers and Dyers was built was reprised by its privileged audience, with the spectacle itself, in a sense, offered up as the prize to the city’s noblewoman. Callot’s image drives home to these spectators that they, too, were actors playing a role: he populates the cartouche with figures, intended to suggest key men of the court: one of them has a copy of the Fan in his hand, offering it to the audience, as well as holding up a mirror to them. In this way, a “nobility”, male and female alike, was invited to watch itself watching the Arno battle, to understand itself as integral to the larger drama of the event.⁴⁹

What Callot ingeniously invoked was a common topos of baroque spectacle, the *theatrum mundi*, the world as theatre – and in this context that world was always identified with the state. Court theatre assembled the works of the state in a lavish unity of the arts: design, poetry, music, engineering. Here, on the river, this extended to include the lower arts or crafts – the two key skilled trades of the textile industry – and even the unskilled labour of river work. In this microcosm ordered by human artifice, the political and social nature of the state were also articulated. Within the confines of the Pitti or Uffizi theatres, the imagined state usually comprised only a carefully positioned prince and nobility.⁵⁰ Here, the social range was broader, and Callot’s image delineates – from background battle to foreground audience – the greater hierarchies that were held together in the aesthetic unity of the event, all under the eye of a divinely ordained ruler. For beyond the Fan’s thick cartouche a final observer is implied, the theatre/state’s maker, his panoptical gaze alluded to within by the figure holding Galileo’s telescope, a marvel only recently added to the Tuscan state’s virtuosity and one that was intimately bound to the service of the Medicean dynasty.⁵¹

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ With the self-referencing of his own print, Callot further developed ideas he had introduced two years earlier, again in collaboration with Salvadori and Parigi, for a performance in the Uffizi theatre entitled the *Liberation of Tyrrhenus and Arnea*. See Nagler, *Theatre Festivals*, 131-3, where Callot’s print for this festival is reproduced. On this theme in Callot’s work, see also Rothrock, who describes these designs as ‘paper theatres’. Rothrock, *Jacques Callot*, 378-405.

⁵⁰ See Zorzi, *Il teatro*, ch. 2; *Idem*, ‘Il teatro e il principe’.

⁵¹ Galileo’s ‘Medicean stars’, Jupiter’s four largest moons, discovered in 1610, became a much-used motif at court. The four stars, which Galileo linked to Cosimo and his three brothers, were presented as an astrological endorsement of Medici rule, and they fed into the imagery, resurrected from the time of Cosimo I, of the state as a (micro)cosmos and Cosimo II as master of it. The four stars appeared at the Carnival joust in the Pitti of 1613, discussed above, as well as on the cover of the “Alle Stelle medicee” commemorative pamphlet for the 1619 festival itself, encircled within a cosmos punctuated by the planetary balls of the Medici (fig. 23). See Biagioli, *Galileo*, ch. 2, and 139-141 for the 1613 joust. For the Cosmos/Cosimo symbology, *Ibid.*, 120-4; Crum, ‘Cosmos, the World of Cosimo’; Cox-Rearick, *Dynasty and Destiny*, 277. For a discussion of baroque spectacle and the prince, see esp. Aercke, *Gods of Play*, chs. 1-2; also Strong, *Art and Power*.

This absolutist poetics confronted the social and economic crisis that marked the early 17th century. Cosimo II did not bring back the *potenze* solely to burlesque the *plebe*, but looked to re-present before the entire population the sense of civic contract that had also accompanied their festivities in the 16th century. With the drama of food and work being played out day by day on the Arno, Cosimo moved to shore up traditional trade identities even as they were collapsing, while at the same time stressing to artisan Florence that the very survival of these identities was dependent on the government's *lavori pubblici*, and that the same link between work and reward existed there. Indeed, the moral thrust of Salvadori's overall conceit was arguably one also intended, minus the derision, for a socially broader audience: if artisan masculinity had been compromised by unemployment, it could be, as in Salvadori's storyline, redeemed if channelled productively. At the same time, a nobility, while no doubt savouring the frisson of a comic (mis)identification with the reviled *plebe*, were also positioned by the prince as the audience of artisan labour, were reminded that work was one of the keys to social order and that they, or at least their capital, had an active role in the wellbeing of the state. They were even lightly admonished: just before Queen Barulla stops the Weavers and Dyers' brawl and sends them to Etna, Salvadori has the "magnanimous Court and the great Senate" betting on the outcome of the fight.⁵²

The *Battle of the King of the Weavers and the King of the Dyers* rested, then, on the same ideological bedrock that underpinned the elaborate gardens that had been constructed by successive Medici dukes. Francesco's Pratolino had been extolled as "a portrait of a well-governed commonwealth"⁵³ and, with a more immediate resonance, the same idea can be found in the Boboli gardens, which, in the still more desperate 1630s, were extended in order to celebrate Ferdinando II's new aqueduct, a huge public works project that brought potable water into the city and employed up to 600 textile workers. On the base of Pietro Tacca's statue of Abundance, one element in the Boboli's sculptural program, an inscription optimistically announces: "While almost all Europe was consumed with most grievous wars and Italy was struggling for lack of grain, Etruria under Ferdinando II, because of the kindness of his will, was enjoying peace, the best of affairs and prosperity."⁵⁴ Similarly, in 1619, Cosimo II's festive tableau sought to affirm the existence of a stable universe, a state in which Nature and Fortune could be brought under control, notwithstanding the note of struggle sounded by the eruption of Etna and the loss of several ships. At a moment of profound uncertainty the battle of the textile kings projected an idea of continuity,

⁵² "E chi da questo tien, chi da quel lato / La magnanima Corte, e 'l gran Senato."

⁵³ "Pratolino [è] un' ritratto prima di una Republica ben governata quaggiù in terra & poi della sopraceleste & divina": Francesco Vieri, *Discorsi di M. Francesco De' Vieri, detto Il Verino Secondo, Cittadino Fiorentino. Delle Maravigliose Opere di Pratolino, & amore* (Florence, 1587), 8-9; quoted in Butters, 'Pressed Labor', 64.

⁵⁴ The statute was installed in 1636. The aqueduct, like extensions to the Palazzo Pitti itself, were, again, engineered by Giulio Parigi. Campbell, 'Hard Times', esp. 165-9, and 173 for the *Abundance* inscription. For the renewed economic contraction at the end of the 1620s, see esp. Lombardi, '1629-31'.

and of a Promethean prince who could guarantee it, who could forge a integrated whole out of the higher arts and lower trades, out of nobles and plebeians – who could wrest order and peace out of potential chaos.

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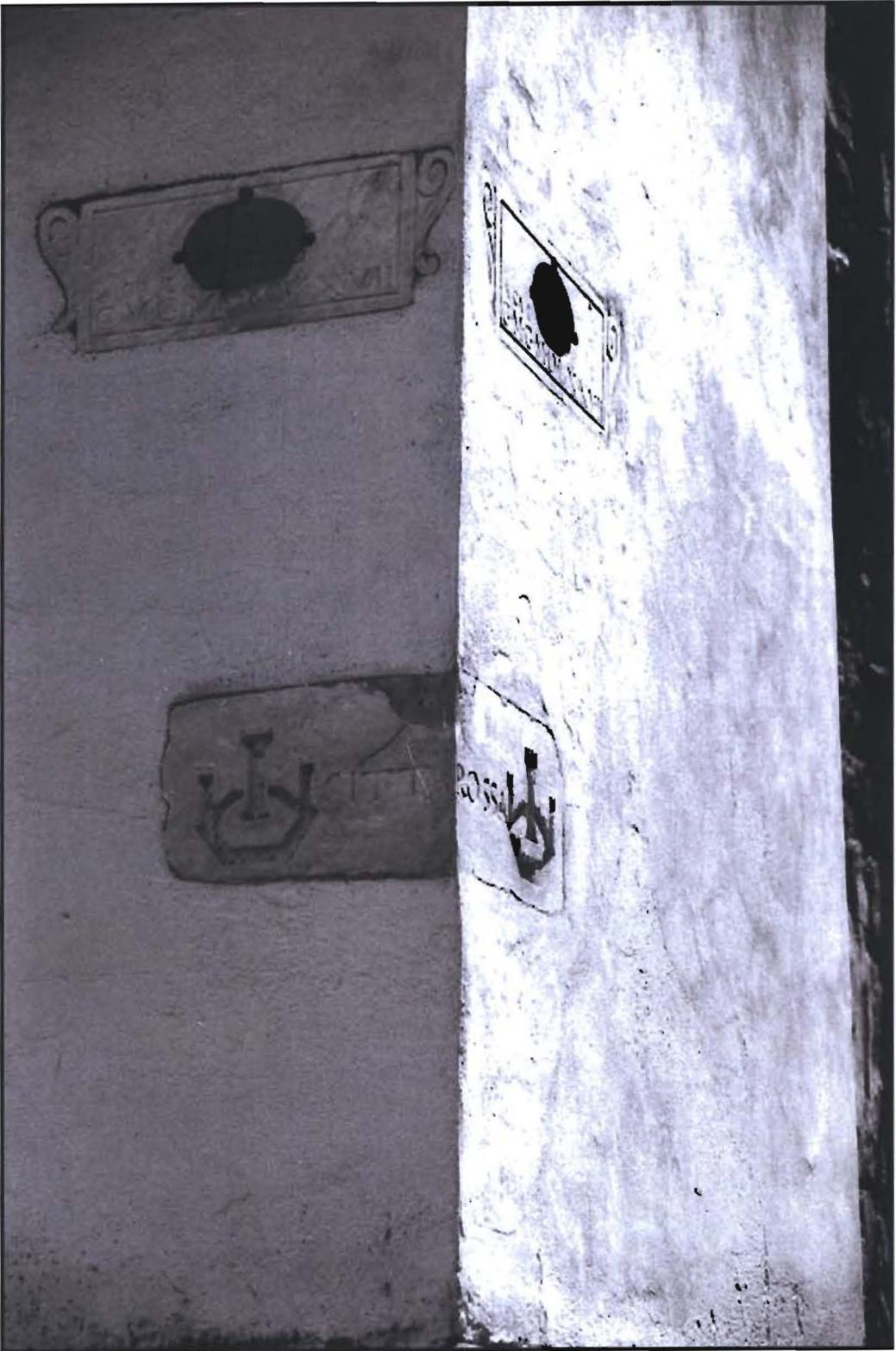


FIG 1: Stones of the Città Rossa *potenza*. Church of Sant' Ambrogio, Florence



FIG 2: Stone of the Mela *potenza*. Corner of via de' Macci and via Ghibellina, Florence



FIG 3: Stone of the Monteloro *potenza*. Corner of Borgo Pinti and via Pilastri, Florence



FIG 4: Giovanni della Robbia (attr.), Tabernacle of Sant' Ambrogio, Florence, corner of Borgo la Croce and via de' Macci

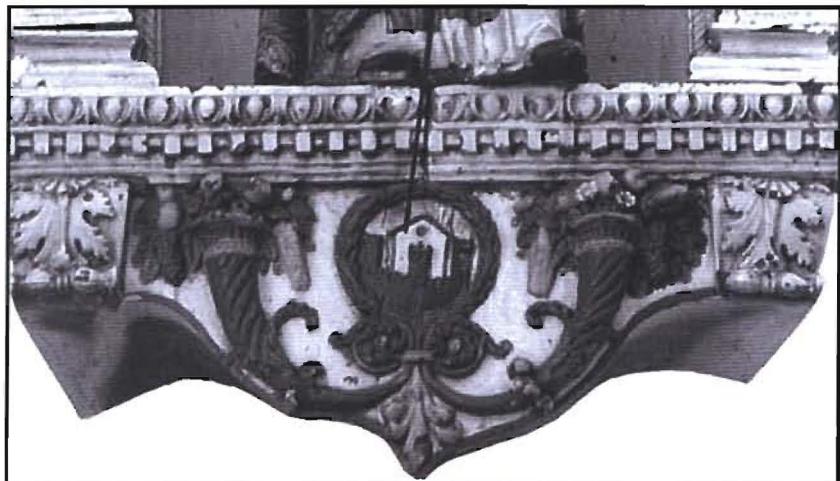


FIG 5: Tabernacle of Sant' Ambrogio, detail

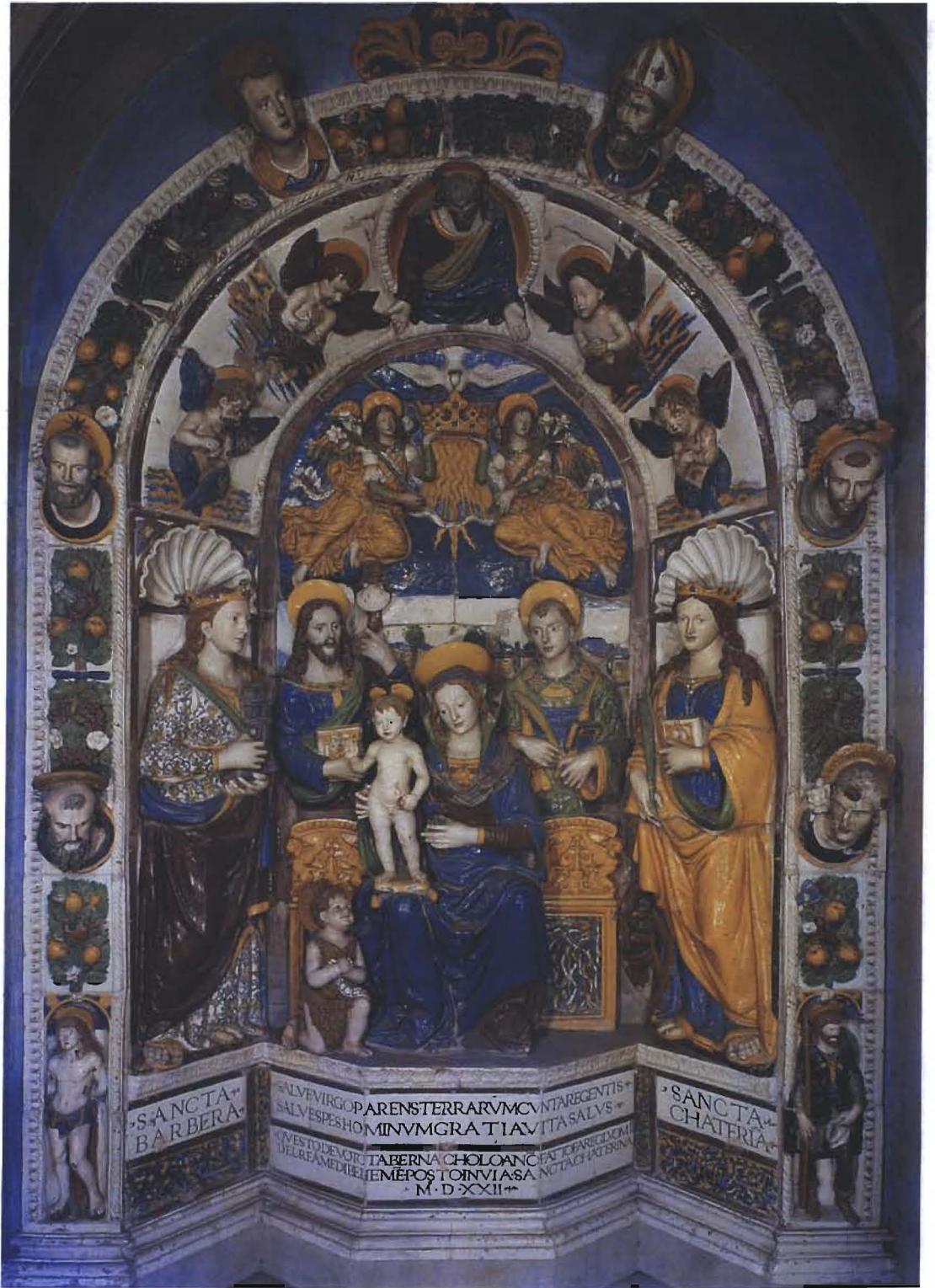


FIG. 6: Giovanni della Robbia (attr.), Tabernacle of the Biliemme, via Nazionale, Florence. Known as the *tabernacolo delle fonticine*.



FIG 7:

Giovanni della Robbia (attr.), Tabernacle of the Biliemme, via Nazionale (formerly via Santa Caterina/ via dei Tedeschi), Florence. Known as the *tabernacolo delle fonticine*.



FIG 8: Tabernacle of confraternity of Santa Maria degli Angeli dei Battilani. Corner of via Sant Reparata and via delle Ruote, Florence



FIG 9: Tabernacle of confraternity of Santa Maria degli Angeli dei Battilani, detail



Emperor
of the
Prato's
tombstone

FIG 10: Former oratory of the confraternity of Santa Lucia dei Bianchi, with the parish church of Santa Lucia beyond the pilaster. Via Santa Lucia, Florence

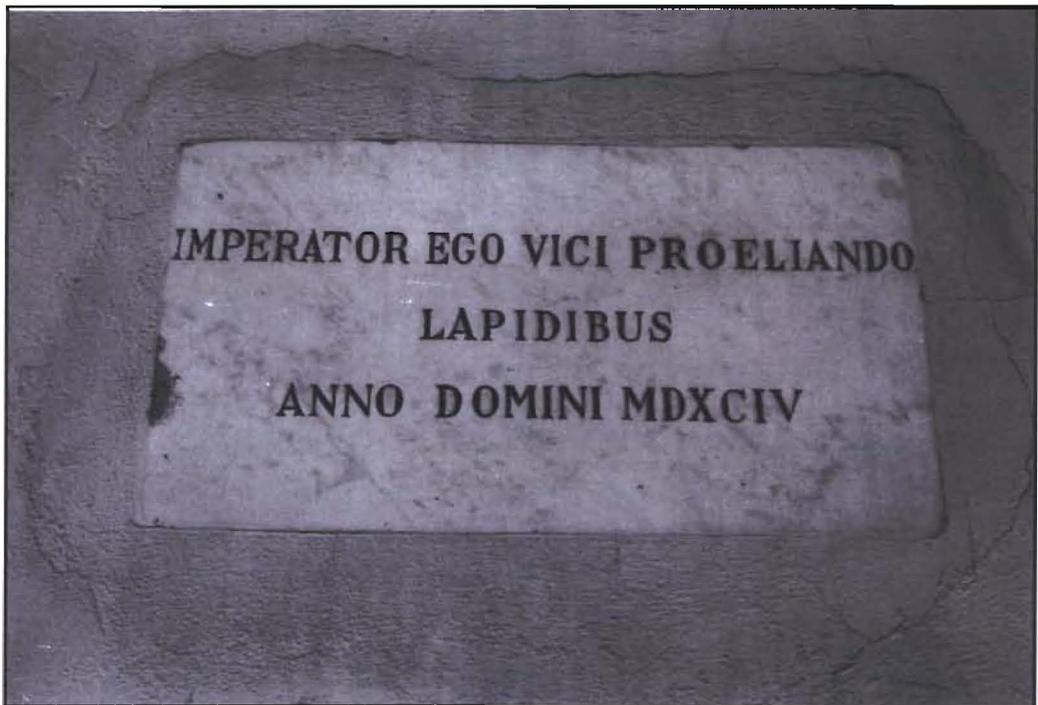


FIG 11: Emperor of the Prato's tombstone, 1594

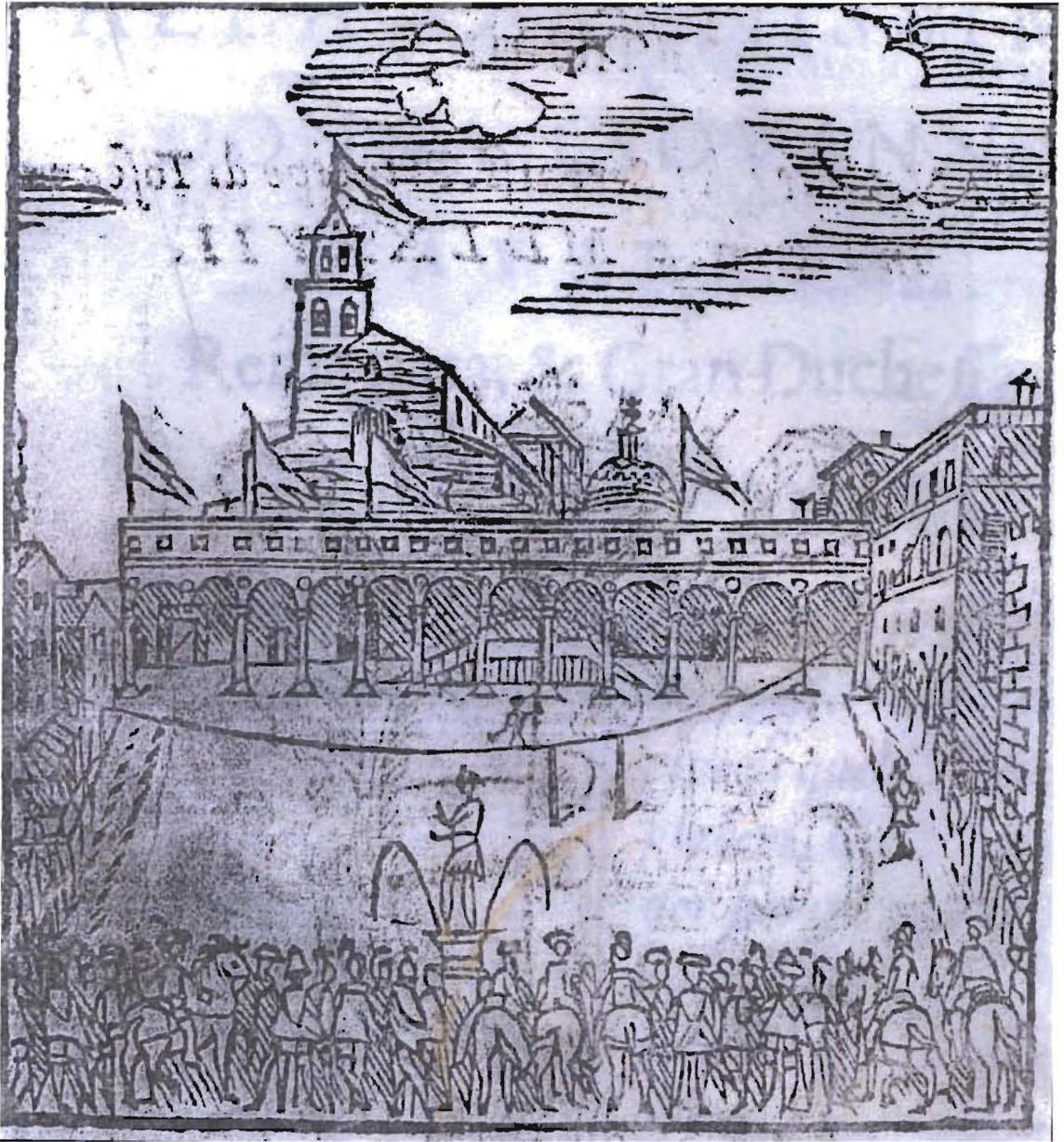


FIG 12: *Ordine, feste et pompe per re della graticola et suoi dignissimi ufitali* (Florence, 1577), frontispiece.

Città
Rossa
markers



Città
Rossa
tabernacle

FIG 13: Borgo La Croce, from Piazza Sant' Ambrogio, Florence

Oratory of
San
Michele
della Pace



Città
Rossa
markers

FIG 14: Piazza Sant' Ambrogio, from Borgo la Croce, Florence.

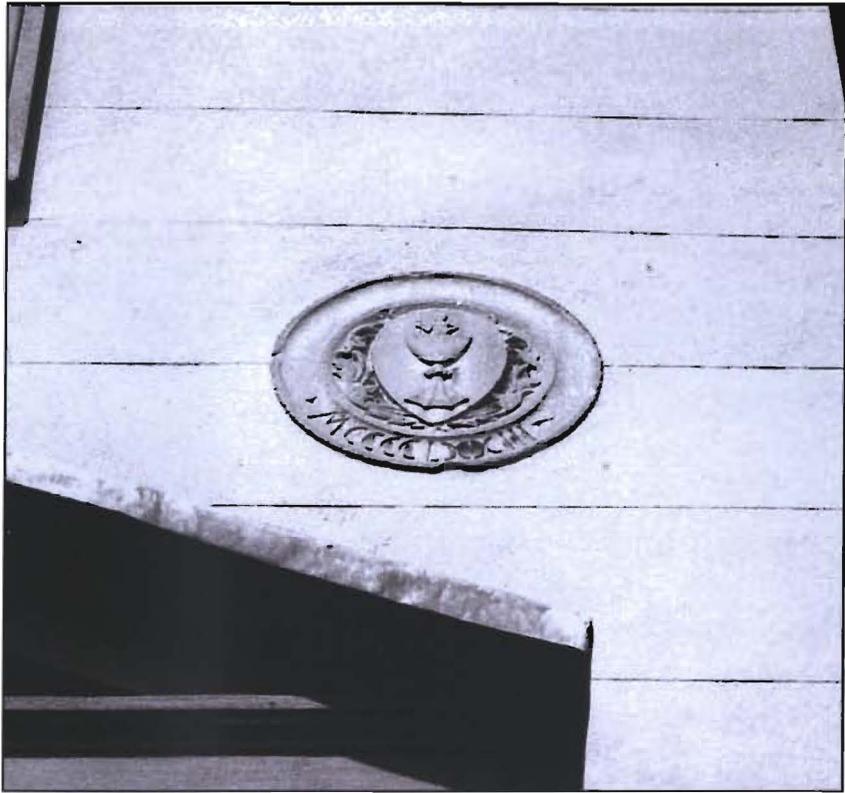


FIG 15: Plaque of Christ rising from chalice, dated 1473. Oratory of San Michele della Pace, Piazza Sant' Ambrogio



FIG 16: Cornerstone with inscription. Oratory of San Michele della Pace, Piazza Sant' Ambrogio/Via dei Pilastri



FIG 17: Cosimo Rosselli, *The Procession of the Sacrament in Piazza Sant' Ambrogio*, Sant' Ambrogio, Florence, 1484-6.



FIG 18: Cosimo Rosselli, *The Procession of the Sacrament in Piazza Sant' Ambrogio*, Sant' Ambrogio, Florence, 1484-6, detail of *potenze* sign

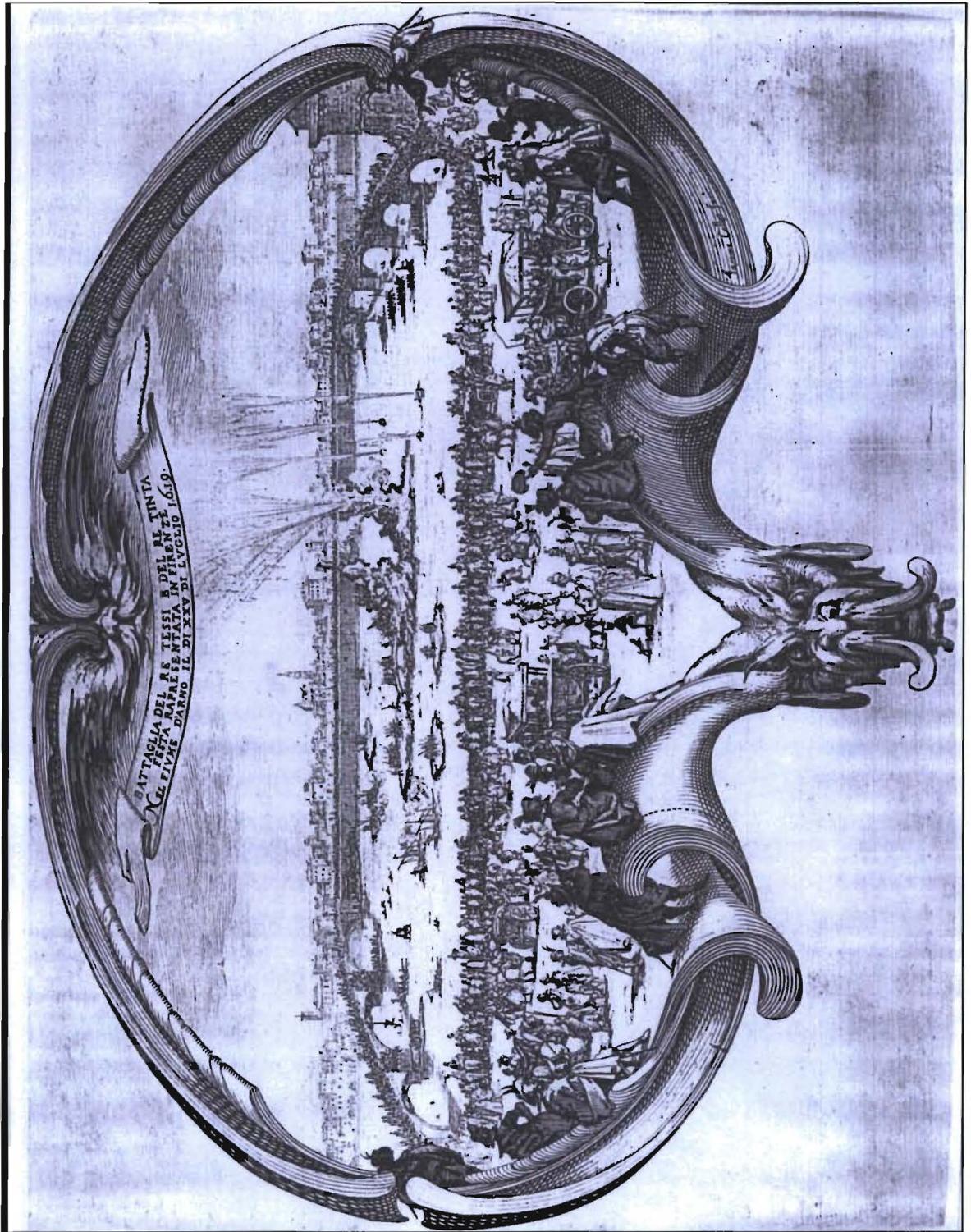


FIG 19: Jacques Callot, *Battaglia del Re Tessi e del Re Tinta*, 1619

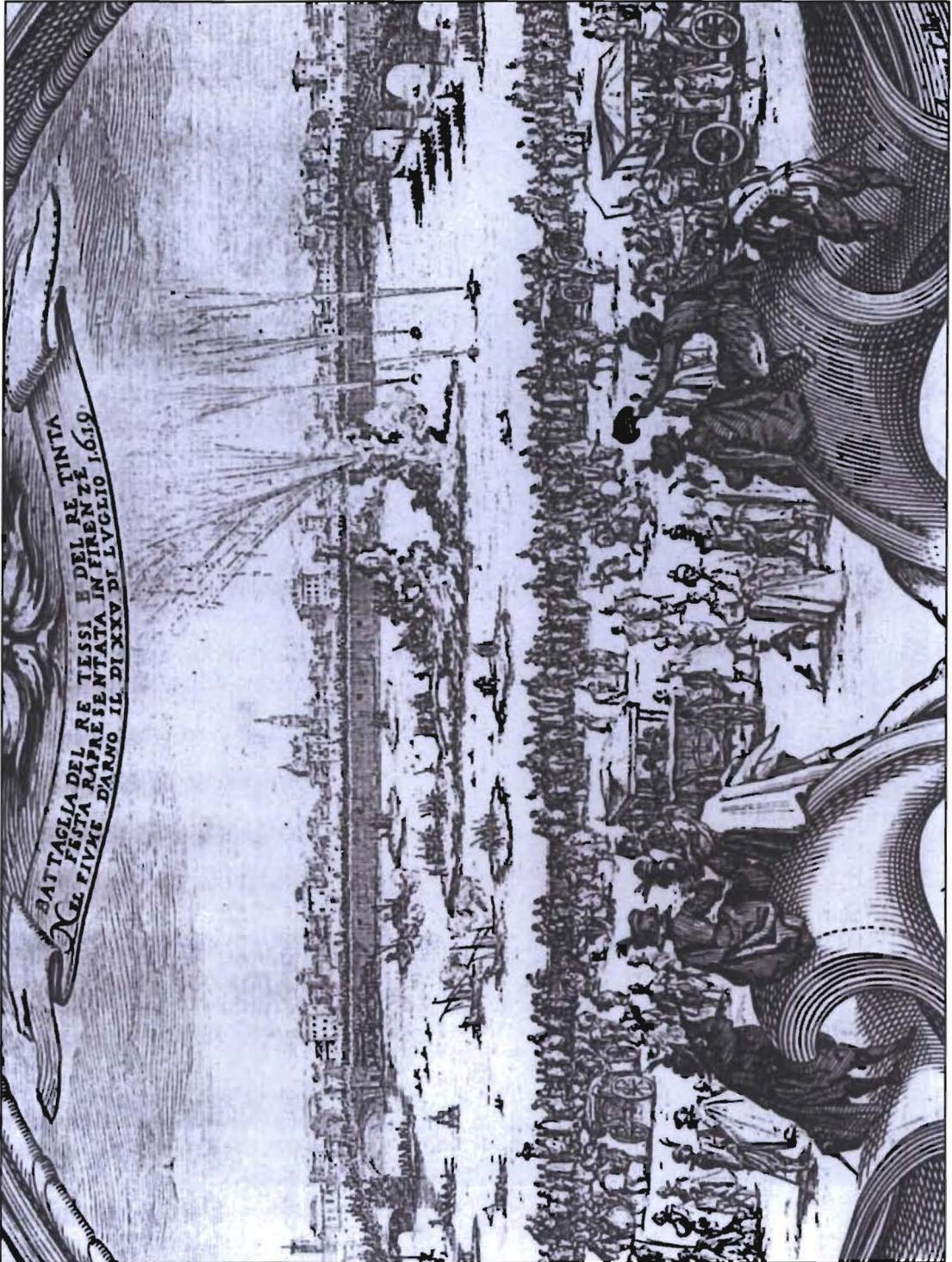


FIG 20: *Battle of the King of the King of Weavers and King of the Dyers*, Jacques Callot, detail

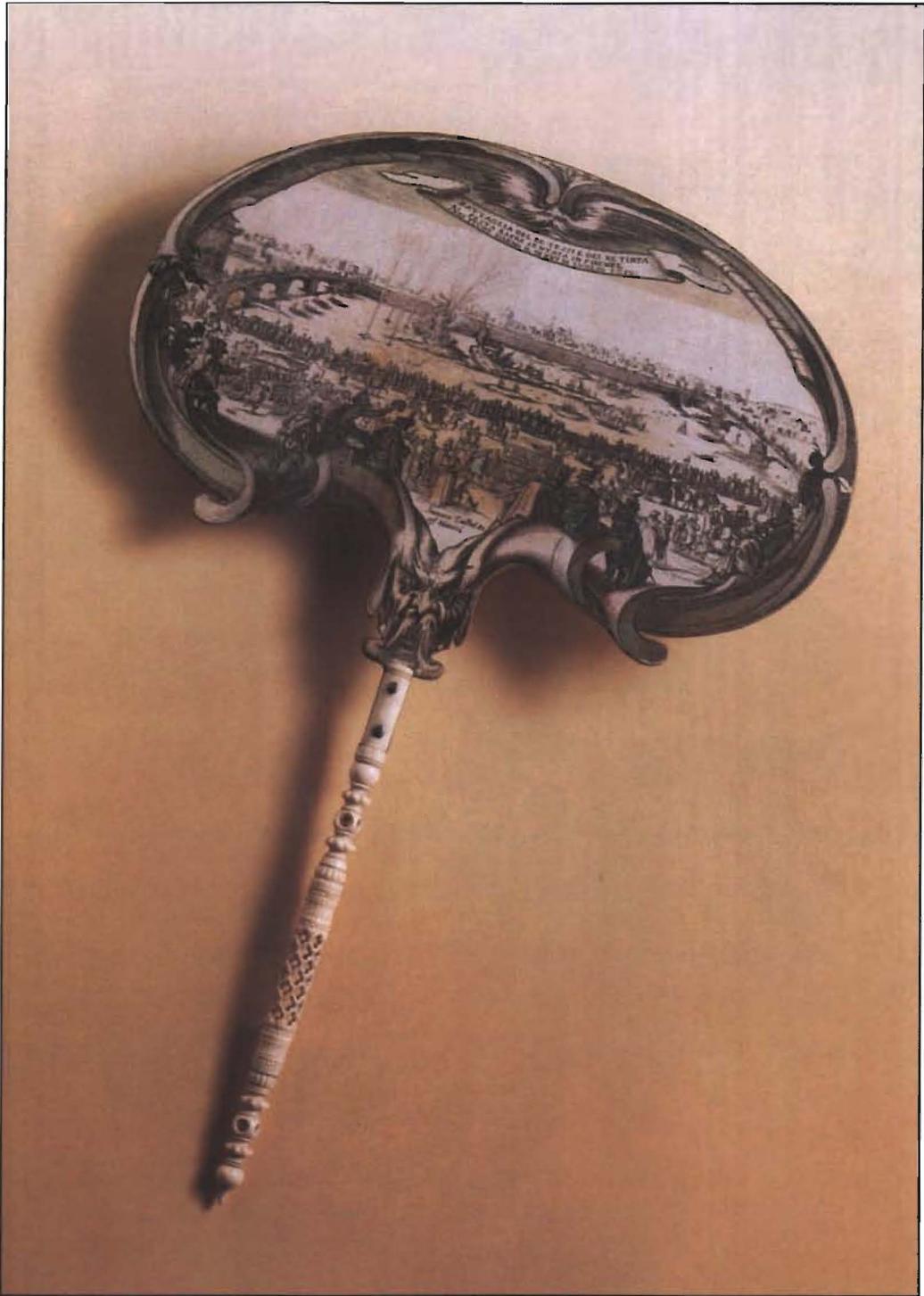


FIG 21: Jacques Callot, *Ventaglio*, engraved paper with some colouring, and with bone handle, 17th century. From Doretta Davanzano Poli, *I mestieri della moda a Venezia* (New York, 1995), 125 (entry 160), the collection of Giancarlo Marsiletti. Almost nothing is known about this piece, but it perhaps gives some sense of what was offered to noblewomen at the 1619 spectacle, and, given the carefully crafted handle, how it was later embellished as a commemorative and decorative object.

BATTAGLIA TRA TESSITORI E TINTORI.

Festa rappresentata in Firenze nel fiume Arno
il dì 25. di Luglio 1619.

Posta in luce da Pietro Ceconcelli.



IN FIRENZE 1619.
ALLE STELLE MEDICEE.

Con Licenzia de' Superiori.

FIG 23: Frontispiece of *Battaglia tra tessitori e tintori* (Florence, Pietro Ceconcelli, 161

Potenze and their Residenze

SANTA CROCE

1. Monarca Città Rossa
Piazza Sant' Ambrogio
2. Principe della Mela Canto
alla Mela (v. Ghibellina / v.
dei Macci)
3. Signore del Monteloro
Canto a Monteloro
(v. Alfani / Borgo Pinti)
4. Signore delle Rondine
Canto alle Rondine (v.
Pietrapiana / pa. Salvemini)
5. Duca del Piccione Porta
alla Croce
6. Signoria dello Scodellini
San Simone in Piazza
7. Marchese della
Cornacchia Canto della
Badia di Firenze (v.
Condotta / pa. S. Firenze)
8. Signore della Spiga Piazza
del Grano (v. dei Neri)
9. Signoria della Catena
Canto alla Catena (v.
Alfani / v. Pergola)
10. Gran Signore de' Tintori
Canto agli Alberti (Corso
Tintori / v. dei Benci)
11. Duca de' Purgatori Piazza
d'Arno (pa. Merdana)

SAN GIOVANNI

12. Re de' Battilani
Orsanmichele
13. Re Piccino Canto del
Giglio (v. Calzaiuoli / v.
Speziali)
14. Re della Vacca fornaio
della Vacca (v.
Campidoglio)
15. Signore del Covone Canto
alla Paglia (pa. S. Giovanni
/ v. Cavour)
16. Signore della Graticola
Piazza San Lorenzo
17. Re della Macine Canto all
Macine (v. Guelfa / v.
Ginori)
18. Re del Gallo Porta San
Gallo
19. Duca di Camporeggi Via
San Gallo (v.
Camporeggi)
20. Duca della Guelfa S.
Bernarba (v. Guelfa)
21. Re di Billemme Cella di
Ciardo (v. Ariento / S.
Antonino)
22. Signoria della Dovizia
Mercato Vecchio

23. Duca del Ponte Vecchio
(also known as Duca della
Biscia) Ponte Vecchio da
Santo Stefano



24. Duca del Luna fra
Ferravecchi (v. Strozzi / v.
Vecchietti)
25. Re del Tribolo Canto al
Tribolo (v. dei Servi / v.
Alfani)
26. Duca di Coraccio Mercato
Nuovo
27. Duca del Pecora Porta
Rossa
28. Duca del Diamante Canto
del Diamante (v.
Calzaiuoli / Porta Rossa)

SANTA MARIA NOVELLA

29. Imperadore del Prato il
Prato
30. Signore di Ponte Nano a
Ripoli (v. della Scala
towards wall)
31. Duca de' Vagliati Santa
Maria Novella (v. dei
Bianchi / v. del Giglio)
32. Signore del Corvo Ponte
alla Carraia a Ricasoli
33. Signore della Spada S.
Pagolo (v. Palazzuolo)
34. Signore del Ponticelli
Gualfonda (v. Valfonda)

SANTO SPIRITO

35. Vice Imperio
dell'Imperadore Porta San
Frediano
36. Re della Colomba
Camaldoli (pa. Tasso)
37. Signore della Spalla Trave
Torta (Foot of Ponte alla
Carraia)
38. Signore della Consuma
Canto alla Cuculia (v.
Serragli / v. S. Monaca)
39. Monarca di Terra Rossa
Convertite (v. Serragli / v.
Campuccio)
40. Re della Gatta San Piero
Gatoliri (v. Romana)
41. Gran Signore e Capitano
de' Pitti Palazzo Pitti
42. Signore della Sferza S.
Felice in Piazza (Piazza S.
Felice)
43. Signoria della Nespola
Santa Felicità (Ponte
Vecchio)
44. Duca della Nebbia Canto
di via Maggio (Foot of
Ponte S. Trinita)
45. Signoria dell'Olmo Borgo
San Niccolò (v. S. Niccolò)

This list of potenze follows the 1610 research by the Capitani di Parte (Parte 1478, f. 70). The order, division by quarter and number of groups are the same. However, when a more precise residenza was available, this is used instead of the information in parte document of that year

Pianta della città di Firenze, di Ferdinando Ruggieri - 1731.