

ROME DURING AVIGNON:
MYTH, MEMORY, AND CIVIC IDENTITY IN FOURTEENTH-CENTURY
ROMAN POLITICS

A Dissertation

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Alizah Holstein

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Alizah Holstein, Ph.D.

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My dissertation examines the social and political ramifications on Rome of the papacy's 1304 departure for Avignon. In this least-studied of Roman centuries, citizens weathered economic shock, loss of prestige, and a traumatic impact on their sense of political relevance. Questioning their city's identity, some turned to the communal model, while others sought to revive Roman claims to empire. Incorporating sociological, anthropological, and psychological theories of memory, my study investigates how social groups employed myth and collective memory to legitimize existing power or to introduce reforms.

Traditional scholarship has it that ideological conflict with the papacy defined the early Roman commune. However, a sustained analysis of the major chronicle sources—John of Salisbury, Otto of Freising, and Matthew Paris—reveals that cooperation was also an important defining element of communal-papal relations beginning with the 1143 revival of the senate. The early commune, moreover, seeking legitimacy, frequently entreated the German emperor to return to Rome.

The empire grew in stature in the Roman political imaginary between 1300 and 1343. The papacy's departure was attended in early century by five major

popular revolts that frequently appealed to Romans' mythologized belief in their inherited claims to empire. As Rome lost political power in the papal absence, Romans enhanced their symbolic power by appealing to lasting myths.

In mid-century, Romans often fought socio-political battles through the medium of culture. Classical learning and historical memory became important tools, underscoring the class dimension of early humanism. Though elites had traditionally used the ancient past to legitimize their power, Romans of varied backgrounds began acquiring classical educations and writing history. The *Anonimo romano*, Giovanni Cavallini, and, most seriously, Cola di Rienzo, who incorporated ancient rhetoric, political theory, and learning into his political persona, all challenged elite dominance through extensive classical learning.

Cola's ritualized murder and Charles IV's subsequent imperial coronation at Rome reveal the profoundly changing political landscape after Cola. The imperial ideal suddenly disappeared from political rhetoric, Romans forgot Cola, and the Felice Società inaugurated a period of stable popular government predicated on a culture of oblivion.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Alizah Holstein attended high school in Brookline, Massachusetts, where she was first introduced to medieval Italian literature and history. She earned a B.A. in History from Barnard College in 1998, with a concentration in medieval Europe. Under the direction of her undergraduate adviser, Professor Joel Kaye, she wrote a senior thesis entitled “Bishops, kings, and the contest over legal authority in sixth-century Gaul.” At Cornell, she studied with Professors Paul Hyams, John Najemy, Marilyn Migiel, and former Cornell Professor Susanne Pohl. Professor Tom Cohen of York University, Canada, generously contributed to her dissertation. Her Ph.D. she earned with a major field in medieval History, and minor fields in Renaissance and early modern European History.

To Mom, Dad, Nick, and Ben, in order of shoe size

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CHAPTER 1 Introduction

My first impression of Rome was a sense of wonder at the great weight of human history visible even from the ring highway circumventing the city. This I pondered at age eighteen, from inside a speeding taxi, little aware that that city, or even the subject of history, would in time become the focus of my graduate study. This dissertation owes a lot to that first sight of Rome, which made me ask how a city lives with such a past. Why were some monuments, such as those near the road heading north to Civitavecchia, left in a field sprouting grasses and poppies, while others were carefully tended and preserved? It eventually set me thinking about how societies decide what to remember, who makes the choices, and for what reasons. These questions brought me, via a circuitous route, to study medieval history, itself an object of the modern imaginative memory, and then specifically to medieval Italian, and finally, Roman history. In this dissertation, I weave themes of political and social conflict with theories of social memory and myth to explain the complex world of Trecento Rome.

Broadly conceived, my dissertation examines the traditions of popular government emerging spasmodically in the roughly two hundred and fifty years between the Roman senate's 1143 revival, and the papacy's definitive 1377 return to Rome from roughly seven decades in Avignon. The majority of my inquiry, however, is directed toward the much-understudied fourteenth century. Years ago, I began my inquiry asking, "what is Rome without the papacy?" I wondered how a city, for more than a thousand years identified as the home of popes, coped in their absence. Realizing that the papacy was not soon to return, what future did Romans envision for their city? The unstable politics of the period reveal that there was no single prevailing vision for the new Rome. Indeed, I would contend, Rome in the early Trecento

experienced a profound crisis of civic identity. That Romans staged five popular revolts in the early fourteenth century suggests that some strove after the communal model exemplified by many contemporary Italian cities. At the same time, that they repeatedly entreated the German emperor to restore the imperial seat to Rome reveals that others looked to their city's glorified ancient past, appealing to fellow citizens' memory of that past, for political inspiration. And finally, that talented Roman orators arrived sporadically in Avignon determined to persuade the pope to return shows that still others dismissed ideas of a new Rome, wanting instead to restore Rome's traditional status of papal city. The civic struggles of Trecento Rome are, to the modern eye, a complex and chaotic weave. Yet in this study I attempt to illuminate some of the major threads, showing how medieval Romans used the weight of their past as a lever for power in their political present.

Chapter 2, concentrating on 1143 to 1300, examines the beginnings of communal government in Rome, elucidating the parallels to and deviations from other Italian communes. While exploring the diffusion of communal ideals in Rome, this chapter also investigates the implications of the myths of empire surfacing frequently in the early years of the commune. It shows how the memory of empire was initially used by the Roman *popolo* as a tool to manipulate Roman nobles, popes, and emperors. In researching this period, I discovered that many persisting impressions of the early Roman commune were based on uncritical readings of important narrative sources. In light of this, I conduct close readings of John of Salisbury, Otto of Freising, and Matthew Paris to extricate reliable conclusions from their often partial accounts.

Chapter 3 examines popular government from 1300-1343, weighing the consequences of the papacy's 1304 departure for Avignon on civic politics and identity. Tracing the sequence of five rebellions against aristocratic and papal rule, I

noticed that popular leaders often, and with increasing frequency in the early 1300's, appealed to Romans' mythologized belief in their inherited claims to empire. Since this trend is seldom noted and never explained in the scholarship, my dissertation proposes that the imperial ideal was used by popular leaders to garner support from a Roman citizenry hungry for political relevance. I posit that, because the imperial myth was increasingly used in this way by elites, the fascination with myths of empire occasionally weakened the Roman *popolo* in its spasmodic struggle with the Roman nobility.

Chapters 4 and 5 trace the influence of the imperial ideal on Roman politics throughout the following decades, yet they incorporate sociological, anthropological, and linguistic theories of memory. I take as my point of departure the idea that collective, or social memory is both an instrument and objective of power.¹ Chapter 4, employing various theories of memory, examines the role of history and memory of empire in the struggle for power in mid-fourteenth century Rome. Analyzing the cultural milieu of Trecento Rome, I note the sudden importance of both classical education and historical writing to Romans of varied social backgrounds. I explain these major cultural shifts by showing how an emergent group of educated Roman *popolo* began challenging the old aristocracy by co-opting its traditional control over the ways Romans remembered their past. Chapter 5 traces the culmination of the imperial ideal in the famed popular leader Cola di Rienzo, who incorporated in his political persona a vast range of classical learning, rhetorical devices, and propaganda techniques. Noting the sudden disappearance of the imperial ideal after Cola's 1354 death, I propose that late Trecento Roman society moved from remembrance to

¹ As expressed, for example, in Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*, trans. Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992) 98.

forgetting. Paying particular attention to rituals, I argue that despite certain continuities, Romans in the 1350's and '60's decidedly favored forgetting their past.

The state of the field

It is common for historians writing about fourteenth-century Rome to begin their essays bemoaning the lack of scholarship on the subject. Yet despite the nearly formulaic status of this lamentation, it still reflects a bitter reality: we know far less about medieval Rome than about other medieval Italian cities. This is less so among continental scholars than among their Anglophone counterparts, however, as in recent years, Italian, French, and German scholarship on medieval Rome has blossomed, enjoying the diligent attentions of the *École française de Rome*, the *Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo* and the department of History at the *Università degli Studi di Roma "la Sapienza,"* all of which have organized conferences and published a wide range of works on medieval Rome.

In Anglophone scholarship, however, fourteenth-century Rome is still relatively unknown, and compared to other Italian cities in the same period, receives far less consideration. One wonders how and why this neglect has fallen on Rome, ostensibly a city of some renown, and certainly one of primary symbolic and practical importance in the Middle Ages. One problem is that Rome's civic history has been chronically conflated with the history of the papacy, and historians writing on this subject found little to interest them in a pope-less Rome. Robert Brentano's esteemed *Rome Before Avignon* brings his readers up to the end of the thirteenth century,² while Charles Stinger, John D'Amico, Peter Partner, and Arnold Esch resume the

² Robert Brentano, *Rome Before Avignon: A Social History of Thirteenth-Century Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

investigation in the fifteenth.³ With the exception of the brief and sparkling intermezzo of Cola di Rienzo, the early and late century have hardly managed to emerge from obscurity. There has to date been no major work on the economic, social, or political effects on Rome of the papacy's departure for Avignon. Likewise, there has been little work on many of the themes recently occupying historians of other Italian city-states: the Black Death, the growth of confraternities, the role of civic religion, preaching and heresy, merchant networks, mercenary companies, patronage, the development of humanism, and marriage and inheritance customs, to name but a few. The War of the Eight Saints, amply studied from the Florentine perspective, remains obscure in its ramifications on Roman society.⁴

One could argue that there are intrinsic obstacles to studying the history of fourteenth-century Rome, such as the distressing paucity of surviving documentation, especially when compared to other Italian cities. With the papacy went its administrative apparatus, such as the notaries, secretaries, and scribes, that had previously furnished municipal records. Suddenly bereft of this administrative machinery, Romans were not able to replace it all immediately. Notarial protocols, for example, survive only from 1348, when the city began to demand their systematic collection. Yet other types of documentation do exist: city statutes, confraternity records, more than 7,000 pages of notarial protocols beginning in 1348, private letters, chancery letters, court cases, and at least one major and well-known chronicle. While this is still a comparatively small corpus of documents, it nevertheless

³ Some important works in this field are: Charles Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); John D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Peter Partner, *The Lands of Saint Peter: the Papal State in the Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1972); and Arnold Esch, *Rome entre le Moyen Age et la Renaissance* (Stuttgart: J. Thorbecke, 2000).

⁴ One exception is Richard Trexler, "Rome on the Eve of the Great Schism," *Speculum* 42, no. 3 (1967): 489-509.

constitutes a fascinating and ample body from which to craft a more complex understanding of Rome during Avignon.

Despite the objective challenges, Trecento Rome deserves our attention. Enduring a crisis of civic identity, the city entered into nearly a century of heightened political and social experimentation. The papacy, for the great sweep of the Middle Ages calling Rome its home, left in 1304, ultimately ending up in Avignon. Its departure was perceived by many to be a tragedy, with art and literature personifying Rome as a widow in mourning. The departure of the vast papal curia initiated a series of tidal changes in the city's sociological and demographic makeup, and dealt its economy a serious blow as major building initiatives were suddenly abandoned, the stream of visiting pilgrims and clerics reduced, and the papal regulation of provisions and foodstuffs came to a halt.

The Roman "baronial" families, great landowning clans who had traditionally depended on the pope for prestigious appointments, found themselves in dire straits. Without an institutional outlet for their power, bereft of their traditional patron, and with an elevated propensity for interfamily conflict as they competed for a restricted number of posts in the Avignon hierarchy, many of these families lost their primacy. The first half of the century is characterized by a bifurcation in the ranks of the Roman nobility, in which a nucleus of powerful families became even more powerful while many, if not most, others withered and gradually disappeared. The baronial families were challenged in the early Trecento by intermittent communal uprisings in which an increasingly influential merchant elite attempted to subvert their established hold on municipal government, but it was not until the latter half of the century, beginning with the regime of Cola di Rienzo, that their power was effectively, if temporarily, curbed. Perhaps the most injurious blow to the Roman baronial class in this period was the falling price of land resulting from the Black Death, which prompted many of

these cash-strapped families to sell their holdings, thus opening the way for a new class of enterprising merchants and stockbreeders—the *mercanti* and *bovattieri*—who came to dominate in late century. Thus, Trecento Romans witnessed an unprecedented degree of social mobility, experimenting as never before with forms of popular government. The identity of Rome hung in the air: was it a papal city, a widow in mourning? Could it be a city-state on the model of Florence or Venice, free from political domination, economically vibrant, and able to offer its citizens a voice in the administration of its affairs? Or was it destined to reclaim its lost imperial authority, holding once more the seat of empire within its walls? Despite the difficulties, there is worth in studying this exciting and decisive moment in the Roman past.

An aspect of Trecento Rome that has enjoyed extensive attention, even inspiring recent scholarly work, is the enigmatic figure of Cola di Rienzo. Over six and a half centuries, the colorful tribune has been depicted as variously as a forerunner to Garibaldi, a proto-fascist, and, as the subject of Hitler's favorite Wagnerian opera, a romantic hero. Interestingly, he has also been the subject of both recent scholarly works in English on Trecento Rome. Unlike many prior works that portrayed Cola as a deranged madman, these studies place Cola's political, intellectual, and spiritual ideals in context, explaining him as a product of his time.⁵ The first, Amanda Collins' *Greater than Emperor*, demonstrates how Cola relied on Roman rhetoric and law to communicate his political ideals to Trecento Romans, taking into account the ways that apocalyptic religious ideology influenced his ideas. The second work, Ronald Musto's *Apocalypse in Rome*, is a masterly and comprehensive study synthesizing the important political and religious trends of fourteenth-century Rome, and that

⁵ Amanda Collins, *Greater than Emperor: Cola di Rienzo (ca. 1313-54) and the World of Fourteenth-Century Rome* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), Ronald Musto, *Apocalypse in Rome: Cola di Rienzo and the Politics of the New Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). Each of these works offers a fine overview of the various, often outrageous, uses historians, writers, and composers have made of Cola.

demonstrates how deeply rooted Cola was in these currents. While both works grapple with crucial questions about Cola and the political, social, and religious condition of mid-Trecento Rome, neither attempts to ascertain whether Cola's brief but notable period in power shaped Rome's subsequent course. In Anglophone scholarship, therefore, the period of Cola di Rienzo has become a shining light in the middle of a dark tunnel.

In Italian scholarship, the defining study of later medieval Rome is still Eugenio Dupré Theseider's 1952 *Roma dal comune di popolo alla signoria pontificia, 1252-1377*.⁶ Despite being methodologically and ideologically dated, it still provides the most comprehensive and detailed analysis of that period, and it was on the coattails of this impressive work that much successive scholarship of the 1960's and '70's rode. Since the 1960's, facilitated and inspired by Dupré Theseider's work, Italian, French, and German scholarship on medieval, and specifically Trecento Rome has proliferated. In her pioneering 1967 article on the *mercanti e bovattieri*, Clara Gennaro analyzed notarial protocols to illustrate how a dynamic group of entrepreneurs attained prominence in the later fourteenth century, largely at the expense of the nobility.⁷ Her work was the first to demonstrate clearly the social dynamism of late Trecento Rome, crucially reversing the commonly-held image of medieval Rome as economically and socially stagnant. Gennaro's work also inspired a generation of scholars to delve into the rich, fascinating, and complex font of Roman notarial records, with exceptional results. Anna Esposito, Luciano Palermo, and Isa Lori Sanfilippo, for example, have all employed notarial protocols to study the social and economic history of the late

⁶ Eugenio Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo alla signoria pontificia, 1252-1377* (Bologna: L. Cappelli, 1952).

⁷ Clara Gennaro, "Mercanti e bovattieri nella Roma della seconda metà del Trecento," *Bollettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo e Archivio Muratoriano* 78 (1967).

medieval city.⁸ The study of these protocols is still one of the liveliest areas in the field, as evidenced by the numerous critical editions of notarial collections as well as the analytical studies utilizing these sources that have recently been published.

Much recent scholarship has focused on issues of class and family power, extensively examining the position of elites in medieval Roman society. Sandro Carocci, in many articles and in the comprehensive 1993 study *Baroni di Roma*, investigated the rise and decline of Rome's thirteen most powerful families in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.⁹ Franca Allegrezza's 1998 *Organizzazione del potere e dinamiche familiari* studies the Orsini family in the fourteenth century. And a fairly recent work of German scholarship, Andreas Rehberg's massive *Kirche und Macht im römischen Trecento* illuminates the difficulties endured by the Colonna in the papacy's absence.¹⁰ Carocci, Allegrezza and Rehberg all investigate the place of noble families in civic politics, both before and during the papal absence.

The Roman commune was a fashionable subject of study in the early twentieth century, as many scholars tried to locate the birth of national consciousness and democratic feeling in the popular movements of many medieval Italian cities. While in recent years Anglophone literature on the communes of many cities has flourished,

⁸ See, for example: Anna Esposito, "Pellegrini, stranieri, curiali ed ebrei," in *Roma medievale*, ed. André Vauchez (Rome: Editori Laterza, 2001), Isa Lori Sanfilippo, *La Roma dei romani: arti, mestieri e professioni nella Roma del Trecento*, *Nuovi studi storici*, 57 (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 2001), Isa Lori Sanfilippo, ed., *Il protocollo notarile di Lorenzo Staglia (1372)* (Rome: Società Romana di Storia Patria, 1986), Luciano Palermo, *Il porto di Roma nel XIV e XV secolo: strutture socio-economiche e statuti*, vol. 14, *Fonti e Studi del "Corpus Membranarum Italicarum"* (Rome: Il Centro di Ricerca, 1979).

⁹ Sandro Carocci, *Baroni di Roma: dominazioni signorili e lignaggi aristocratici nel Duecento e nel primo Trecento*, *Nuovi studi storici*, 23 (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1993). See also his fascinating "Una nobiltà bipartita: rappresentazioni sociali e lignaggi preminenti a Roma nel Duecento e nella prima metà del Trecento," *Bollettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo Archivio Muratoriano* 95 (1989), as well as his "Baroni in città: considerazioni sull'insediamento e i diritti urbani della grande nobiltà," in *Roma nei secoli XIII e XIV: cinque saggi*, ed. Étienne Hubert (Rome: École française de Rome, 1993).

¹⁰ Franca Allegrezza, *Organizzazione del potere e dinamiche familiari: gli Orsini dal Duecento agli inizi del Quattrocento*, *Nuovi studi storici*, 44 (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medioevo, 1998), Andreas Rehberg, *Kirche und Macht im römischen Trecento: die Colonna und ihre Klientel auf dem kurialen Pfründenmarkt (1278-1378)* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1999).

Rome has remained largely out of their discussion. This neglect is probably due partly to the lack of documentary evidence, and partly to the impression, both among modern historians and medieval contemporaries, that communal institutions were not important in Rome, that they were at best partially functioning apparatuses corrupted by nepotistic barons, that they fluctuated hopelessly in form and function every few years, in short, that they were failures. This opinion was most famously articulated by the medieval jurist Bartolus of Sassoferrato, who blamed the barons in describing the political situation of mid-fourteenth century Rome as a “res monstruosa.” The city, he claimed, had been politically hobbled by the incessant squabbles of numerous petty tyrants.¹¹

The history of the Roman commune has more recently been pursued by scholars intent on countering the view that popular pressure was non-existent in medieval Rome. Laura Moscati, for example, demonstrated the varied social backgrounds of the twelfth-century founders of the commune.¹² Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur has applied a Marxist approach to illustrate popular influences on Roman politics.¹³ From a socio-economic perspective, Marco Venditelli has written on the citizen elite and the merchant class, importantly emphasizing the fluidity of Trecento social boundaries.¹⁴ And finally, in an influential article marking the closure of the

¹¹ “Est et septimus modus regiminis, qui nunc est in civitate Romana, pessimus. Ibi enim sunt multi tyranni per diversas regiones adeo fortes, quod unus contra alium non prevalet... Quod regimen Aristoteles non posuit: est enim res monstruosa. Quid enim, si quis videret unum corpus habens unum caput commune debile et multa alia capita communia fortiora illo et invicem sibi adversantia? Certe monstrum esset. Appellatur ergo hoc regimen monstruosum.” Bartolus of Sassoferrato, *Tractatus de regimine civitatis*, in Diego Quaglioni, ed., *Politica e diritto nel Trecento italiano: il 'de tyranno' di Bartolo da Sassoferrato (1314-1357)* (Florence: Leo Olschki, 1983) ll.65-74, p.152.

¹² Laura Moscati, *Alle origini del comune romano: economia, società, istituzioni* (Rome: B. Carucci, 1980).

¹³ Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur, "Classe dominante et classes dirigeantes à Rome à la fin du Moyen Age," *Storia della Città* 1 (1976), Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur, "Il comune romano," in *Roma medievale*, ed. André Vauchez (Rome: Editori Laterza, 2001).

¹⁴ Marco Venditelli, "Élite citadine: Rome aux XIIe - XIIIe siècles," in *Les élites urbaines au Moyen Age: XXVIIe Congrès de la SHMES (Rome, May 1996)*, *Collection de l'École française de Rome* (Rome: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1997), Marco Venditelli, "Mercanti romani del primo Duecento 'in

communal period, Arnold Esch demonstrated the complicity of the papacy in the final demise of the Roman commune.¹⁵

In addition to individuals, several organizations have promoted the study of medieval Rome. First, the *École française de Rome* has played an important role in fostering connections between Italian and French scholars. In November 2003, the *École française*, together with the *Università di Roma "Tor Vergata"* organized an international conference on the Roman nobility in the Middle Ages, gathering scholars from Italy, Germany, France, England, Spain and Austria.¹⁶ The *École française* has published extensive monographs, and without the copious contributions of its scholars our knowledge of medieval Rome would be unimaginably poorer. In addition, the unassuming but active *Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo* in central Rome maintains a very useful library for medieval historians, and often serves as a venue for meetings, lectures, and events. Another major contribution of the *Istituto* has been its publishing house, publishing numerous critical editions of sources as well as analytical scholarly work on medieval Italy, with particular attention to Rome. Long is the list of influential studies published through its auspices. The offices and library of the *Istituto* are also the headquarters of *Roma nel Rinascimento*, the organization currently headed by Massimo Miglio that has spurred so much recent work on Rome in the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Despite this flourishing climate, however, Anglophone scholars have, on the whole, been hesitant to demonstrate real commitment to Rome's medieval and early Renaissance past.

urbe potentes'," in *Roma nei secoli XIII e XIV: cinque saggi*, ed. Etienne Hubert (Rome: École française de Rome, 1993).

¹⁵ Arnold Esch, "La fine del libero comune di Roma nel giudizio dei mercanti fiorentini: lettere romane degli anni 1395-1398 nell'archivio Datini," *Bollettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo e Archivio Muratoriano* (1976-1977).

¹⁶ Sponsored by the *Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia* of the *Università di Roma "Tor Vergata"* and the *École française de Rome*, the conference, held in Rome, 20-22 November 2003, was entitled *La nobiltà romana nel medioevo*.

Many of the questions I ask in this dissertation emerge directly from the work of the above-mentioned “Romanist” scholars. Questions such as “who wanted popular government in Rome?” or “what were the lasting effects of the papacy’s departure for Avignon?” are important questions still awaiting convincing answers. At the same time, many questions I ask are new for Rome. Interdisciplinary studies of memory have not, as far as I know, been applied to medieval Roman history. My thesis explores the interstices between history and memory, and posits that Romans’ memories of their ancient past helped in the twelfth century to develop communal institutions, but in the fourteenth, ultimately limited the long-term success of popular government. My investigation into the politics of memory in the Avignon period therefore introduces an innovative element into the discussion of Trecento Roman social and political conflict.

CHAPTER 2
Prelude to a republic: the early Roman commune 1143-1300

Conflict and cooperation: the 'renovatio senatus'

Traditional scholarship has maintained that the Roman commune, for the first century of its existence, was a direct product of conflict with the papacy. The vacillations in papal-communal relations, as evidenced for example by the eight treaties ratified between the papacy and commune in the first fifty years of the commune's existence, were thought to have constituted the primary formative element for the early communal government.¹ Further, the political wrangling between papacy and commune was portrayed, almost in a Wagnerian tenor, as a heroic battle between medieval despotism and an irrepressible, emergent democracy. According to this view, the Roman *popolo*, in its search for "liberty" from the papacy, was possessed of strident ideological zeal. While it was certainly resuscitated in some measure by the developing commune, Romans' civic pride in this period has often been greatly exaggerated.² Thus, much of the traditional scholarship focused on the relationship between the commune and the papacy in order to understand why the commune developed as it did. That is to say, it attempted to explain why the commune never developed in parallel fashion to other Italian communes, and why it was never able to become a fully-functioning, independent political mechanism.

¹ Treaties between the commune and papacy were concluded in 1145, 1149, 1155, 1165, 1172, 1177, 1188, and 1191. For a summary, see Pierre Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval: le Latium méridional et la Sabine du IXe siècle à la fin du XIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Rome: École française de Rome, 1973) 1343, n.2.

² For example, the description offered by G. Giuliani: "Un soffio di libertà spirava infatti dall'Italia settentrionale e a Roma la 'pestilente dottrina' di Arnaldo da Brescia...trovò il terreno abbastanza adatto per dare buoni frutti." Girolamo Giuliani, *Il comune di Roma sotto il senatorato di Brancaleone degli Andalò (1252-1258)* (Florence: R. Nocchioli, 1957) 13.

In recent years, however, criticisms of this approach have begun to emerge, as scholars such as Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur have attempted to illuminate other defining aspects of the early commune.³ Simultaneously, there has been a major shift in the field in recent years toward the study of the Roman nobility. The burgeoning research on family histories has contributed substantially to our knowledge, particularly regarding the period after 1250 when many Roman noble families began accruing their power.⁴ While this sub-field has produced invaluable research and contributed to our knowledge of the period, it has partially eclipsed the study of the medieval Roman commune. Consequently, a great deal of the older scholarship, which is useful in its depth of detail and comprehensiveness of analysis, but rather dated in theory and method, still stands fundamentally unchallenged.⁵ And further, I have found, some recent scholarship still relies on the unfounded, or uncritical, evaluations of the older work.

In this chapter, I elucidate the defining attributes of the early Roman commune in order to help explain subsequent developments. First confronting the issue of papal-communal conflict, I try to bring a more equilibrated understanding

³ “Nato...in chiave antipontificia, il comune romano passa anche gran parte della sua esistenza a combattere contro il papa o perlomeno a cercare con il papato un difficile *modus vivendi*. È un dato di fatto indiscutibile ma che non costituisce una ragione sufficiente per concentrare, come troppo spesso hanno fatto gli storici della Roma medievale, tutta l’attenzione sul problema dei rapporti comune-papato, al punto di trascurare gli altri aspetti della vita cittadina.” Maire Vigueur, “Il comune romano,” 130.

⁴ The recent works of Sandro Carocci, Franca Allegrezza, and Andreas Rehberg stand out with particular relevance: Allegrezza, *Organizzazione del potere e dinamiche familiari: gli Orsini dal Duecento agli inizi del Quattrocento*, Carocci, *Baroni di Roma*, Rehberg, *Kirche und Macht*.

⁵ Some standard works on the Roman commune are, for the early period, Paolo Brezzi’s venerable *Roma e l’impero medioevale, 774-1252* (Bologna: L. Cappelli, 1947), and for the later period, Eugenio Dupré Theseider’s *Roma dal comune di popolo alla signoria pontificia, 1252-1377* (Bologna: L. Cappelli, 1952). Also important are: Franco Bartoloni, “Per la storia del senato romano nei secoli XII e XIII,” *Bollettino dell’Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo e Archivio Muratoriano* 60 (1946), Alain De Boüiard, *Le régime politique et les institutions de Rome au moyen age, 1252-1347* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1920), Louis Halphen, *Études sur l’administration de Rome au moyen age (751-1252)* (Paris: H. Champion, 1907). More recent works, which adorn, but do not supersede them, include: Maire Vigueur, “Il comune romano,” Massimo Miglio, “Tradizioni popolari e coscienza politica,” in *Roma medioevale*, ed. André Vauchez (Rome: Editori Laterza, 2001), Moscati, *Alle origini del comune romano*.

of the papal-communal relationship by emphasizing the many instances of cooperation. I then examine in detail the chief narrative sources on which our understanding of early Roman communal development rests. John of Salisbury, Otto of Freising, and Matthew Paris all chronicled seminal moments in the formation of the early commune, and their observations and conclusions have profoundly influenced our understanding of the early Roman commune. Since the surviving documentary evidence for this period is lamentably modest, a great deal of the scholarship has relied on these sources to provide basic historical information. However, historians have too often absorbed not only the factual content, the critiques, and the analyses of the sources, but their prejudices, their sentiments, and their blind spots as well.⁶ The result is a depiction of the early commune that is usually colorful, but also questionable.

The reasons for the rise of the medieval Italian communes have been well documented: the growth of towns, the rise of a merchant elite, and a burgeoning class consciousness at each rung of the social hierarchy.⁷ These explanations hold true for Rome as they do for any other commune. However, from its twelfth-century beginnings, the development of the Roman commune deviated in important ways from the model offered by many northern communes. Certain peculiarities, such as the existence of a senate instead of consuls or a *podestà*, and the notable feebleness of the Roman guilds, have been explained in various ways. Some have

⁶ Massimo Miglio alluded to this when he wrote, "...una tradizione storiografica ostile, per lo più di matrice pontificia ma anche imperiale, non esita a deridere, a svalutare, a demonizzare, a nascondere, rendendo allo storico arduo il compito di comprendere quanto dietro a questi sogni, alle idee, alle parole e ai simboli, che richiamavano l'antico splendore di Roma, realmente esistesse in termini di potere politico, economico, militare." Miglio, "Tradizioni popolari e coscienza politica," 333.

⁷ For standard treatments of this phenomenon, see Daniel Philip Waley, *The Italian City Republics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969). or Lauro Martines, *Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979). A complex analysis is P.J. Jones, *The Italian City-State: From Commune to Signoria* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). This is a more comprehensive, and more moderate, adaptation of his earlier "Communes and Despots: The City State in Late-Medieval Italy," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 15 (1965).

posited that Romans were modeling their new institutions on ancient ones. Robert Benson, for example, described the revival of the Roman senate in 1143 as “the twelfth century’s only example of political classicism at the very center of a historical movement.”⁸ The weakness of the guilds, on the other hand, has often been attributed to the presence of a papal administration opposed from the outset to communal aims.⁹ Another explanation has attributed these peculiarities to the presence of a powerful local nobility that had little interest in fostering communal government, trade, or the exercise of law.¹⁰ Still others have ascribed them to Romans’ “incapacità di uscire dal cerchio incantato” or their incapacity to escape from the enchanted myth of their exceptional past.¹¹

As often happens, it is probably most likely that at various times, all three elements—a dominant nobility, a resistant papacy, a profound and deeply-held myth—altered, limited, or compromised the development of the commune. Overall, the nobility was less a factor for the early commune, since it was not until the end of the thirteenth century that it grew sufficiently powerful and hostile to the communal enterprise to pose it any real danger.¹² And the papacy, while confrontational from the beginning, was often willing to reconcile and cooperate

⁸ Robert L. Benson, “Political *Renovatio*: Two Models from Roman Antiquity,” in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 341.

⁹ This view undercuts the work of Louis Halphen’s *Études sur l’administration de Rome*. As it pertains to conflict over the papal patrimony, see Peter Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter: The Papal State in the Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

¹⁰ See, for example: Sandro Carocci and Marco Venditelli, “Società ed economia (1050-1420),” in *Roma medievale*, ed. André Vauchez (Rome: Editori Laterza, 2001). This view has been moderated somewhat by Marco Venditelli’s work on the mercantile activities of the Roman elites: Venditelli, “Mercanti romani.” For a synthesis of the two, see: Carocci and Venditelli, “Società ed economia (1050-1420).” For the Roman guilds, see: Lori Sanfilippo, *La Roma dei romani*, Gonippo Morelli, *Le corporazioni romane di arti e mestieri dal XIII al XIX secolo* (Rome: Pubblicazione edita dall’autore, 1937).

¹¹ Arsenio Frugoni, *Arnaldo da Brescia nelle fonti del secolo XII*, *Studi Storici* 8-9 (Rome: 1954) 40.

¹² Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur conceded that between the mid-thirteenth and mid-fourteenth centuries, the communal government was profoundly influenced by the nobility. Yet he also demonstrated that some elites were willing to cooperate with, and participate in, communal government. Maire Vigueur, “Il comune romano,” 117-18.

with the commune. The myth of Rome, however, which encouraged citizens to believe in the exceptional destiny of their city, fanned vestigial hopes for a revival of the ancient empire.¹³ It consequently prevented Rome from developing, or even from wanting to develop, in line with other nascent Italian communes. For all of these reasons, the Roman commune, from its very beginnings, exhibited significant differences from other Italian city-states.

The standard view of Rome in the middle ages as a city dominated by an unusually powerful nobility has its origins in contemporary descriptions. Many northerners looked upon the Roman political situation with disdain. Just for this reason, the fourteenth-century jurist Bartolus of Sassoferrato, for example, described the Roman system as a “res monstruosa,” claiming that, like a many-headed beast, it was dominated by a handful of competing petty tyrants.¹⁴ Many modern scholars have more or less concurred. Paolo Brezzi posited that there was no Italian commune more oppressed by noble families than Rome, and that in no city did the *popolo* have a more diminutive voice in urban affairs.¹⁵ Just as forcefully, Sandro Carocci stated that by the early fourteenth century, Rome had effectively “abandoned” the communal world.¹⁶ However, Rome’s noble families did not develop their luxuriant fur and polished claws until at least the middle of

¹³ Paolo Brezzi posits that prior to the eleventh century the ecclesiastical interpretation of the myth of Rome prevailed, in which the Roman Empire was seen as a providential preparation for Christianity. Of the works of antiquity, only those were acceptable that had been corrected or improved by the Church. During the eleventh century, Brezzi claims, the myth underwent a profound transformation, in which *romanitas* had value in itself, sparking an admiration for the physical city, its culture, and its lay ideals. See Paolo Brezzi, *Roma e l'impero medioevale, 774-1252* (Bologna: L. Cappelli, 1947) 189-91. For the manifestations of this myth in a later period, see P. A. Ramsey, ed., *Rome in the Renaissance: The City and the Myth, Papers of the Thirteenth Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval & Early Renaissance Studies* (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies Center, 1982).

¹⁴ Quaglioni, ed., *Politica e diritto nel Trecento italiano: il 'de tyranno' di Bartolo da Sassoferrato (1314-1357)* lines 65-74, p. 152.

¹⁵ Brezzi, *Roma e l'impero medioevale* 341-42.

¹⁶ “...la Roma del primo Trecento abbandonava il mondo comunale.” Sandro Carocci, “Barone e podestà: l'aristocrazia romana e gli ufficiali comunali nel Due-Trecento,” in *I podestà dell'Italia comunale*, ed. Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 2000), 874.

the thirteenth century. When they did, it was the result of two principal factors: the presence of the papacy, and the relative weakness of trade.¹⁷ The papacy offered elite families the opportunity to augment their prestige with coveted posts in the papal hierarchy.¹⁸ Families successful in getting a member appointed a cardinal, or indeed a pope, stood to gain in myriad ways, from financial profit to political advancement.¹⁹ And finally, because of the relative weakness of Rome's trade, the commercial elite, the backbone of many communal movements in the north, was relatively ineffectual. Roman society has thus been portrayed by many scholars as little more than a playground for predatory baronial families.²⁰

Other recent scholarship, however, has tried to moderate this view of the Roman commune as suffocated by a hegemonic elite. Laura Moscati, though she concurs that the Roman elites played a consistently antagonistic, rather than protagonistic, role in the commune's development,²¹ has tempered Brezzi's and Carocci's claims by showing that despite the resistance of a large part of the nobility, the push toward communal initiatives progressed. Moscati demonstrated that twelfth-century communal gains were the product of tenacious efforts by a group of "new men" in Roman society, namely small- and large-scale merchants and artisans, suburban property owners, artists, doctors, lawyers and judges. By

¹⁷ Marco Venditelli has challenged the view that the Roman economy was as short on trade as has often been claimed. He has shown that a high proportion of Roman elite families engaged in trade, even in comparison to many other Italian communes. See: Venditelli, "Élite citadine: Rome aux XIIe - XIIIe siècles.", Idem, "Mercanti romani."

¹⁸ A detailed recent work charts the activity of the Colonna family in the church hierarchy: Rehberg, *Kirche und Macht*. Another important, more general, work is: Sandro Carocci, *Il nepotismo nel Medioevo: papi, cardinali e famiglie nobili, La corte dei papi; 4* (Rome: Viella, 1999).

¹⁹ The Segni, the family of Innocent III, profited greatly from Innocent's pontificate. Of Innocent's penchant for nepotism, Peter Partner writes, "such nepotistic methods had been characteristic of papal temporal rule from its origins. What was new under Innocent III was the scale and style of his temporal policy." Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter* 234.

²⁰ One standard treatment of medieval republicanism, Daniel Waley's *The Italian City-Republics*, does not mention the Roman commune. Daniel Waley, *The Papal State in the Thirteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1961).

²¹ Moscati, *Alle origini del comune romano*.

emphasizing Rome's unusually high levels of social mobility in this period, and the expansion of this burgeoning "middle class," Moscati and other scholars have attempted to show that Rome was not a pariah among the Italian city-states, but rather, that even though Rome's nobility was powerful, the commune's pattern of development still resembled that of many northern communes.²² Rome, for example, strove as much as any other commune to control its *contado*, to impose the rule of law, and to develop independent communal institutions that prevented the accumulation of power by an individual.

Because of the recent emphasis on noble families and their relationship to communal government, scholarship has not systematically reevaluated the early commune's relationship with the papacy. As a result, this relationship has often been simplified as one of pure and unrelenting conflict. While conflict between the two institutions was one very important element of their relationship, also important was cooperation, an activity that in general has received little attention.²³ Many contemporaries, on the other hand, perceived an element of symbiosis between the Roman government and the papacy. Thus, when the pope left for Avignon in 1305, Rome was depicted in contemporary art and literature as a widow in mourning.²⁴

²² Maire Vigueur, "Il comune romano," 128.

²³ P.J. Jones wrote that communes arose through "protest, pressure, or partnership with authority." In Rome's case, the element of "partnership" appears underemphasized. Jones, *The Italian City-State* 131.

²⁴ According to Mario Cosenza, "Laments on the squalid appearance of widowed Rome, as Petrarch always considered the city, are found scattered everywhere in his works." Mario Emilio Cosenza, ed., *Petrarch: The Revolution of Cola di Rienzo*, Reprint, 3rd ed. (New York: Italica Press, 1996) 28. Dante, by contrast, portrayed Rome as a widow mourning the loss of the emperor: "Vieni a veder la tua Roma che piagne/ vedova e sola, e dí e notte chiama:/ 'Cesare mio, perché non m'accompagne?'" Dante Alighieri, *La divina commedia: Purgatorio*, ed. Natalino Sapegno (Milan: Nuova Italia, 2004) VI, 112-14.

Most scholars locate the beginnings of the Roman commune in 1143,²⁵ when Roman citizens symbolically reinstated the ancient order of the Roman senate.²⁶ A conflict had arisen with the papacy over the divisive issue of the nearby town of Tivoli, a small but flourishing commercial hub endowed with a precociously developed communal government.²⁷ Romans, much like citizens of other nascent communes, wanted to control the commercial and political mechanisms in the towns of their *contado*, in order to exploit their natural resources, reap profits, and harness manpower. Tivoli's location also made it a strategic point for the defense of Rome from the east. These reasons, in addition to its wealth, made Tivoli a prime target.

But other eyes were also on Tivoli in this period. Pope Innocent II had two significant complaints to lodge against it. First, Tivoli and its allies had repeatedly attacked church property in the *distretto*, and had confiscated monastic possessions.²⁸ Second, and perhaps more importantly, Tivoli had supported Pope Innocent's rival, the antipope Anacletus II, until his death in 1138. Perhaps harboring resentment against the obstreperous commune, Innocent launched his papal militia against Tivoli. The Roman militia contributed to the effort, and after an initial discouraging defeat, Innocent's objective was achieved within a few

²⁵ The date of 1083 suggested by Lauro Martines is probably too early, and most scholars of Roman history place the founding of the commune in 1143 with the foundation of the senate. Recently, however, Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur has argued that such a concrete boundary is misleading, since Romans began to organize in guilds and professional organizations as early as the late eleventh century. See: Martines, *Power and Imagination.*; Maire Vigueur, "Il comune romano."

²⁶ The standard treatment of the origins of the commune of Rome can be found in Paolo Brezzi's *Roma e l'impero medioevale 774-1252*, which remains the most comprehensive work on the subject of medieval Roman history up to the thirteenth century. Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur came to a similar assessment in "Il comune romano," 118-119.

²⁷ As early as 1100, Tivoli was referred to as "civitas Tiburtina," and an 1140 document mentions the "populus Tiburtinus." See Moscati, *Alle origini del comune romano* 177. The relationship between Rome and Tivoli, much like Florence and Fiesole, was one of continual rivalry. The two cities had battled as recently as 1123. See Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter* 110, 75-80., and Brezzi, *Roma e l'impero medioevale* 319-24.

²⁸ Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter* 177.

months. In 1143, Tivoli agreed to a series of concessions: it allowed the pope to appoint the communal rector and to exercise jurisdictional rights over the territory, it swore loyalty to the papacy and it promised military support.²⁹ The Romans however, with little gained by this agreement, insisted on destroying Tivoli's economic and military capacity by tearing down its walls and taking hostages. When Pope Innocent refused to consent to this, the Romans stormed the Campidoglio, symbolically reinstated the ancient order of the senate and renewed the war on Tivoli on their own authority.³⁰ Thus, the foundational story of the Roman commune incorporates elements of both conflict and cooperation with the papacy.

Though the senate's initial composition and activity remain hazy, within a few years it constituted a fully-functioning elected assembly.³¹ Surviving documentation attests that senators were soon active in municipal administration, issuing privileges and prohibitions, signing treaties and scripting diplomatic letters.³² By 1148, the senate counted 26 men, though the number would fluctuate greatly in later years.³³

²⁹ There is some disagreement concerning the chronology of events leading up to Tivoli's surrender. Peter Partner, following the text of Otto of Freising, says the pope concluded a treaty with Tivoli before its defeat. Paolo Brezzi, on the other hand, puts it the other way round. For earlier manifestations of the Roman senate, see: G. Arnaldi, "Rinascita, fine, reincarnazione e successive metamorfosi del Senato romano (secoli V-XII)," *Archivio della Società romana di storia patria* 105 (1982).

³⁰ Halphen offers a descriptive analysis of earlier medieval Roman usages of 'senator,' showing that it was often employed to connote an individual of aristocratic lineage. Halphen, *Études sur l'administration de Rome* 5-6.

³¹ Charters from 1160 and 1162 attest to the popular election of senators. Ibid. 69-70.

³² Relevant documents can be found in: Franco Bartoloni, ed., *Codice diplomatico del Senato romano dal MCXLIV al MCCCXLVII*, vol. 1 (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo, 1948). Bartoloni also attests to the formation of a municipal chancellery within a few years of the *renovatio senatus*. Bartoloni, "Per la storia del senato romano," 2-3. Miglio states that over the course of a year the functions, term limits, and size of the new institution were gradually defined, though it is unclear on which documents he bases this statement. Massimo Miglio, "Il senato in Roma medievale," in *Il Senato nella storia. Il Senato nel Medioevo e nella prima Età moderna* (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1997), 120.

³³ Bartoloni, "Per la storia del senato romano," 76-77.

The next major administrative change executed by the Romans was the 1144 creation of the *patricius*.³⁴ The *patricius* temporarily replaced the prefect, the municipal official defined mainly by his jurisdiction over the city and the *distretto*.³⁵ In title, the prefect had been an imperial vicar, although recent history had seen him nominated by popes. The *patricius*, on the other hand, was the symbolic head of the Roman commune. Comparable to the *podestà* of other Italian communes, the *patricius* was to govern the city “tamquam princeps.”³⁶ He possessed executive powers, as well as dictatorial powers in military and political realms. Otto of Freising noted that the commune and *patricius* together forced all princes and nobles into subjection to the *patricius*.³⁷ However, the first, and as it turns out only, *patricius* elected to the post was Giordano di Pierleone, from a Roman elite family and the brother of antipope Anacletus II.³⁸ Despite Giordano’s privileged background, he espoused the cause of the poorest Romans, and four years later, long after the elimination of his post, he was still perceived by communal officials as an advocate for their interests.³⁹

³⁴ There is uncertainty about precisely when the office of *patricius* was formed. Otto of Freising puts it in the early spring of 1144. Otto of Freising, *Chronica sive historia de duabus civitatibus*, ed. A. Hofmeister, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores*. (Hanover: 1912) VII.31. Likewise, Romualdo Salernitano, in his *Chronicon*, estimates June 1144: Romualdo Salernitano, "Chronicon," in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, 7, ed. C.A. Garufi (Bologna: 1935), 228. Boso, however, places the election of the *patricius* during the first months of Eugenius’ reign (1145): Boso, "Gesta Pontificum Romanorum," in *Liber Pontificalis*, v.2, ed. Louis Marie Olivier Duchesne (Paris: 1955), 386. For an analysis of these sources, see Moscati, *Alle origini del comune romano* 143ff.

³⁵ Moscati, *Alle origini del comune romano* 147-51. For a list of the prefects from the tenth century through 1252, see, Halphen, *Études sur l'administration de Rome* 147-56.

³⁶ As stated by Otto of Freising. The entire relevant passage: “Populus enim romanus, nullas insaniae suae metas ponere volens, senatoribus, quos ante instituerant, patricium adiciunt atque ad hanc dignitatem Iordanem Petri Leonis filium eligentes, omnes ei tanquam principi subjiuntur...At romanus populus, cum patricio suo Jordane in furorem versus, praefecturae dignitatem abolentes, omnes principes ac nobiles ex civibus ad subjectionem patricii compellunt.” Freising, *Chronica sive historia de duabus civitatibus* VII.31.

³⁷ See previous note.

³⁸ The means by which he was elected remains unknown. The office of *patricius* would not survive long: eliminated in the 1145 treaty between Eugenius III and the commune, the former office of prefect was reestablished.

³⁹ See in particular the letter to Conrad III in Otto of Freising, *Gesta Frederici*, ed. Georg Waitz and Bernhard Simson (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1965) I.30, p.184.

The appointment of Giordano di Pierleone as *patricius* of the commune has sometimes been interpreted as an act of aggression against the papacy. This perspective largely derives from the accounts of John of Salisbury and Otto of Freising, who viewed the abolition of the prefecture and the establishment of the patriciate as a direct usurpation of papal prerogative.⁴⁰ However, Giordano's salient attributes as an individual and as an official suggest another reading. These are, namely, that Giordano did not confront or attack the papacy, but rather concentrated on improving the lot of the Roman poor. Furthermore, the communal officials who elected Giordano chose an individual from the Pierleoni family, a noble family traditionally allied with the papacy. The Pierleoni were known, for example, for protecting beleaguered popes in their palace in Trastevere.⁴¹ And although Giordano was the brother of antipope Anacletus II, the rest of Giordano's family was openly hostile to the commune.⁴²

The revival of the senate was accompanied by the development of other communal structures that suggest a degree of cooperation between commune and papacy. For example, also created was a magistracy of municipal judges, the *illustres iudices Urbis*,⁴³ who eventually replaced the palatine judges, the once-venerated, now under-utilized, "subaltern" personnel of the papal curia.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ John of Salisbury: "Regalia beati Petri sue reipublice vendicabant, ut inde sustinerentur honora civitatis. Patricium sibi creaverant Iordanum...palatium diruerant in iniuriam domini pape." Marjorie Chibnall, ed., *The Historia Pontificalis of John of Salisbury* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) 59. Otto of Freising wrote that Roman nobles thought Giordano Pierleoni had become a black sheep in his family by associating with the commune: "Sed pro his omnibus, que vestre dilectionis fidelitate facimus, papa, Franiipanes, et filii Petri Leonis, homines et amici Siculi, *excepto Iordano nostro* in vestra fidelitate vexillifero et adiutore..." [italics mine] Freising, *Gesta Frederici* I.30, p.184.

⁴¹ The Pierleoni were supposedly descended from an eleventh-century Jewish convert. For a brief sketch of the family's history, refer to Carocci and Venditelli, "Società ed economia (1050-1420)," 75-76.

⁴² Cf. the letter to Conrad III in Freising, *Gesta Frederici* I.30, 182-88.

⁴³ Attesting to the establishment of communal judges are the several preambles to the first judicial sentences of the senate: Bartoloni, *Codice diplomatico*, doc. 12 of 1151, pp. 14-15; doc. 13 of 1151, p. 19; and doc. 17 of 1160, p. 23. Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval* 1340.

⁴⁴ "Subaltern" is Toubert's term. He states that "[les juges et avocats romains] se sont ainsi détachés d'une Curie qui n'avait pas réussi à les assimiler et qui les reléguait depuis le début du XII^e siècle dans

According to Pierre Toubert, the office of *iudex Urbis* was created more as a response to Rome's administrative needs than as an instrument of opposition against the papacy. From 1140 to 1160, communal judges exercised autonomous jurisdiction, *infra Urbem et extra*, over both clerics and laymen.⁴⁵ Records show that clerics availed themselves of the alternative source of justice. In 1151, for example, the clerics of S. Prassede and S. Croce in Gerusalemme were engaged in a dispute. Dissatisfied with the sentence conferred by Pope Eugenius III, they appealed in 1160 for a communal judgment, to their marked advantage.⁴⁶ Despite pretensions to regional power, however, the authority of the communal judges remained limited beyond the immediate suburban area.⁴⁷

In this way, the particular elements that led to the birth of Rome's first communal institutions—competition over territorial and administrative rights combined with joint military endeavor—reflect the complexity of the relationship between the early Roman commune and the papacy. Too often, this relationship has been interpreted solely through the prism of conflict. Take, for example, the summary explanation offered by Peter Partner: “The communal revolution against the Roman bishop had occurred.”⁴⁸ To explain the birth of the senate exclusively as a product of conflict, of the Roman populace *against* the papacy, is to ignore the cooperation and mutual interest. The senate, in other words, was not formed to

des positions subalternes.” The title “illustre iudex Urbis” does not actually appear in the documentation until 1160. Ibid. 1342.

⁴⁵ Former papal judges must have been occasionally hired to work for the commune. Halphen notes that the papal judiciary was divided into the *ordinarii iudices* or *iudices palatini* and the *iudices dativi*. While the origin of the titles is unclear, the former were often clerics, numbering seven, and the latter were often laymen, numbering many more. Several *iudices dativi* have been identified holding communal office in the late twelfth century. Halphen, *Études sur l'administration de Rome* 37-57, esp. 51, n.3.

⁴⁶ Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval* 1341, n.3.

⁴⁷ Toubert laments, “[l]e faible rayonnement de la justice sénatoriale n’est alors qu’un reflet de la longue impuissance de Rome à se constituer en capitale régionale dynamique.” Ibid. 1341, n.4.

⁴⁸ Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter* 180.

damage the papacy, or to deprive it of its rights, so much as to protect Roman municipal interests, an objective that the papacy could not possibly claim to fulfill.

John of Salisbury

Our understanding of the events of 1143 derives largely from a few principal sources. The first is John of Salisbury, the twelfth-century English scholar and statesman employed at the papal curia. When John described the momentous events of 1143 in his *Historia Pontificalis*, he did not mention Tivoli at all. Rather, he portrayed the Romans as vindictive aggressors inflicting “multas iniurias” upon a vulnerable pope.⁴⁹ He wrote that the senators, “whom the populace created on its own authority” (“senatores enim, quos populus propria creabat auctoritate”) had “taken over all authority to administer and execute justice throughout the city” (“omnem in tota civitate reddendi iuris et exequendi occupaverant potestatem”).⁵⁰ Further, John claimed that the senators appropriated the regalian rights of the papacy for their republic (“regalia beati Petri sue reipublice vendicabant”), and that they harmed the pope by destroying the tower of one of his allies, the Frangipani family (“Chenchii Frangentis panem, cuius familia necessitatibus ecclesie semper astitit, palatium diruerant in iniuriam domini pape”).⁵¹ John’s description clearly reflects his loyalty to the papal cause.

Yet it is worth questioning by what means John formulated his perception of the *renovatio senatus*. For one thing, his description of the events of 1143 is

⁴⁹ “Dominus papa urbem egressus est propter improbitatem Romanorum, qui ei et suis multas iniurias irrogabant.” Chibnall, ed., *Historia Pontificalis* 59.

⁵⁰ By “populus,” John probably referred to the Roman *popolo*. The only other time he used the term, it referred to Arnold of Brescia’s supporters. On another occasion, to specify Roman elites, he used the terms “senatores et nobiles.” Ibid. 64, 62.

⁵¹ Ibid. 59. All translations in this passage are mine.

embedded in a narrative of events occurring in 1149. The pope whose court John attended, Eugenius III, was not the pope (Innocent II) challenged by the Roman populace six years earlier. Though John begins this passage by lamenting Pope Eugenius' poor treatment by Romans, his next sentences listing the senators' offenses in 1143 makes no mention of the change of papal subject, or of his jumping back six years.⁵² An unsuspecting reader could easily be led to believe that Eugenius was the sole object of the Romans' aggression. What is clear from his account, however, is that John's loyalties lay with the pope. He sympathized little with the Roman drive for self-rule, and had little liking for Roman character. As a result, he paints the emergence of the commune as a scene of uncontrolled, hostile, and violent conflict with the papacy.

In addition to John's dubious conflation of disparate events, another reason to question John's assessment of the formation of the commune was that he did not, in all likelihood, witness it. John's life at the papal curia is almost entirely undocumented, and both the date at which he began and the function that he filled are still unknown. It is thought, though, that for twelve years following Henry I's death in 1135, John was studying in Paris and Chartres.⁵³ Almost certainly, therefore, John could not have witnessed the Roman events of 1143.⁵⁴ This is not to say that his account is unreliable—his analysis appears fitting for an individual working at the papal curia, and, disregarding its chronological inconsistencies, it correlates well with other records. However, since John was not an eye-witness, his

⁵² Ibid. 59-60.

⁵³ Ibid. xix.

⁵⁴ Various estimates for the starting date of his employment with the curia range from 1146 (R.L. Poole) to 1149 (Chibnall). For a brief account of this discussion, and of the details of John's life, see *ibid.* xx-xxiii.

source is unknown, and he harbored clear antipathy to the commune, his account needs to be read with caution.⁵⁵

Otto of Freising

Another notable foreigner who left behind an indispensable record of his age was Otto of Freising. Although a devotee of the German king Frederick Barbarossa rather than the pope, Otto was hardly more forgiving than John of the Romans' rebellion. This is not surprising, given the imperial politics of that moment. In the early 1150's, Frederick was determined to come to an agreement with the papacy and secure his coronation at Rome. And because papal relations with the commune were turbulent in this period, Frederick treated the Roman populace with aloofness. Frederick's general antipathy to the commune was reflected in the Treaty of Constance, which he and Pope Eugenius III signed in 1153.⁵⁶ There, Frederick agreed not to make peace with the Romans without papal consent, and he agreed that the Romans should revert to the same constitutional arrangement that they had maintained with the papacy prior to 1143.⁵⁷ When in 1155 Frederick came to Rome to be crowned by Pope Adrian IV, he never entered Rome proper, but stayed on the Tiber's west bank.⁵⁸ He was crowned in St. Peter's

⁵⁵ There is a similar problem in interpreting John's account of Arnold of Brescia. Of this, Chibnall writes, "John's account of Arnold's conduct in Rome is certainly vivid enough to have been written by an eye-witness; but it is straining the evidence to make John enter the papal service so early... Whatever the truth of this, there is no doubt that John's source of information was reliable, and that his account of Arnold's behaviour is so important that its publication necessitated a re-writing of Arnold's life. ... John proved beyond doubt that Arnold was not associated with the Roman rebellion until after the establishment of the Senate..." Ibid. xli-ii.

⁵⁶ Peter Partner elucidates the terms of the Treaty of Constance in *The Lands of St. Peter* 188.

⁵⁷ Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter* 188. This treaty is unrelated to the treaty of Constance signed in 1183 between Barbarossa and the Lombard League, by which the northern communes retained their autonomy but agreed to pay an annual fee for the exercise of imperial jurisdiction.

⁵⁸ The municipality of Rome formally included only the part of the city east of the Tiber. The division between Rome proper, and Trastevere, the Leonine city, and the Tiber island, remained even after the communal developments of 1143. Thus, for example, when Pisa signed a peace treaty with the commune in 1151, it had to sign a separate one with Trastevere. See Halphen, *Études sur l'administration de Rome* 60.

in a private ceremony, and contrary to custom, excluded Roman citizens by closing Ponte Sant'Angelo (the bridge leading from the city center to the Vatican) and the walls of the papal city.⁵⁹ Because of this atmosphere of tension and hostility, it is understandable that Otto of Freising regarded the Roman commune with suspicion.

Like the description offered by John of Salisbury, Otto's report of the *renovatio senatus* is intrinsically problematic. To begin with, he conflated the 1143 revival of the senate with the arrival at Rome of the popular reformer Arnold of Brescia sometime between 1146 and 1148.⁶⁰ Arnold's presence in Rome had been a thorn in the side of the papacy, and had likely helped sour relations between the pope and the commune. Otto probably confused the revival of the senate with Arnold's arrival in Rome because the latter was the major issue of contention when in autumn 1154 Frederick entered Italy. Pope Adrian, furious that the Romans had harbored the heretic, placed the city under interdict until they released him to papal jurisdiction. When in the spring of 1155 Arnold was captured and executed by German troops, it likely appeared to many Germans that the conflict between the papacy and commune centered on him only.⁶¹

Although Otto erred in attributing the communal revolt to Arnold of Brescia, his analysis reveals his belief that popular anti-papal sentiment was fundamental in precipitating the commune's formation:

Because of [Arnold's] envy for the honors paid to clerics, he entered Rome, and seeking to restore the dignity of the senate and the equestrian order to their ancient status, he

⁵⁹ An account of the Roman expedition of Frederick Barbarossa can be found in Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter* 187ff. See also Peter Munz, *Frederick Barbarossa: A Study in Medieval Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969).

⁶⁰ Chronological confusion abounds. Otto of Freising indicates that Arnold arrived in 1146. Freising, *Gesta Frederici* I.29, p.183. The Roman medievalist A. Frugoni put it instead at 1148. Frugoni, *Arnaldo da Brescia nelle fonti del secolo XII* 129-30.

⁶¹ John of Salisbury also documented Arnold's arrival in Rome. Rather than condemning him outright, John appears to have sympathized with some of Arnold's criticisms of the twelfth-century church, such as its extensive temporal aims and rapid enrichment. Chibnall, ed., *Historia Pontificalis* 65-6.

incited almost the entire City, and especially the *popolo*,
against his pope.⁶²

...ex ecclesiastici honoris invidia urbem Romam ingreditur
ac senatoriam dignitatem equestremque ordinem renovare ad
instar antiquorum volens totam pene Urbem ac precipue
populum adversus pontificem suum concitavit.⁶³

By associating the foundation of the Roman commune with a firebrand orator and religious purist such as Arnold of Brescia, Otto radicalized the discourse, attributing a popular, religious, reformatory zeal to the origins of the communal movement in Rome.⁶⁴

Another intrinsic difficulty in evaluating Otto's report of the *renovatio senatus* is that he almost certainly did not witness it.⁶⁵ Like John of Salisbury, Otto offers a colorful yet slightly confused description of an event he could only have heard about, and reveals his partisanship with an adversary of the Roman commune. Otto's sources, like John's, are unknown.⁶⁶ Although they were first-rate chroniclers, they both belonged to political camps in conflict with the Roman commune. They both had reason to depict the Romans as aggressive, greedy, and cruel.

⁶² The translation is mine. The published translation is useful though not very accurate in this passage: Charles C. Mierow, ed., *The Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa, by Otto of Freising and his continuator, Rahewin* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004) 61. Otto was not alone in ascribing the *renovatio senatus* to widespread anti-papal sentiment. The anonymously-authored poem *Ligurinus*, commenting on Roman events between 1152 and 1160, also put forward the claim that Arnold "titulos Urbis vetustos...suadebat populo." Guntherus Cisterciensis, "Ligurinus," in *Patrologiae Latinae cursus completus*, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris: 1853).

⁶³ Freising, *Gesta Frederici* I.29, p.183.

⁶⁴ Even if true, this would stand out against the largely non-ideological foundations of other Italian communes. On this, P.J. Jones writes, "Revolutionary intentions certainly were nowhere openly expressed, still less programmatically proclaimed. Motives, for the most part undeclared or at any rate unregistered, were not, when manifest, subversive. Charters of liberty, the most articulate records, where granted out at all – and many towns like Milan did without them – were in general reticent, circumscribed documents..." Jones, *The Italian City-State* 136-37.

⁶⁵ Frederick did not come to Italy until 1155. In 1137, Otto was elected bishop of Freising.

⁶⁶ Chibnall thinks it unlikely that John of Salisbury was familiar with Otto's *Gesta Frederici*. Chibnall, ed., *Historia Pontificalis* xxxiii.

The revival of the senate, even if not aimed at destroying the temporal power of the papacy around Rome, resulted in almost immediate confrontation between the pope and the commune. The refusal of Pope Innocent, and then of his successor Lucius II (1144-45), to regard the senate as legitimate engendered resentment in many Romans. The consequent hostility of the commune toward Pope Lucius was palpable. Feeling unsafe in the city streets, he appealed to Roger II of Sicily and to the powerful barons of Lazio for military aid against the commune.⁶⁷ Upon the election of his successor, Eugenius III, Romans again requested formal acknowledgment of the senate. Eugenius' refusal was met with violence, as Roman citizens destroyed bridges, used churches as fortifications, extorted money from pilgrims, and attacked the residences of cardinals and traditionally pro-papal elite families such as the Frangipani. John of Salisbury claims that Eugenius III was forced to leave the city on account of the wickedness of Romans ("propter improbitatem Romanorum").⁶⁸ When relations with the Romans did not improve, Eugenius gathered a small army of Roman elites and the militias of several nearby communes including Tivoli and Viterbo.⁶⁹

The pope and his allies prevailed by the end of 1145. Concluding a treaty with the commune, Eugenius became the first pope to legally recognize the senate. In return, the Romans abolished the recently-established office of *patricius*, reestablished the prefecture, and agreed to papal appointment of senators.⁷⁰ This series of skirmishes reveals the tensions that often existed between the papacy and the early Roman commune. This dynamic of conflict and reconciliation would

⁶⁷ During one of the ensuing skirmishes, the ill-fated pope was struck by a rock, dying soon after on the fifteenth of February, 1145.

⁶⁸ Chibnall, ed., *Historia Pontificalis* 59. Eugenius decided in the beginning of his pontificate to reside in Viterbo, later establishing an additional residence at Tusculum (Frascati). Later still he moved to Lombardy and then to France to preach the crusade. See also Brezzi, *Roma e l'impero medioevale* 327.

⁶⁹ Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter* 182.

⁷⁰ Brezzi, *Roma e l'impero medioevale* 327.

continue to define Roman communal life until the end of the fourteenth century, when the papacy delivered the decisive blow to Roman communal government.⁷¹

Scholars have debated how much meaning the *renovatio senatus* had for twelfth-century Romans. Some have argued that 1143 marks “the birth of a Roman political consciousness,” insofar as the municipality of Rome affirmed its communal identity, and symbolically declared its independence from the institution of the papacy.⁷² One indication of communal consciousness was a revival in civic restorations and building projects: already by 1151, the senate was meeting in a newly restored senate house on the Campidoglio.⁷³ In this same period, an ancient obelisk was transferred to the northeast corner of the Campidoglio.⁷⁴ Further, the ancient city walls were repaired, and inscriptions were placed over city gates declaring the commune’s role in urban restorations;⁷⁵ and finally, the long-damaged Ponte Milvio was restored to working condition.⁷⁶ While the building projects are convincing evidence of a renewed interest in the municipality, they do not prove that Romans desired total independence from the papacy. And again, I would argue that it overstates the ideological fervor of the early commune. How else can we explain Romans’ repeated attempts, beginning in

⁷¹ Cf. Esch, “La fine del libero comune di Roma.”

⁷² See, for example, Miglio, “Tradizioni popolari e coscienza politica,” 332-3. Other scholars, such as Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur, have argued that this was a much more gradual process. Maire Vigueur, “Il comune romano.”

⁷³ An 1151 document was dated and signed by senators “in Capitolio, in concistorio novo palatii in renovationis vero seu restaurationis sacri senatus.” Bartoloni, ed., *Codice diplomatico* doc.11, p.13.

⁷⁴ Richard Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City, 312-1308* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980) 198. Miglio concurs on the dating. Miglio, “Il Senato nel medioevo,” 129.

⁷⁵ Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City* 237-53, Miglio, “Il Senato nel medioevo,” 129.

⁷⁶ There might have been additional reasons that the commune wanted to repair the Ponte Milvio. In a letter of July 1149 exhorting king Conrad to return to Rome, Romans explained that they had repaired the bridge to create for him an alternate point of entry, thereby reducing the strategic value of the Ponte Sant’ Angelo, which was controlled by the papacy and pro-papal families such as the Pierleoni: “sciatis preterea quia pontem Mulvium extra Urbem parum longe, per tempora multa pro imperatorum contrario destructum, nos, ut exercitus vester per eum transire queat, ne [filii] Petri Leonis per castellum Sancti Angeli vobis nocere possint, ut statuerant cum papa et Siculo, magno conamine restauramus et in parvi temporis spacio muro fortissimo et silicibus iuvante Deo complebitur” Bartoloni, ed., *Codice diplomatico* doc.5, p.5.

the mid-1140's, to convince the German king to return to Rome? Complete autonomy, in the final analysis, seems not what Romans were after. Feeling uneasy in the absence of formal ties to long-venerated institutions, Romans immediately began to serenade the German king.

The Romans' repeated entreaties to the German king reflect two competing ideals in the early identity of the Roman commune. First, the revival of the senate resuscitated long-dormant memories of empire in the medieval Roman imagination. The politics of medieval Rome had always been saturated with references and appeals to its ancient past. But the success of the *renovatio senatus* revived the hope that a *restauratio imperii Romani* might also have been possible. This prompted communal officials to write a flurry of letters to king Conrad III in the 1140's, offering him a coronation at Rome and exhorting him to return the seat of empire to their city. In a letter of July 1149, the Romans declared their desire "to exalt and amplify the Roman kingdom and empire, bestowed to your governance by God, to that state in which it was in the time of Constantine and of Justinian..." ("quidem regnum et imperium Romanum, vestro a Deo regimini concessum, exaltare atque amplificare cupientes, in eum statum, quo fuit tempore Constantini et Iustiniani...").⁷⁷ In this letter, the Romans swore their loyalty to the German king, promised that all opposition had been hushed or exiled and the property of the exiles had been destroyed or dispersed, and reminded him of Christ's invocation to render unto Caesar his due.⁷⁸ Although the entreaties came to naught, it is clear that many Romans hoped that the revival of the senate would confer on their city long-lost prestige and a degree of influence they could not muster in the shadow of the papacy. The 1149 letter exposes both the power of the

⁷⁷ The translation is mine. Latin text quoted from Freising, *Gesta Frederici* I.30, p.184.

⁷⁸ For a transcription of the letter, see, *ibid.* 182-88. See also Miglio, "Il Senato nel medioevo," 122.

imperial myth in Rome, as well as the repercussions of this myth on the Roman polity, as it curtailed, and perhaps prevented, the growth of an autonomous commune.⁷⁹

Romans' belief in the exceptionalism of their city is reflected by their employment of an unusual communal vocabulary. While most other early communes denoted their head magistrates by *consul*, the Romans employed *senatus*.⁸⁰ The differing usage highlights the Romans' desire in the early communal period to maintain their identity as a city imbued with mythical inherited power. While in time the Romans would adopt more common communal institutions such as *capitano del popolo*, their early re-creation of the senate reveals the strong link of the early commune to the ancient Roman past.⁸¹ For this reason, I would argue that the *renovatio senatus* of 1143, while it reflected Rome's participation in the contemporary trend of communal government, also manifested long-held Roman aspirations to revive their political heritage.

Analyses of the formation of the Roman commune are dependent on contemporary sources. Those cited most often—John of Salisbury and Otto of Freising—offer vivid but questionable depictions that in most cases have not been challenged. Our perception of the early commune has been formed by the impressions of men who did not reside in Rome, or even in Italy during the period they narrated, who were not always well-informed about the complexities of Roman society, and who were allied with parties in conflict with the commune.

⁷⁹ Miglio, "Il Senato nel medioevo," 122.

⁸⁰ Prior to the *renovatio senatus* of 1143, consuls were municipal officers working in coordination with the papacy. However, evidence suggests that the consular office was terminated upon the revival of the senate. Halphen, *Études sur l'administration de Rome* 28-36. De Bouärd also has a useful chapter on the Roman consuls: De Bouärd, *Le régime politique* 133-47.

⁸¹ Frugoni, for example, claimed that the revival of the senate was an "orgogliosa ripresa di quell'antico senato che era ricordo magnifico di saggezza e potenza," ("a proud revival of that ancient senate that was a glorious memory of wisdom and power"). Arsenio Frugoni, "Sulla 'renovatio senatus' del 1143 e 'l'ordo equestris'," *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo* 62 (1950): 166.

Although the chronicles of John and Otto are vital for our understanding of the period, their descriptions of a Roman *popolo* inflamed against papal rule are probably overstated. The movement for the revival of the senate was, I would argue, less ideologically charged at the outset, and the political friction with the papacy less acute than these two sources would have it.

Historical sources, however, are often more valuable for what they reveal about their authors than for what they purport to describe. John, for example, writing more than a decade after the Roman commune's 1143 foundation, probably reflected the tensions that by the early 1150's had accumulated between the papal court and the commune. It is possible that he "translated" his knowledge of Rome in the 1150's onto his analysis of events occurring ten years previously. Similarly, Otto, serving in the retinue of a king unsympathetic to the commune, likely reflected the German fear of a rowdy Roman mob in his account. The German-Roman relation had soured ever since Conrad had snubbed their invitations to return the imperial seat to Rome. More recently, Frederick Barbarossa had responded similarly to Roman entreaties. But the German king fanned the fire by claiming that the Roman consuls, senate and army were, by virtue of the *translatio imperii*, in his German empire rather than in Rome itself.⁸² It is thus evident that the relationship between Germans and Romans was at that moment fairly tense.

There remains one other circumstance that might have colored Otto's perception of events. Like the rest of the German entourage, Otto probably never entered central Rome, but rather viewed the Romans from a distance as they chanted in protest about the closure of the Ponte Sant' Angelo and their unprecedented exclusion from the coronation ceremony. The distance implicit in this encounter probably dictated the nature of Otto's perception. As he faced the

⁸² Miglio, "Tradizioni popolari e coscienza politica," 333.

Romans from across the river, Otto's position would have conditioned his conclusion that the Romans were an uncontrolled, teeming, angry mob.

The Roman triangle: papacy, nobility, and commune

The Roman senate initially functioned more or less autonomously.⁸³ However, this autonomy was largely lost in 1188 when the senators signed an agreement with Pope Clement III that restored to the papacy many of its former privileges. This moment has been identified by one historian as “the end of the first phase of the medieval Senate.”⁸⁴ In the 1188 treaty, the senators ceded authority over senatorial nominations to the pope, in addition to two-thirds of the rights to the municipal mint, *regalia* inside and outside the city, and the immunity of churches and bishops to war debts; the senators promised to swear an annual oath of loyalty to the pope, to offer military support to the Patrimony, and to recognize the church's jurisdiction over Frascati; they guaranteed peace and security to the papal curia and anyone traveling to it. Further, they agreed to allow the pope to elect ten men annually from each of the city's *rioni*, of which at least five would swear peace with the papacy, after which the pope too would promise to uphold the pact. The only contested privilege that Romans insisted on preserving was their

⁸³ The papacy and the empire were still important actors in Roman politics. In 1167, for example, the senate signed a compact with Frederick Barbarossa promising to defend imperial rights in the city and abroad, in return for the emperor's confirmation of senatorial authority and the economic rights of Roman citizens. See: Bartoloni, ed., *Codice diplomatico* doc.42, 69-70.

⁸⁴ “Il 1188 segna la conclusione della prima fase del Senato medievale.” Miglio, “Il Senato nel medioevo,” 130. The full text of this treaty can be found in Bartoloni, ed., *Codice diplomatico* doc.42, pp.69-74. Paolo Brezzi has seen in this document proof that “l'istituzione comunale era in realtà una cosa provvisoria, vivente più per reazione delle forze altrui che per capacità proprie.” Brezzi, *Roma e l'impero medioevale* 371.

right to wage war with Tivoli.⁸⁵ In return, the pope promised one hundred *libre de provisini* each year to maintain the city walls;⁸⁶ and finally, he promised not to oppose a Roman war with Tivoli. The 1188 treaty marks the beginning of increased papal participation in, and occasionally control of, Roman communal politics.

Why in the treaty of 1188 did the senate offer such a sweeping act of submission? The fifty-six senators who signed the treaty declared that the commune would “be strengthened to its greatest state” if they could achieve a “concord of peace between the holy Church and illustrious Rome.”⁸⁷ Clement III, a Roman by origin, had persuaded them that peace with the papacy was in their long-term interest. Paolo Brezzi, perhaps exaggerating the commune’s ideological zeal, claimed that the animating spirit of the revolution (“spirito animatore della rivoluzione”) was lost.⁸⁸ The senators, swearing loyalty to the pope, would become guardians of papal interest. The Roman militia, which had been gradually building a Roman power base in the *distretto*, re-channeled its energies to protecting the pope, churches, and the large retinues of the papal curia. The remarkable

⁸⁵ “...sed si Tiburnos impugnare voluerimus, non facietis nobis contrarium.” Bartoloni, ed., *Codice diplomatico* 73.

⁸⁶ From about 1155 on, the commune utilized a currency from Champagne called the *provisinus* or *proveniese*. When a Roman mint was established in 1184, the currency was referred to as *denari provisini senatus* or *provisinus de manganello*, to distinguish it. The coins were inscribed with *Roma caput mundi* on one side, and *Senatus P.Q.R.* on the reverse. They depicted various images: the city personified as a crowned woman on a throne, holding in her right hand an orb and in her left a palm; alternately, a lion; a senator, kneeling while receiving the symbols of power from St. Peter; or finally, the papal keys, or images of St. Peter and St. Paul. See Brezzi, *Roma e l'impero medioevale* 488-90, and plate XII. Also useful are V. Capobianchi, “Appunti per servire all'ordinamento delle monete dal senato romano dal 1184 al 1439 e degli stemmi primitivi del comune di Roma,” *Archivio della Società romana di storia patria* 19 (1896), Halphen, *Études sur l'administration de Rome* 82, n.3. Allusions to the Roman commune on coinage ended in the mid-fifteenth century, when Eugenius IV substituted papal emblems, his own name and images of Peter and Paul. Miglio, “Il Senato nel medioevo,” 129-30.

⁸⁷ “Dignitas senatus populique Romani in optimum statum roboratur et reipublice nimium confert, si pacis concordiam inter sancrosanctam Ecclesiam et inclitam Urbem firmiter stabilitam ad posterorum memoriam sollempni scripturarum exaratione reducamus...” Bartoloni, ed., *Codice diplomatico* doc.42, p.71.

⁸⁸ “...lo spirito animatore della rivoluzione del 1143-1144 andò perduto e la caratteristica di quel movimento tenuto desto per vari anni fu smarrita.” Brezzi, *Roma e l'impero medioevale* 372.

concessions agreed to by communal officials in the pact of 1188 reveal their desire to live in harmony with the papacy, even at the expense of communal autonomy.

By the end of the twelfth century, the institutional structure of the senate came under scrutiny, and Romans began to experiment with various forms. Their first modification was to reduce the senate from fifty-six to a single senator in 1192, when Benedetto Carushomo ruled as *summus senator*.⁸⁹ This arrangement lasted two years, whereupon the traditional assembly of fifty-six was reinstated, which, after two years, was again replaced by the single senator Giovanni Capocci.⁹⁰ It was initially thought that a single senator would be able to rise above the factional strife then dividing the communal government. They discovered, however, that a single senator was much more easily manipulated by the pope, and the commune thenceforth always advocated a larger assembly.⁹¹ A larger senate was less likely to cater to a domineering pope, but was also vulnerable to faction and paralysis. The commune lost its control over the senate after Innocent III instituted a papally-appointed dual-senatorship, much like the dual hegemony of the ancient Roman consuls. This was deemed an improvement on the previous models whose faults and limitations were clearly visible. Though some might see the fluctuations in function and size of the early senate as a sign of institutional weakness, Robert Brentano claimed that this “unobstructive and flexible” quality of Roman government in this period was its “genius.”⁹² The senate’s instability of form in this period reflects the commune’s capacity to preserve its institutions in

⁸⁹ Laura Moscati, "Benedetto 'Carushomo' summus senator a Roma," in *Miscellanea in onore di Ruggero Moscati*, ed. Ruggero Moscati (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1985).

⁹⁰ A chronological list of senators can be consulted in Bartoloni, "Per la storia del senato romano," 76-108. Salimei is less reliable: A. Salimei, *Senatori e statuti di Roma nel medioevo. I senatori: cronologia e bibliografia dal 1144 al 1447* (Rome: Biblioteca d'arte editrice, 1935). See also Miglio, "Il Senato nel medioevo," 131-2. For the senatorship of Giovanni Capocci, refer to Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, "Giovanni Capocci," *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 18 (1960-): 596-98.

⁹¹ Brezzi, *Roma e l'impero medioevale* 395.

⁹² Brentano, *Rome Before Avignon* 101.

the presence of a strengthening papacy and an ascendant nobility, to adapt and respond to the varied political stimuli that sometimes threatened its survival.

In the decades following the 1188 pact, the senate came increasingly under the control of the papacy. Although the senators had ceded authority over the senate to Pope Clement III, this largely symbolic concession had only required senators to swear loyalty to the pope. However, papal intercession in communal affairs reached an apex during the pontificate of Pope Innocent III, who used his temporal powers and legal acumen to control the city. He shrank the senate in 1204 to a single senator, who was thenceforth to be appointed through a papal official called the *medianus*, or papal median.⁹³ When the discontented Romans requested that the fifty-six-man body be reinstated, Innocent eventually agreed, warning them, however, that it was an “unwise and unworkable” political plan.⁹⁴ When the large senate proved too factionally divided to function effectively, Innocent reverted in the following year to the policy of appointing a single senator.⁹⁵ His opponents could muster no real opposition, and from this point on, Roman attempts at resisting papal power yielded less and less fruit.⁹⁶

The thirteenth-century growth of the papacy as an institution possessing increasingly formidable temporal powers tangibly altered the way Rome was governed. The influence derived in part, as we have seen, from papal involvement in communal affairs. Yet as the papacy grew more powerful, it also began to confer

⁹³ Carocci notes that the reduction in the size of the senate was in keeping with developments in other communes then choosing one leader over a multiplicity: from consuls to a podestà. See Carocci, *Baroni di Roma* 20. Another of Innocent’s vigorous assertions of supremacy over the commune was his summary refusal, or indefinite deferral, to disburse the traditional payment offered by popes to the Romans. Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter* 238.

⁹⁴ Brentano, *Rome Before Avignon* 105.

⁹⁵ Brezzi, *Roma e l'impero medioevale* 398-9.

⁹⁶ One elite Roman, Giovanni Pierleoni, was so exasperated with papal infringement on communal prerogatives that when Innocent reverted to the single senator system in 1205, he took his protest outside the city. In Frascati, he occupied church lands, claiming that they had been granted to him by Celestine III. Soon after Innocent excommunicated him, the lone malcontent died, leaving his heirs to finally submit to the pope. *Ibid.* 399.

wealth and power on certain Roman families, bringing the papacy into close alliance with those families, and changing the social composition of the city. This too affected municipal affairs. The five sequential popes ruling between 1187 and 1241 all hailed from elite Roman families.⁹⁷ Attaining the papal seat improved the political and economic prospects of any family, especially in this period when the temporal powers, and thus the material rewards, of the papacy were expanding so rapidly. Moreover, the succession of five popes from Rome enriched not one, but many Roman families, which began to emerge as an uncontested elite.

The family of Innocent III provides one of the best examples of family ascendancy due to papal connections. The Conti were “rustic nobility” who owed their dramatic early thirteenth-century rise up the Roman social ladder to Innocent III, the family pope, to his successors, and to an array of advantageous local marriages.⁹⁸ During his pontificate, Innocent often relied on relatives to implement and uphold papal policy.⁹⁹ It was an effective method of rule that benefited both Innocent’s family and the papacy, which lacked the means to enforce its policies.¹⁰⁰ For instance, Innocent’s “notorious” brother,¹⁰¹ Riccardo Conti, seems in 1198 not to have had castral possessions (countryside properties containing fortifications). Yet within fifteen years, he gained a vast dominion including a nucleus of *castelli* (castles or small villages) near his native Segni,¹⁰² and multiple properties in the vicinity of the Monti Prenestini. In 1208, he became the Count of Sora in the Neapolitan kingdom. Throughout Innocent’s pontificate, Riccardo was

⁹⁷ These were: Clement III (1187-91), a Scolari; Celestine III, an Orsini (1191-98); Innocent III, a Conti (1198-1216); Honorius III, a Savelli (1216-27); and Gregory IX, a Conti (1227-41).

⁹⁸ Brentano, *Rome Before Avignon* 179.

⁹⁹ Peter Partner has likened Innocent’s methods to those of antipope Anacletus II during the schism of the 1130’s. Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter* 233.

¹⁰⁰ Carocci, *Il nepotismo nel Medioevo: papi, cardinali e famiglie nobili*.

¹⁰¹ Brentano, *Rome Before Avignon* 102.

¹⁰² There is a possibility for some confusion regarding names here. Because of their origins in Segni, Innocent III’s family is called in some sources the “Segni,” in other sources, the “Conti,” and in others still as the “Conti de Segni.” For consistency, I remain with “Conti.”

an important instrument of papal policy in the area south of Rome. Together with their family friend Riccardo of Ceccano, Lord of Sezze, and Innocent's brother-in-law Pietro Annibaldi, the three nobles formed a wall of pro-papal constituencies between Rome and the border of the Neapolitan Kingdom.¹⁰³ In addition, many Conti and their political allies filled administrative posts such as papal chamberlains, marshals, rectors, and the like. Symbolic of their family ambitions is the Tor de' Conti, the family tower begun by Innocent early in his pontificate. It was the highest tower ever built in Rome.¹⁰⁴ By the end of Innocent's reign, the Conti were among the most preeminent families in the region. The Conti's sudden rise incited fierce opposition among other aristocratic Roman families, resulting in factional conflict in the city.¹⁰⁵ These families regarded Innocent's tight control over the senate, and his family's domination of the *distretto*, as an acute threat to their own power.

The aggrandizement of the Conti in the early thirteenth century would soon be paralleled by the development of a core of increasingly powerful families in Rome. For this reason, Sandro Carocci has identified the first decades of the

¹⁰³ Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter* 233-5.

¹⁰⁴ *Guida d'Italia: Roma*, 10th ed., *Guida d'Italia* (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 1999) 300.

¹⁰⁵ A serious property dispute broke out in 1204 between the Conti and Poli families, absorbing the city, and even the emperor, into its fray. The lords of Poli, possessing extensive estates in Campagna, were in debt to Riccardo of Sora, Innocent's brother. In order to recuperate some of his losses, Riccardo suggested a marriage between his daughter and one of the Poli lords. The Poli at first accepted, but later reneged, prompting Riccardo, with the help of his brother the pope, to attempt to confiscate the estates. The Poli heir challenged Riccardo's right to buy, and created a clamor in Rome wherein the dispossessed Poli lords dressed in rags and howled in the streets to the Roman people about the egregious offenses of the pope and his relatives. In protest, the Poli donated their estates to the commune. Innocent protested this action, the senate divided over the issue, and the communal opposition, under Giovanni Capocci, expressed dissatisfaction with Innocent's control of the senate. The pro-Conti party was funded by papal funds, and the opposition was funded by the Hohenstaufen. There followed two disputed senatorial elections, and urban conflict ensued. The number of senators was temporarily reinstated to fifty-six, but Innocent eventually prevailed and reestablished the nomination of a single one. The disputed Poli lands were handed over to Riccardo of Sora, resulting in a double victory for the determined pope and his family. For details, see Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter* 239; Brentano, *Rome Before Avignon* 104. A letter of Innocent narrating this affair can be found in: Bartoloni, "Per la storia del senato romano," 62.

thirteenth century as a vital period of growth for the Roman nobility.¹⁰⁶ Among the elite families within and around the city, a few would soon prevail in the struggle for wealth and power. While some of these were older families building on their traditional holdings, others were new, expanding their influence both within the city and over the countryside. The Conti were one of the few families rising from virtual provincial status to a position of civic and seigneurial power as a consequence of papal support. Upon Innocent's election in 1198, the most prominent families in the city were the Colonna, the Normanni, the Orsini, the Capocci, the Annibaldi and the Sant'Eustachii. Some, such as the Colonna, based their power outside the city, while others, like the Savelli and the Normanni, were primarily active in municipal and papal administration.¹⁰⁷ A small proportion of these families eventually came to constitute a preeminent, partly rural, baronial class which would distinguish itself from a second-tier urban aristocracy.¹⁰⁸ This small core—the Colonna, Orsini, Savelli, Conti, and Annibaldi, and to a lesser extent the Caetani—would, by the end of the thirteenth century, achieve a level of wealth and power not even remotely accessible to the city-dwelling aristocracy. Their hegemony is visible through the illuminating binoculars of statistics: in the 112 years between 1191 and 1303, these families controlled the papacy for a total of seventy-four.¹⁰⁹ In this development, the essential problem for the commune was that many of these families, perceiving the rewards to be gotten from allying with and participating in the papal administration, gradually became alienated from the

¹⁰⁶ Carocci locates the first, "crucial" period of this development between the end of the twelfth century and the first three to four decades of the thirteenth. Carocci, *Baroni di Roma* 24.

¹⁰⁷ Honorius III (1216-27) and Honorius IV (1285-87) were both Savelli.

¹⁰⁸ This bifurcation of the Roman elite into a baronial noble class and what is often termed a "citizen aristocracy" was first elucidated by Sandro Carocci. Carocci, "Una nobiltà bipartita," 71-122.

¹⁰⁹ The Conti, thirty-nine years; the Savelli, twelve and a half years; the Orsini, ten years; the Caetani, almost nine years; the Colonna, for more than four years. See Brentano, *Rome Before Avignon* 147.

needs and objectives of the commune. In the end, many saw greater outlet for their ambitions in the papal court than in the communal chamber.¹¹⁰

Brancaleone degli Andalò

The next decisive moment in the history of the Roman commune must be understood in the context of these developments. This moment came in 1252, when the habitual succession of senators was interrupted. The Romans dispatched a delegation to Bologna in August of that year to procure a learned and impartial official to assume the highest magisterial post of the commune, the position of single senator.¹¹¹ Elected by the Bolognese city council was Brancaleone degli Andalò, count of Casalecchio, a judicially trained Bolognese noble once in the employ of Frederick II. Brancaleone was appointed senator for three years, even though the conferment of any office for more than one year did not have a known precedent. Brancaleone came from an elite family that had served for generations in communal governments around Italy.¹¹² Some contemporaries, notably a biographer of Innocent IV, considered Brancaleone to have been elected on account of his Ghibelline views, though there is little to substantiate this claim.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ According to Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur, "...è anche probabile che altri [membri della nobiltà cittadina], piuttosto che dividere il potere con il popolo dei mestieri, abbiano negato il loro sostegno al nuovo regime, giungendo in casi estremi ad aderire all'una o all'altra delle fazioni baronali." Maire Vigueur, "Il comune romano," 143.

¹¹¹ The Roman commune brought in foreigners to act as senator or as *capitano del popolo* only very rarely. Those they imported came from: Perugia (Armando Supolini), Bologna (Brancaleone and Castellano degli Andalò, Giovanni da Ignano), Brescia (Emanuele de Maggio), Parma (Ugolino Rossi), and Milan (Paganino della Torre). In the period 1142-1250, when Romans served as *podestà* in other communes, they went to Perugia with the greatest frequency. Carocci, "Barone e podestà," 848, n.3, 50.

¹¹² His father and grandfather had been *podestà* in various city-states, among them Genoa. His uncle, Castellano, was also a "professional" *podestà*, who succeeded Brancaleone as senator of Rome. Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 10-11.

¹¹³ Nicolaus De Carbio, "Vita Innocentii IV," *Archivio della Società romana di storia patria* 21 (1898). Innocent's biographer, Niccolò da Calvi, claimed that Brancaleone was chosen by Romans because he was a supporter of Frederick II and the friend of two great pro-imperial lords Ezzelino and Pelavicino.

Before coming to Rome, Brancaleone sent approximately thirty Roman nobles as hostages to Bologna where they remained for the duration of his rule.¹¹⁴ This protected him from the elite families, whose enmity he later secured through his anti-magnate policies. He brought with him a group of aides including his wife, Galeana, who was eventually honored with the title *senatrix*, as well as notaries, judges, and a personal guard.¹¹⁵

Once in power, Brancaleone's actions make it clear that he considered the Roman nobility, more than the papacy, the main political adversary of the commune. To combat them, he insisted on the enforcement of law, and many Roman elites were brought to trial for their crimes and subsequently punished. Hanging them from the windows of their ancestral homes, Brancaleone presented Romans, noble and non-noble alike, with a grim but forceful symbol of his power and authority.¹¹⁶ As a consequence of his strict enforcement of the law and his extended tenure of office, Brancaleone has sometimes been accused of heavy-handed rule. Dupré Theseider, for example, described him as a “dictator by contract.”¹¹⁷ Robert Brentano, who also referred to Brancaleone as a dictator,

For an appraisal of Brancaleone's political loyalties, see Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 11.

¹¹⁴ Dupré Theseider claims that this was an unusual, but not unheard-of practice. The Milanese Ubertino da Mandello, for example, sent elite Florentines as hostages to Milan during his tenure of office in Florence in 1251. Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 13.

¹¹⁵ Giuliani, on the basis of the dubious work *La Bologna perlustrata* by A.P. Masini (Bologna, 1827), claims that Brancaleone's retinue included three judges and two notaries, whose names were: Napoleone Caregalupi, Iacopo Infangati, Alberto e Bonaccorso Lodovici, and Bolognino Artemisi. Giuliani, *Il comune di Roma* 28. For a recent assessment of the composition of Brancaleone's *familia*, see Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur, "Flussi, circuiti, profili," in *I podestà dell'Italia comunale: Parte I: Reclutamento e circolazione degli ufficiali forestieri (fine XII sec.-metà XIV sec.)*, ed. Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il Medioevo, 2000), 899-1101.

¹¹⁶ Of Brancaleone's policy of punishing criminals, Matthew Paris wrote: "...quosdam de civibus de homicidio infames et demum convictos in fenestris suorum castrorum suspendi fecit, et quosdam contumaces patibulis fecit praesentari." Matthew Paris, *Chronica majora*, ed. Henry R. Luard, vol. 5 (London: Longman & Co., 1880) 358.

¹¹⁷ "...il modo come si presenta fin dall'inizio il senatore è indubbiamente nuovo: in poche parole, Roma si procura con lui un dittatore per contratto." Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 13. Matthew Paris never calls Brancaleone a dictator or tyrant, instead referring to him in almost every case as "senator."

claimed that his rule marked both the apex and the end of popular government in late medieval Rome.¹¹⁸ Most surviving evidence indicates that Brancaleone, even if severe, was a just leader who ruled in accordance with the communal government. This is demonstrated, for example, by a council record in which Brancaleone requested permission from the Roman *parlamento* to retain and prosecute the noble Oddone Colonna and his followers who had harassed the assembly by throwing stones.¹¹⁹ Brancaleone requested, and received, *plenum et liberum arbitrium ac potestatem* from the council to prosecute them.¹²⁰

More importantly perhaps, Brancaleone aided the growth of communal institutions in Rome. One reason that Romans hired a foreign official was to develop communal institutions in Rome and align them more closely with the powerful communes to the north.¹²¹ Brancaleone's provenance from Bologna, a city renowned for communal achievements and a prestigious school of law, seems not an accident, and his upbringing and training were soon reflected in the changes he made in Rome.¹²² He reorganized institutional structures by introducing a council of elders (*anziani*) and a corps of thirteen regional representatives called

¹¹⁸ “[Brancaleone] was a popular dictator. He had perfected, insofar as it was in his century to be perfected, the powers of what has been called the popular party...In Brancaleone the power of the ‘people’ would seem to have reached both its apex and its end. He had in fact with his unified commune, and the taste for order that his successes encouraged, prepared the signory for Charles of Anjou’s use.” Brentano, *Rome Before Avignon* 109.

¹¹⁹ According to De Bouärd, who overemphasized its democratic characteristics, the *parlamento* was the popular assembly, which all citizens were invited to attend. To the *parlamento* fell the duty of approving or rejecting, by popular acclamation, the government’s propositions. If a proposition were approved, it would pass into the councils, of which there were two: the *consilium generale* and the *consilium speciale*. De Bouärd, *Le régime politique* 143-5. Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur modified De Bouärd’s definition, claiming that the *parlamento* consisted of all men trained in civil law. Maire Vigueur, “Il comune romano,” 126.

¹²⁰ The document is cited in full in Bartoloni, ed., *Codice diplomatico* doc.128, pp.204-6.

¹²¹ According to Dupré Theseider, the provisional government that called for a foreign official “decide la chiamata di un magistrato da porre a capo della città, perché prenda in mano le redini della popolazione e ne faccia un ‘popolo,’ come nelle altre città. Roma, che si vanta di essere da più di loro, deve cominciare ad essere come loro.” Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 10.

¹²² Rome prevailed most commonly upon Bologna and Milan for foreign officials.

boni homines.¹²³ He has also been credited with a substantial reorganization of the Roman guilds that possibly granted them conciliar representation, a plausible foundation for non-noble rule.¹²⁴ Brancaleone in 1255 assumed the title of *capitano del popolo*, the communal official dedicated to the needs of the *popolo*. Hitherto unprecedented in Rome, the *capitano* was another manifestation of Brancaleone's commitment to bringing Rome into line with other Italian city-states.¹²⁵

Throughout his three years in power, Brancaleone continually reaffirmed his commitment to pursuing impartial justice and ensuring the needs of the Roman *popolo*. Although reelected in the summer of 1255, Brancaleone's regime was ended just a few months later, in November, when Roman noblemen besieged him in the Campidoglio, deposed him, imprisoned him, and then transferred him to a castle in Passerano. Two years later, however, a popular revolt overturned noble-led rule, and Brancaleone was invited back as senator. He returned, briefly, before his death in 1258. During this final interlude, Brancaleone cemented his image as an enemy of the nobility. Brancaleone, as reported by Matthew Paris, "seeing the insolence and arrogance of the Roman nobles," ordered the destruction of over 140 towers, radically altering the face of the city.¹²⁶ This was Brancaleone's most

¹²³ The *buonumini* administered communal affairs when the senate was out of session, elected new senators, and, when needed, reformed the city's constitution. Though their number fluctuated, the *buonumini* always numbered a multiple of thirteen, with either one, two, or four *buonumini* elected for each of the thirteen urban subdivisions, called *rioni*. See De Bouïard, *Le régime politique*.

¹²⁴ Brentano, *Rome Before Avignon* 108. De Bouïard posits that the number of guilds was set at thirteen in order to correspond to the number of *rioni*, thereby facilitating guild participation in municipal politics. De Bouïard, *Le régime politique* 97-8. See also Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 26-30.

¹²⁵ According to Daniel Waley, the *capitano del popolo* first appeared at Parma in 1244. By 1250, both Florence and Piacenza had one, and the post quickly became common in other Tuscan communes as well. By the 1270's, Waley claims that most communes boasted a *capitano*. In the framework offered by Waley, Rome would have been among the first to incorporate the position. Strange then, that he does not mention it. Waley, *The Italian City Republics* 185-6.

¹²⁶ "Eodem quoque anno senator Romanus Brancaleo videns insolentiam et superbiam nobilium Romanorum non posse aliter reprimi, nisi castra eorum, quae erant quasi spoliatorum carceres, prosternerentur, dirui fecit eorundem nobilium turre circiter centum et quadraginta et solo tenu complanari." Paris, *Chronica majora* 709.

blatant assault on Rome's noble families. After his death, the *popolo* honored him by placing his head in a reliquary atop a marble column and venerating it.¹²⁷

Summarizing Brancaleone's service as senator, Matthew Paris eulogized him as the "hammer and uprooter of the prideful, powerful and iniquitous, the protector and defender of the *popolo*, and a lover and imitator of truth and justice."¹²⁸

Brancaleone left such a vivid impression on the Roman imagination that he became a model for popular rulers over the next century, beginning with his immediate successor Angelo Capocci and culminating in 1347 with Cola di Rienzo.¹²⁹

Although some scholars, both modern and medieval, have attributed to Brancaleone an overtly anti-papal stance, his actions while in office actually reflect a more ambiguous position.¹³⁰ First, it was Brancaleone who effectively persuaded an errant, and resistant, papacy to return to Rome. He exhorted Pope Innocent IV, who had left the city in 1244 to reside in Perugia, to return the papacy to its natural seat, where his flock awaited him.¹³¹ Dupré Theseider has asserted that, in pressing for a papal return, Brancaleone was following the wishes of the Roman populace, who had suffered serious economic setbacks from the papacy's absence.¹³² When the pope proved hesitant, Brancaleone tried to warm him to the idea by threatening to attack Perugia, prompting the fretful pope to scuttle onward to Assisi.

Eventually he submitted, however, probably more from fear that the Romans

¹²⁷ Ibid. 723. For the idea that Brancaleone was venerated after his death like an ancient god, see Giuliani, *Il comune di Roma*.

¹²⁸ My translation. "Fuerat etenim superbiorum potentum et malefactorum urbis malleus et extirpator, et populi protector et defensor, veritatis et justitiae imitator et amator." Paris, *Chronica majora* 723.

¹²⁹ Maire Vigueur, "Il comune romano," 142.

¹³⁰ The chronicler most hostile to Brancaleone, and the one most responsible for imparting an image of vehement anti-papalism to him, was the biographer of Pope Innocent IV, Niccolò da Calvi. Nicolai De Carbio, "Vita Innocentii IV papae," in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, 3, ed. L.A. Muratori (Milan). This view has recently been moderated by the argument that Brancaleone, although a Ghibelline, did not allow his political outlook to interfere with his policies as senator of Rome. For this view, see for example: E. Cristiani, "Brancaleone degli Andalò," *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (1961).

¹³¹ Matthew Paris: "...Romani missis nuntiis solempnibus dominum Papam rogitant, ut Romam rediret, more boni pastoris gregem suum minaturus..." Paris, *Chronica majora* 372.

¹³² Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 21.

would conclude a pact with king Conrad IV than from conviction of the validity of their plea. Arriving back in Rome on October 12, Innocent was greeted with immediate demands that he pay the customary “voluntary” papal donations to the Roman populace.¹³³ According to Matthew Paris, Brancaleone mediated between pope and populace, urging the Romans to soften their demands.¹³⁴ In the end, the harassed pope stayed in Rome only a few months before retreating to the Annibaldi fortress in the Alban hills.

The Roman commune was able to appoint Brancaleone as a foreign senator, and to grant him a three-year term, only because the temporal power of the papacy was at that time substantially weakened.¹³⁵ Gone, for a time, were the days when a pope like Innocent III could forcibly streamline the senate from fifty-six to one. As a result, once in power, Brancaleone experienced far more difficulty with a recalcitrant nobility than he did with an overbearing pope. The major challenges that Brancaleone faced were first, the struggle to maintain judicial power over a resistant nobility, and second, the struggle to extend communal authority in the *distretto*. Most of the scholarship has treated these two issues separately.¹³⁶ However, given the nobility’s significant presence in the *distretto*, I would argue that the issue of geographical expansion needs to be examined in light of the commune’s relations with noble families. At least one of the commune’s major offensives in this period, against Terracina, was waged as much against a powerful

¹³³ Romans asked that the pope pay them for defending papal interests and church property against Frederick II. Furthermore, they requested restitution for the losses endured as a result of the papal absence: namely, income earned from lodging clerical and lay visitors who came to visit the Curia, as well as from pilgrims. And finally, Innocent owed substantial sums to Roman bankers anxious to settle their accounts. Ibid. 16-17. See also Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter* 257-9.

¹³⁴ “Senator igitur mellifluis colloquiis populi furorem compescuit, dicens inhumanum esse, in pace vocatum ad animarum custodiam patrem ac pastorem tam graviter perturbare. Et sic quievit impetus tempestatis.” Paris, *Chronica majora* 418.

¹³⁵ Indicative of this weakness is that Pope Innocent IV allowed Perugia to tax its clergy. Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter* 258.

¹³⁶ Dupré Theseider, Giuliani, Maire Vigueur, and Cristiani all treat Brancaleone’s anti-magnate domestic policies separately from his military forays in the *distretto*.

Roman noble family, and likely against the pope as well, as it was for economic gain. Brancaleone was thus shifting the locus of conflict with the nobility out of the city and into the provinces.

This contention makes sense in light of Sandro Carocci's recent work, which has highlighted the Roman baronial families' extensive, and still rapidly growing, provincial assets in this period.¹³⁷ Many Roman families, such as the Colonna and the Annibaldi, rooted their power in country estates and provincial territories. While the tactic of shifting the center of conflict outside a city by launching an offensive outside its walls was certainly not new, Brancaleone appears to have espoused the strategy with particular energy. For Romans, accustomed to urban tower wars and factional struggles outside the doors of their homes, the exportation of that conflict constituted a significant policy shift. Non-elite Romans esteemed Brancaleone, and venerated him when he died, because he made order an urban reality for them.¹³⁸

Looking at Brancaleone's attempts at communal expansion, we find that there are two major types. The first, as evidenced by the assaults on Terracina in 1253 and Anagni in 1258, attacked lands in which a pope was personally invested, through either property ownership or family relations. In these cases, the commune provoked conflict as a way of confronting urban socio-political tensions, and displacing them outside the city. By attacking Terracina and Anagni, Brancaleone threatened the ancestral homes of noble families allied with the pope, and of the pope himself, thereby asserting communal power. In the second type, exemplified by Viterbo and Tivoli, the commune attempted to expand its sphere of influence

¹³⁷ Carocci has argued that around 1250 the Roman nobility went through a transition caused in part by the end of Swabian rule and the beginning of Angevin domination in Italy. One of the effects of these changes was that Roman elite families significantly increased their baronial possessions in Lazio. Carocci, *Baroni di Roma*.

¹³⁸ See Brentano, *Rome Before Avignon* 109.

over traditionally pro-imperial towns. There, the commune recognized the opportunity to extend its power and to derive political and economic benefits. We will now look more closely at what happened.

Brancaleone led the communal militia in the spring of 1253 in an attempt to expand its influence southward and capture Terracina, a port valuable for Roman trade. As a subject city of the papal state, Terracina owed its loyalty to the pope. But it was also a city of considerable importance for two noble families, the Frangipani, by then waning, and the Annibaldi, an ascendant family that had dominated the senatorship in the 1240's, before Brancaleone arrived.¹³⁹ The Annibaldi had also cultivated ties with Innocent IV, often serving as papal officials.¹⁴⁰ Among all the Roman noble families, they were probably Innocent IV's staunchest defenders.¹⁴¹ Predictably, when the Roman militia advanced towards Terracina, threatening it to align with Rome or suffer the consequences, Innocent quickly protested and urged the nobility to field an opposing army. Yet his protest seems not to have deterred the senator, who continued fighting.

Upon capturing the town, Brancaleone offered a treaty: the inhabitants of Terracina were to recognize the authority of the senate, to accept Roman jurisdiction, to attend Roman communal councils and, when necessary, offer military aid to the commune.¹⁴² All of these requirements – the usurpation of jurisdiction, the request for military service – would have weakened the ties

¹³⁹ According to Bartoloni, members of the Annibaldi family served as senator in 1240, 1241, 1243, 1244, 1247, and 1250, making them by far the most active family in the senate in that decade. Bartoloni, "Per la storia del senato romano," 92-96.

¹⁴⁰ Cardinal Riccardo Annibaldi served under Innocent IV as the papal rector of the Campagna and the Maritime province, and later, as papal vicar of Rome. Innocent was succeeded in 1254 by Alexander IV, himself a Conti, and an uncle of Annibaldo Annibaldi, who served as papal rector of the Marches. Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter* 258-9.

¹⁴¹ This was probably because the fortunes of the Annibaldi were connected to the Conti. Of this, Brentano writes, "The Annibaldi rose on the back of Conti greatness by strongly supporting, with Pandolfo of the Suburra, Riccardo Conti and the pope in their violent Roman disputes at the beginning of the thirteenth century." Brentano, *Rome Before Avignon* 190.

¹⁴² Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 23.

between the residents of Terracina and the Annibaldi. But as common demands made by a powerful centralizing commune, they were not out of the ordinary.¹⁴³ The Romans also added their own distinctive touch, and underscored the vitality of their communal, rather than aristocratic culture, by requiring that the residents of Terracina participate in the Roman public games, held annually in Testaccio and Piazza Navona. Taking part in the Roman games, they said, would show their fidelity to the commune.¹⁴⁴ Then, perhaps as a result of increasing pressure from the pope and the military preparations of several noble contingents in the area, Brancaleone suddenly abandoned the unfinished mission of conquering Terracina. We do not know the precise reasons, but Brancaleone and the Roman militia, by threatening noble power and defying papal authority, had in a sense made their point.¹⁴⁵

Dupré Theseider explained Brancaleone's interest in Terracina in purely economic terms: Romans, he argued, needed to control the port to ensure the flow of goods north to Rome.¹⁴⁶ Most recent treatments of the subject have followed Dupré Theseider's argument, stressing the value of the Terracinan port to Roman commerce.¹⁴⁷ While we can never be certain what Brancaleone's, or Romans',

¹⁴³ For the various types of settlements made between communes and outlying towns, see Jones, *The Italian City-State* 360-70.

¹⁴⁴ The games at Testaccio and Piazza Navona were an expression of communal life. The Statutes of 1363 prescribed penalties for refusing to participate. "Item quicumque fuerit electus ad ludendum in ludis agonis et testacie et recusaverit ludere et non luxerit [sic] in ipsis ludis, quod non possit habere officium in Urbe vel eius districtu per quinque annos nisi iustam causam habuerit videlicet infirmitates brigam vel inimicitiam vel propter senectutem a xl annis supra." Camillo Re, ed., *Statuti della città di Roma* (Rome: 1880) II.48, p.109.

¹⁴⁵ Dupré Theseider suggests that the May heat dissuaded the Roman troops from lingering too long near the Pontine Marches just north of Terracina. Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 24.

¹⁴⁶ Dupré Theseider does acknowledge the possibility that the Annibaldi presence might have influenced the Romans' choice to besiege Terracina. However, he downplays this possibility: "Il motivo è evidente: si desidera assicurare ai traffici romani la disponibilità di quel porto, attraverso il quale si svolgevano gli scambi...Nello stesso modo i romani tenderanno ad avere il controllo di Civitavecchia. È possibile che, per Terracina, il popolo romano si trovasse anche in contrasto con due famiglie baronali, che sappiamo aver sempre avuto interessi sul posto, i Frangipane e gli Annibaldi." Ibid. 23.

¹⁴⁷ See, for example, Maire Vigueur, "Il comune romano," esp. 143-6. In addition, see the biographical essay in Cristiani, "Brancaleone degli Andalò."

precise motivations were, and certainly the port might have been relevant, it seems imprudent to ignore the claims to authority that both the papacy and the Frangipane and Annibaldi families had in the region as possible explanations for the maneuver. After all, Brancaleone had bitterly opposed the two families in municipal politics. And given that Brancaleone had sent thirty-odd noble hostages to Bologna, he clearly knew early on that he would antagonize the Roman elites. The final result of the Terracina campaign was that the conflict between commune and noble families, which had hitherto been fought on city streets, was for some time fought in the *distretto*, for which many Romans would probably have thanked Brancaleone. Taken together, that the presence of the Frangipane and Annibaldi ought to be emphasized in the evaluation of Brancaleone's campaigns in the *distretto*.

The second act of communal aggression against nobility and papacy occurred in 1258, during Brancaleone's much more aggressive second term. This time he attacked Anagni, the birthplace of the incumbent pope Alexander IV, a Conti. Matthew Paris describes the affront in dramatic terms, relating the weeping and the pleas of Anagni residents that the pope intercede on their behalf.¹⁴⁸ Although the Roman militia soon abandoned the mission, they succeeded in humiliating the pope. According to Matthew, the Sicilian king Manfred, who had little liking for Alexander IV, rejoiced at the news.¹⁴⁹ In a personal manner, the expedition against Anagni subverted and threatened the authority of the pope; there was no getting around that the attack was directed against him. Anagni held little strategic importance for Rome or for the papal administration. However, it was personally significant to the pope and his family. Neither in the case of Terracina

¹⁴⁸ Paris, *Chronica majora* 665.

¹⁴⁹ "Memfridus autem, qui Papam odio habuit et senatorem B[rancaleonem] praecordialiter dilexerat, gavisus est vehementer." Ibid.

nor Anagni did Brancaleone attempt to undermine the authority of the papacy or of the papal state. Rather, his attacks were personal, aimed at the popes themselves, their families, and their closest noble supporters.

The remaining two major targets of Roman expansion in this period, Viterbo and Tivoli, were historically pro-imperial cities.¹⁵⁰ Although Viterbo had since the 1170's been a seat of imperial power in central Italy, its situation changed between 1199 and 1201 when the Roman militia defeated it.¹⁵¹ Innocent III, anxious to extend papal authority there, made the victorious Roman nobles into 'legates and rectors' of the papal patrimony, and the city became, for a time, a safe-haven for papal interests.¹⁵² Brancaleone mounted a short military offensive against the city, though as in the conquest of Terracina, it evaporated without any real result.¹⁵³

In the following April, the Romans mounted a serious challenge against Tivoli, its traditional arch-enemy located just to its east. Like Viterbo, Tivoli had allied with the empire, and when Roman troops appeared on the horizon, the Tivolese issued urgent, though unheeded, pleas to Conrad IV. Though the two main narrative sources, Matthew Paris and Niccolò Calvi, Innocent IV's biographer, agree that the Roman militia did not abandon its mission, their accounts of the events differ. Matthew Paris claims that the citizens of Tivoli, deserving the attack on account of their "insolence and arrogance," were taken to

¹⁵⁰ In the words of Peter Partner, "Viterbo was a city with a tradition of imperialist sympathies and heretical tendencies, and a healthy dislike for Rome and the Romans." Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter* 239.

¹⁵¹ The city boasted an imperial palace, paid taxes to the empire, and its prefect swore loyalty to the emperor. Ibid. 230.

¹⁵² Even before Innocent III, however, Viterbo had occasionally accepted papal guests. Pope Eugenius III resided there from 1146-7. Anti-popes Paschal III and Calixtus III also found a hospitable reception there. See *ibid.* And, according to Matthew Paris, Pope Alexander IV fled there in 1258 following an uprising in Rome. Paris, *Chronica majora* 663.

¹⁵³ Dupré Theseider blames the failure of the assault on the poor training and lack of preparation of the Roman militia. Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 24.

Rome, barefoot and in penitential garb, to plead for their lives.¹⁵⁴ Calvi, however, claimed that the papal notary Arlotto brokered a peace in which Tivoli had to send an annual tribute of 1,000 *libre di provisini* or a tenth of the commune's income.¹⁵⁵ Details aside, peace prevailed, and Brancaleone counted at least one military victory under his belt. Though the attacks on Viterbo and Tivoli did not yield bounteous results, and the Roman commune was still not the regional power that it continually aimed at becoming, Brancaleone demonstrated the commune's ability to challenge both papacy and nobility.

To explain why Romans in 1252 appealed to Bologna for a senator, Dupré Theseider posited that it was a response to heightened tension between elite and *popolo*.¹⁵⁶ Contemporary sources do not much clarify the situation. Matthew Paris, for example, exhibited little curiosity about the reason for Brancaleone's election, nor did he register surprise.¹⁵⁷ But Dupré Theseider's explanation, which is still the defining interpretation, needs to be reexamined, especially because more recent work has illuminated shifts in Roman society that might in that period have destabilized the city, prompting the call for an outside authority. The work of Sandro Carocci has shown that the period 1200-1250 was characterized less by

¹⁵⁴ "...Romani civitatem Tiburtinam miserabili exterminio vastarunt, propter civium insolentiam et superbiam, unde coacti sunt cives nudi, discalciati et vincti Romam adire, misericordiam pro vita optinenda petituri" Paris, *Chronica majora* 363.

¹⁵⁵ The text of the Rome-Tivoli treaty of 1254 is contained in a document from 1257. The senator Emanuele Maggi read the terms of the treaty before the senate: "homines Tiburis dabunt annuatim et in perpetuum comuni Urbis millenas libras provisinorum senatus vel decimam partem omnium proventuum comunis et hominum Tiboris quos habent et habebunt intus et extra civitatem Tiburis, iuxta formam tractatus facti tempore domni Branchaleonis." Cited from: Bartoloni, ed., *Codice diplomatico* doc.136, pp.217-8.

¹⁵⁶ Dupré Theseider explains the events as follows: "avrà avuto il solito andamento: qualche scontro per le strade, l'assalto al Campidoglio...qualche eccesso ai danni di nobili e di facoltosi cittadini, poi l'instaurazione di una qualsiasi forma di governo provvisorio, che, come su primo atto, decide la chiamata di un magistrato da porre a capo della città, perché prenda in mano le redini della popolazione e ne faccia un 'popolo,' come nelle altre città." Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 10. Maire Vigueur follows this description in his recent article on the Roman commune; Maire Vigueur, "Il comune romano," 142ff.

¹⁵⁷ Paris, *Chronica majora* 358.

conflict between elite and *popolo* than between elite families jockeying for position in the Roman social hierarchy. From 1230, one detects a growing distinction between the ultra-elite core of the most powerful families, and a large, but diminishing group of “senatorial aristocracy,” previously influential but now rapidly losing ground.¹⁵⁸ These families, such as the de Giudice, Subura, Obicioni, and Cenci, lost representation in the senate, while the “big” families, led by the Orsini, took over.¹⁵⁹ The declining families, the former leaders of the communal government, had an incentive to bring in a foreign senator known for his ideals of civic justice.

The same pattern of decline held true for second-tier Roman families serving as *podestà* in other communes: from 1200-1250, almost all of the 85 foreign *podestà* appointments were held by the senatorial aristocracy, and the baronial families were conspicuously absent from these lists.¹⁶⁰ By contrast, from 1251 to 1303, ultra-elite families had come to dominate: of 156 offices filled by Romans (147 *podestà* and 9 *capitani del popolo*), 90 were filled by only four families, the Annibaldi, Orsini, Colonna, and Savelli, only a half-century before nearly absent from the ranks.¹⁶¹ By 1250, the transition was nearly complete. The number of ultra-elite, or “baronial” families, as they came to be called, was extremely small, significantly smaller than in other Italian communes. These families’ control of the senate began in the period just preceding Brancalone’s election. The statistics again are illuminating: of 168 senators between 1230 and

¹⁵⁸ “Senatorial aristocracy” is the term often used to refer to the group of families most active in the senate during its ‘conciliar’ stage, that is, for the first fifty years of its existence before being reduced to a single appointment, though many of them also managed to procure appointments after this in the thirteenth century. They are defined by: 1) their high levels of involvement in communal government, and 2) their possession of seigneurial jurisdiction, particularly through the ownership of modest rural possessions. See Carocci, “Barone e podestà,” 857-8. For details about these families’ castral possessions, see Venditelli, “Mercanti romani.”

¹⁵⁹ The information and statistics in this analysis come from Carocci, “Una nobiltà bipartita.”

¹⁶⁰ Carocci, “Barone e podestà,” 857.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 861.

1347, 134 (or about four-fifths) of them belonged to only five families – the Orsini, Annibaldi, Colonna, Conti, and Savelli.¹⁶² It is therefore conceivable that Brancaleone’s election was a response to these seismic shifts in the Roman social hierarchy. In particular, the families losing control of the senate had incentive to challenge baronial monopoly of the senate by bringing in a foreign senator known for his commitment to communal ideals and fearless persecution of recalcitrant magnates. Dupré Theseider might have been correct that Brancaleone was brought to Rome to counter class tensions, but it is worth questioning whether the classes he specified—elite and *popolo*—are sufficiently accurate and specific. Perhaps we need to bring in new research, particularly regarding the bifurcation of the elite, to supplement, or reformulate, our understanding of Brancaleone’s senatorship.

What we know of the senatorship of Brancaleone degli Andalò depends heavily on the observations and conclusions of Matthew Paris. Like Otto of Freising and John of Salisbury, Matthew Paris was a foreigner, in this case, from England. He did not have a deep knowledge of Roman society or politics, and most of his descriptions and conclusions are thought to have been based on reports of others. Genuinely enthusiastic about Brancaleone, who seemingly could do little wrong, Matthew was won over by Brancaleone’s commitment to civic justice. Yet the chronicler displays little understanding of Roman politics, families, or the communal government that Brancaleone led. Meanwhile, Matthew’s positive enthusiasm for Brancaleone has perhaps produced a fairly one-dimensional portrait of the senator as the “hammer of the prideful and iniquitous.” While Brancaleone certainly did dedicate himself to communal development, a detailed and comprehensive analysis of his senatorship is yet to be written.

¹⁶² For this reason, the terms *barones* and *senatores* were often interchangeable in the documents and letters from the period.

John of Salisbury's and Otto of Freising's accounts of the *renovatio senatus* in 1143, and Matthew Paris' narration of Brancaleone's years as senator of Rome, are all colorful, insightful, and valuable sources for the study of the early commune. Yet some of their shortcomings—particularly the lack of a subtle understanding of Roman society and politics—continue to influence our understanding, and many unfounded assertions still remain unchallenged. While it is understandable that John and Otto viewed events as they did, they have encouraged us to exaggerate the ideological underpinnings of the *renovatio senatus* of 1143. And Paris, while extolling Brancaleone's fierce opposition to the Roman barons, was probably not aware of the complex local politics contributing to his actions. In addition, each chronicler harbored strong feelings for his subject, and both John and Otto were involved in Roman campaigns. These sources shed valuable light on the motivating forces of the early commune, but they need to be used cautiously lest we absorb too deeply their authors' prejudices.

Popular revolts in the wake of Brancaleone, 1258-1300

Before the end of the thirteenth century, Romans staged two more communal uprisings, both of which prioritized controlling the *distretto* and defending popular interests.¹⁶³ Compared to the *renovatio senatus* in 1143 or Brancaleone's senatorship beginning in 1252, however, these were comparatively modest in scope and effect. The first began with the interruption of the incipient senatorship of Charles of Anjou with the nominations in 1266 of the Roman Luca

¹⁶³ In addition to the popular rebellions of 1265 and 1284, some scholars have noted 1293-94 as significant years for popular rule. I have excluded the events of these final years from my analysis, since in my evaluation there was no clear popular initiative that can be determined. These years, in which the pope was away and Rome was without a senator, appear to better represent a period of anarchy than of popular government. For a description of the events, see Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 271-72.

Savelli and the Orvietan Corrado di Beltrame Monaldeschi as senators. While the double senatorship was by then standard procedure, the *popolo* usually had to fight to get a foreigner elected. Roman elites naturally opposed foreign senators since they coveted the position for themselves. The papacy, keen to maintain its own power to nominate senators, similarly resisted any movement towards popular election. The *popolo*, however, preferred foreign senators, perceiving that they were more likely than their native counterparts to enforce communal prerogatives and the equal application of law.¹⁶⁴ Monaldeschi's presence therefore signals popular initiative behind the 1265 government. Further, the commune rankled the papacy in that year by extending communal authority in the *distretto*, threatening church rights.¹⁶⁵ Attacking the elite families'—as well as the church's—seigniorial power base in the *distretto* and replacing it with communal authority was a constant aspiration of communal governments. Clement IV accused the two senators of acting like “predators and thieves” (“predoni e ladri”) in encouraging the looting of church property in the *distretto*.¹⁶⁶

Luca Savelli died in 1266 and Monaldeschi disappears from the documents without a trace.¹⁶⁷ Once again indicating popular initiative, Romans swiftly elected a single magistrate, the Roman Angelo Capocci, as *capitano del popolo*. The chronicler Saba Malaspina mentioned him only once, but depicted him as a noble

¹⁶⁴ Maire Vigueur has argued that the *popolo* usually preferred either a single senator (*summus senator*) or a foreigner. Brancaleone, a case in point, was both. With a high percentage of foreigner senators installed by the *popolo*, Maire Vigueur argues that they often applied centralized and rigorous systems of financial and regional control that benefited non-elites. Maire Vigueur, “Il comune romano,” 141.

¹⁶⁵ Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 141.

¹⁶⁶ Dupré Theseider explained that the senators might have initiated the attacks because the church had reneged on debts to the commune. He cites and apparently translates, but does not identify, a letter from Clement IV to a cardinal: “Ecco che Roma restituita alla sua libertà, si rivolta contro le sue proprie viscere e non vuol sapere della legge...Sono stati fatti due senatori: predoni e ladri, infuriano liberamente dentro e fuori di Roma. Infatti da essi veniamo tormentati, soprattutto a causa dei debiti, per i quali pignorammo i beni delle chiese.” Though it is questionable whether “predoni e ladri” modifies “senatori,” or if it is the subject of the following clause, the next sentence (“Infatti da essi...”) indicates that Clement was referring to the senators' pillaging. Ibid. 140.

¹⁶⁷ Dupré Theseider hazards that Monaldeschi renounced his position. Ibid. 142.

rabble-rouser stirring up the *popolo*.¹⁶⁸ Ruling in concert with the 26 *buonumini* (regional representatives) and the guild consuls, Capocci was asked to nominate a senator of his choice.¹⁶⁹ He chose the famed military commander, adventurer, and papal ally Henry of Castile, exiled from his native land after a failed conspiracy against his older brother, King Alfonso of Castile. Henry reassumed Brancaleone's old mantle, demanding obedience and tribute from Anagni, and even sending troops and heavy weaponry to an obstinate Corneto. And like Brancaleone, Henry aroused the indignation of the papacy, ever concerned with its influence in the provinces. While Henry completed his one-year term, Capocci left for unknown reasons after only a few months. Despite the shortage of documentation regarding them, Angelo Capocci and Henry of Castile evince the presence of significant popular initiative in the 1266-67 administration.

The final popular revolt of the thirteenth century, in January 1284, ended the nearly twenty-year senatorship of Charles of Anjou, bringing Angevin influence in Rome to a temporary halt. A popular insurrection in that year expelled the Angevin vice-senator, substituting the Roman Giovanni di Cencio Malabranca as *capitano del popolo*. As he was a brother of Cardinal Latino and an Orsini relative, some have suspected Orsini involvement in appointing Malabranca.¹⁷⁰ But Malabranca, according to Saba Malaspina, was a "miles," meaning of elevated, yet not baronial, social standing.¹⁷¹ Knighthood in this period was associated with

¹⁶⁸ "Sed dum quidam nobilis civis Romanus, Angelus Capucie nuncupatus, seditionem in Romano popolo suscitasset..." Walter Koller, ed., *Die Chronik des Saba Malaspina*, vol. 35, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1999) 184.

¹⁶⁹ Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, "Angelo Capocci," *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 18 (1960-): 588.

¹⁷⁰ Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 231.

¹⁷¹ "[Romani] quendam Iohannem Cintii Malabranche militem, civem Romanum, in eorum capitaneum erexerunt..." Koller, ed., *Die Chronik des Saba Malaspina* 353. Despite the considerable fluidity of honorifics at this time, a baron would probably have been identified in this period by "nobilis vir," or by the previously predominant "dominus," or even by "magnificus vir," which was just coming into sporadic usage in the 1270's. Carocci, "Una nobiltà bipartita," 78-81.

families basing their fortune and prestige on financial activities.¹⁷² The Cenci belonged to a group of families that lost their affluence after the 1230's as the Colonna, Orsini, and a few other Roman families began to amass larger fortunes.¹⁷³ Thus, while possibly cooperating with the Orsini, Giovanni di Cencio Malabranca could not have been on equal social footing with them.

While the Sicilian Vespers in 1282 probably helped to inspire the rebellion against the Angevin vicars in Rome, Saba Malaspina informs us that it was also motivated by a food shortage.¹⁷⁴ Within a few days of his appointment, pope Martin IV made Malabranca the “capitaneus super facto grassie,” or “captain of the grascia,” putting him in charge of provisioning foodstuffs, but also subjecting him to papal supervision. In his brief time as *capitano del popolo*, however, Malabranca “offended many Romans” by demolishing buildings “in pede mercati,” or near the markets at the foot of the Campidoglio.¹⁷⁵ Though the evidence offers little explanation of his actions, one possibility is that Malabranca found inspiration in Brancaleone's 1252 demolition of noble towers. In all, Malabranca's captaincy was short and the evidence that attests to it is paltry. Yet the incident reveals the *popolo* in action, removing the Angevin vice-regents, and appointing its own magistrate, the *capitano del popolo*, even in the face of papal and noble opposition.

These instances—1265 and 1284—in which the *popolo* succeeded in overturning noble claims to the senate, and in appointing a *capitano del popolo*,

¹⁷² Venditelli, "Mercanti romani," 110. Later Roman statutes prescribed both ancestral and monetary requirements for knightly status. A *miles* was either a son of a knight or of the class of knights (“*filius militis vel de genere militis*”) or someone who possessed more than 2,000 lire. Re, ed., *Statuti* II.47, p.108. More than 30,000 lire made a baron, and less than 2,000, a *pedes*.

¹⁷³ Other families in this category are the de Giudice, Subura, and Obicioni. Carocci, "Una nobiltà bipartita," 96-98.

¹⁷⁴ “...populus Romanus occasione grassie seu victualium caristie versus Capitolium contra Goffredum de Dracone vicarium regis in urbe...seditione facta impetuose procedunt...” Koller, ed., *Die Chronik des Saba Malaspina* 353.

¹⁷⁵ Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 232.

are the only two moments of popular rule in the latter half of the thirteenth century. Though infrequently successful, these regimes repeatedly pursued similar objectives: to control towns and villages in the *distretto*, to enforce law, and to curtail elite power, often by damaging their property. These goals had first been prioritized by Brancaleone, who appears to have been a model for many subsequent popular leaders. Unfortunately, the theoretical or ideological underpinnings of these revolts remain hazy to us. Though sources indicate that they were widely supported by the *popolo*, the lack of Roman testimony prevents us from knowing what Romans thought happened in those years, or what they would have liked to happen. The surviving sources leave indistinct to us the composition, political outlook, priorities, and values of the Roman *popolo*. They do, however, reveal that there were people in thirteenth-century Rome who continually opposed elite control of city government, who were aware of developments in other communes and eager to implement them in Rome, and who believed that it was right and/or possible for Rome to control its *distretto*. While the twelfth-century *renovatio senatus* awakened memories and myths about Rome's claim to empire, our thirteenth-century sources are silent about them. If they were indeed dormant, they had little time left to slumber.

CHAPTER 3

Widowed Rome: the contest over civic identity 1300-1345

The papacy's departure in 1304 sparked economic, social, and political crisis in Rome. Although often depicted as a nadir of Roman history, the early fourteenth century saw frequent political experimentation. Notable were several attempts at communal government, that, although short-lived, revealed some Romans' desire to build a society based on commerce and law. The weakness and brevity of these attempts, however, show that the Roman *popolo's* commitment to communal ideals was at best fragile. While this chapter explores the extent of communal ideals in Rome, it also shows the manifold implications for Roman politics and society of myths of empire. As during the twelfth-century *renovatio senatus*, the *popolo* after 1304 was increasingly receptive to political inspiration from the distant past, as many dreamed of an imminent *renovatio imperii* at Rome. Romans' claim to empire served numerous purposes: it conferred much-needed political relevance, while at the same time it smoothed deep social divisions by creating the illusion of a common cause. We will see that in several crucial moments, politically savvy Romans, and with increasing frequency Roman elites, used popular enthusiasm for empire to garner support for their causes. In external relations, meanwhile, Romans continued appealing to their mythologized past to apply pressure on popes and emperors. Unlike in the twelfth century, when claims to empire were used to advance communal aims, in the early fourteenth such claims were used more often by elites. Although receiving wide popular support, the fascination with myths of empire came to weaken the Roman *popolo* in its spasmodic struggle with the Roman nobility.

Rome the widow

When Pope Boniface VIII pronounced that 1300 would be a Jubilee year, streams of pilgrims flocked to Rome. With Jerusalem inaccessible after its 1244 capture by the Muslims, Rome appeared to have secured its place as the center of the Christian world.¹ Furthermore, the promotion of Roman relics such as the *Veronica*, and the promise of special papal indulgences, previously granted only to crusaders to the Holy Land, also contributed to a flowering of pilgrimage to Rome.²

Imagine, then, the shock and dismay that must have shaken Romans when the papacy departed for Avignon just a few years later, not to return for seventy-four years. Rome was transformed practically overnight from bustling capital to bestilled borough. The phrase “ubi papa ibi Roma”—where the pope is, there is Rome—laid bare the question for contemporary Romans: what was Rome without the papacy?³ While considerable tension often existed between city and papacy, Romans were also acutely aware that the papacy’s presence in their city conferred on them an authority – both spiritual and political – that they could not otherwise have claimed. In addition, since the papacy took with it the legions of officers and administrators who had run the papal, but also often the municipal, bureaucratic machinery, the city was left very suddenly to organize its own administration. This was made all the more difficult by the economic crisis sparked by lost jobs and the greatly reduced foreign visitors. At this point, Romans must have wondered about the future of their city. Many probably doubted that the papacy really planned to

¹ Debra J. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages: Continuity and Change, Studies in the history of medieval religion*, v. 13 (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1998) 199.

² Villani estimated the *Romipetae* at 200,000, William of Ventura, 2,000,000. William of Ventura, “Chronicon Astense,” in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, 11, ed. L.A. Muratori (Milan: 1727); Giovanni Villani, *Nuova cronica*, ed. Giuseppe Porta, 3 vols. (Parma: Fondazione Pietro Bembo, 1990-91) IX.36. For other estimates, both contemporary and modern, see Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome* 199-200.

³ Cited from Dupré Theseider, *I papi di Avignone* xxii.

stay in Avignon. After all, they were accustomed to an itinerant papacy that spent months, indeed years, away from the city.⁴ Many implored Pope Clement to return. Cardinals, for example, penned a letter reminding the pope of the spiritual significance of Rome and of the strength the papacy derived from residing there.⁵

If, for the time being, Rome could not be the center of Christendom, Romans needed to maintain the relevance of their city. In many ways, it was a question of economic survival, for the city depended on income derived from the pilgrims, lawyers, litigants, merchant-bankers, and many others flocking to the papal curia. Of these, only the pilgrims continued to come in significant numbers. As Richard Southern insightfully pointed out, the spiritual power of Rome could actually be stronger when the papacy was not there. Of the Roman tenth and eleventh centuries, Southern wrote, “[w]hen the machinery of government was simple or non-existent, these tangible agents of spiritual power [i.e. Christian relics] had an importance in public life which they lost in a more complicated age.”⁶ In my estimation, however, it is unlikely that the papacy’s departure in the fourteenth century significantly augmented Rome’s spiritual prestige. Martyrs’ blood was powerful, but so too was Rome’s growing reputation as a dangerous and lawless “den of thieves” (“spelunca latronum”), whose unrestrained nobility and continual political unrest put its visitors at considerable risk.⁷

⁴ Dupré Theseider called the idea that the popes resided in Rome a “fiction:” “Nel secolo XIII...[i papi] conducono una vita errabonda...risiedono un po’ dovunque, nelle varie città del Patrimonio ecclesiastico...” Eugenio Dupré Theseider, *I papi di Avignone e la questione romana* (Florence: 1939) xx. See also Sandro Carocci, ed., *Itineranza pontificia: la mobilità della curia papale nel Lazio (secc. XII-XIII)* (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per il medioevo, 2003).

⁵ Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 384.

⁶ R.W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (London: Hutchinson, 1953) 139.

⁷ Jeremiah 7:9-11. Matteo Villani offers a Florentine perspective from about 1360 on Rome’s perils: “I Romani, che già furono del mondo signori, e cche dierono le leggi e’ costumi a tutti, erano stati gran tempo senza ordine o forza di stato popolare, onde loro contado e distretto si potea dire una spilonca di ladroni, e gente disposta a mal fare.” Matteo Villani, *Cronica, con la continuazione di Filippo Villani*, ed. Giuseppe Porta, 2 vols. (Parma: Fondazione Pietro Bembo, 1995) IX.51. Villani pursued the *spelunca latronum* theme in IX.87.

Facing the necessity, or opportunity, to reevaluate Rome's civic identity, Romans had available to them several possible models—they could look to their recent past and run the city much as before, relying on the municipal councils and papally-appointed senate, and praying for a hasty papal return to supplement the otherwise lean governing apparatus. Or, they could look to their contemporaries and develop communal government, which had surfaced intermittently over the past century and a half. Or finally, they could appeal to their distant past and emphasize historical claims to empire, either by inviting the German king to return, or by electing their own emperor. Meanwhile, they did not entirely discard the idea of Rome as center of Christendom, but, faced with papal determination to remain in Avignon, they pursued other visions for the city's political future.

Although Roman merchants and educated elites pursued some communal reforms following the papacy's departure, the imperial ideal appears to have steadily gained purchase, eventually reaching a peak in the late 1320's with the arrival of the German king Louis the Bavarian at Rome's gates. In this period, the imperial myth helped to gloss over many deep divisions in Roman society, promoting instead the illusion that Romans were fighting to revive a glorious common past.

Attempts at communalism

By the early fourteenth century, the concept of the commune was no longer new to Romans. Roman communal memory stretched back almost two hundred years, to the twelfth-century beginnings that produced the *renovatio senatus* of 1143. As discussed earlier, the Bolognese senator, and later *capitano del popolo*, Brancaleone degli Andalò had, between 1252-1255 and 1257-1258, instituted in Rome the anti-magnate policies and legal frameworks that characterized other

contemporary Italian communes. Brancaleone marked a high point of Roman communalism, leading the only popular regime that attempted to curtail the Roman baronial families' rural power base.⁸ With his remains preserved in a Trastevere church, the *capitano del popolo* continued to engender admiration and respect among many Romans.

Roman experience of communal life was not limited, however, to experiments on their own soil. Over the thirteenth century, many Romans participated in the magisterial circuit that sustained the communal enterprise, serving as *podestà* and *capitani del popolo* in numerous northern and central communes. Contact with other popular governments fostered the growth of communal identity in Rome, resulting in, for example, the development of corporations such as guilds, and the compilation of written legislation.⁹ Although there is little documentary evidence to prove their hypotheses, some scholars have hypothesized that Romans began compiling series of communal laws as early as the late thirteenth century. They have based their argument on later Roman law codes, namely the 1363 Statutes, that cite earlier compilations of communal laws.¹⁰

While the communal model was present and occasionally pursued, Romans after the papacy departed also began to appeal frequently to the idea of Rome as empire. Of the five major insurrections between 1300 and 1345 (1305, 1312, 1327-28, 1338-39, and 1342), two, or arguably three, aimed to institute communal government.¹¹ Two others, while also enjoying substantial popular support, aspired

⁸ Sandro Carocci, "Comuni, nobiltà e papato nel Lazio," *Magnati e popolani nell'Italia comunale: Atti del XV convegno internazionale* (Pistoia, 1995): 238.

⁹ For a detailed study of medieval Roman guilds, see Lori Sanfilippo, *La Roma dei romani*.

¹⁰ Antonio Rota, "Il codice degli 'Statuta Urbis' del 1305 e i caratteri politici delle sue riforme," *Archivio della Società romana di storia patria* 70 (1947): 149. Carocci, "Una nobiltà bipartita," 92-95.

¹¹ The popular revolts of 1305 and 1338-39 instituted communal reforms. We know less about 1342, but signs point to communal priorities. Each of these cases will be discussed further in the chapter.

to re-establish Rome as the center of empire.¹² Despite the great span of elapsed time and much-altered historical reality, the empire continued to color the Roman political imagination. Rome's former pre-eminence engendered pride, and some Romans were never far from believing that a *renovatio imperii* was possible. This belief shaped their relationship with the German empire, and convinced them of their relevance on the contemporary political stage. While this perception was certainly illusory, it influenced the political decisions that Romans made in the early fourteenth century, a period in which many myths of the imperial past floated to the surface of the Roman political imaginary.

Myths

Medieval Romans had long been cultivating myths about their city's origins. Illustrative is the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*, a twelfth-century guide for travelers and pilgrims to Rome.¹³ Little is known about Benedict, the *Mirabilia's* supposed author, except that he was likely a canon at St. Peter's, and that he thirsted for Roman history.¹⁴ His modest book enjoyed a wide audience, dominating the Rome travel guide market from the twelfth through fifteenth centuries.¹⁵ The text begins by recounting a foundation story of the city in which the first settler was Noah. His descendents built the city of Janiculum on what became the Palatine Hill. Next was Saturnus, founding the city of Saturnia on the Capitoline Hill. Bit by bit, displaced kings and peoples wandered in, settled, and

¹² These were 1312 and 1327-28. I have excluded mention of 1318, occasionally noted in scholarship as a popular revolt, since evidence is meager, its duration was short, and repercussions minute.

¹³ The standard English translation is Francis Morgan Nichols, ed., *The Marvels of Rome (Mirabilia Urbis Romae)*, 2nd ed. (New York: Italica Press, 1986). The Latin text, with extensive commentary, is found in R. Valentini and G. Zucchetti, eds., *Codice topografico della città di Roma*, 4 vols., *Fonti per la Storia d'Italia* (Rome: 1940-53) v.3.

¹⁴ Louis Marie Olivier Duchesne, "L'auteur des *Mirabilia*," *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'École française de Rome* 24 (1904). See also M.R. James, "Magister Gregorius de *Mirabilibus Urbis Romae*," *English Historical Review* 32 (1917).

¹⁵ Nichols, ed., *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* xv.

established their own cities. Among these were King Italus of the Syracusans, Hercules and the Argives, Tibris, king of the Aborigines, Evander, king of Arcadia, Coribas and the Sicanians, Glaucus, Roma, the daughter of Aeneas, and Aventinus Silvius, king of the Albans. Then, 433 years after Troy's destruction, the Trojan king Priam fathered Romulus, who at the age of twenty-two, enclosed the myriad cities within one wall and after himself called that city Rome.¹⁶

The *Mirabilia's* account of the foundation of Rome mixes mythological figures, such as Saturn, with others such as Aeneas and Priam who bridge the divide between myth and history. Medieval travelers learned Rome's earliest history as a cloudy potion of ascertainable facts and impossible feats. Even in this account, however, Rome's foundation is linked to the fates of kings and empires. By illustrating how earliest Rome was the depository of the dying embers of numerous peoples, the author of the *Mirabilia* emphasized Rome's inheritance of their collective political authority. In addition, by recounting the many kings and peoples who came to populate the region, the *Mirabilia* emphasized the ethnic heterogeneity of early Rome. This image would likely have resonated among medieval travelers who witnessed that Rome was home to a variety of populations including merchants and traders from other Italian cities and abroad, members of the papal curia, foreign dignitaries, and streams of litigants, pilgrims and curiosity-seekers from many parts of the known world.¹⁷ When Jewish Iberian traveler Benjamin of Tudela passed through Rome in 1169, he noted the "honorable position" of the city's Jewish population, as well as the "wonderful buildings"

¹⁶ Ibid. 3-4.

¹⁷ For the English community in Rome, see: Margaret Harvey, *The English in Rome 1362-1420: portrait of an expatriate community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). For other foreign residents, see: Esposito, "Pellegrini, stranieri, curiali ed ebrei."

speckling the urban fabric, “different from all other buildings in the world.”¹⁸ In addition to Rome’s exceptionalism, the wandering rabbi also noted the imprint left on the city by a multitude of kings and emperors.¹⁹ The combination of quasi-mythic origins and a population born from the miscegenation of great but dying Mediterranean cultures bolstered the idea of the exceptional destiny of Rome. This notion of exceptionalism would come to guide many of the major fourteenth century political decisions.

The *Mirabilia* so highlights the city’s ancient past that it at times seems to gloss over the Christian city. Although the text clearly reflects its author’s Christian outlook, the reader is guided from ancient tomb to temple with little regard for the medieval churches between them. Christian monuments are often named only to identify the location of the ancient ruin of interest, as when the author writes: “The Church of Sant’Urso was Nero’s Chancery...By San Salvatore, before Santa Maria in Aquiro, [are] the Temple of Aelian Hadrian, and the Arch of Pity...”²⁰ Thus it appears that some medieval pilgrims to Rome brought with them an avid interest not just in the Christian city, but in the ancient and mythological pagan city as well.

¹⁸ “ויש שם בנינים הרבה ומעשים משונים מכל בנינים שבעולם.” All translations from the Hebrew are my own. Marcus Nathan Adler, ed., *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Critical Text, Translation, and Commentary* (London: Oxford University Press, 1907). Adler’s 1907 edition contains a translation of Benjamin’s account. A more recent edition supplements this standard translation with a new commentary. See Michael A. Signer, Marcus N. Adler, and A. Asher, eds., *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Travels in the Middle Ages* (Joseph Simon, 1983).

¹⁹ “Rome is the head of the kingdoms of Christendom, and there live about 200 Jews, who are respected and who pay no tax to anyone...There are many wonderful structures in the city, different from any others in the world...there are eighty palaces belonging to eighty kings called *imperator* who lived in Rome, ranging from King Tarquinius until Nero and Tiberius, who lived in the time of Jesus the Nazarene, ending with Pepin...In Rome there is a cave which runs underground, and in it are King Tarmal Galsin and the queen his wife, seated upon their thrones, and with them about a hundred royal officials, all of them embalmed and preserved to this day.” Adler, ed., *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela* 63-64. According to Anna Esposito, Benjamin’s “200 Jews” indicated only the heads of families. The total Jewish population would therefore have been much larger. Esposito, “Pellegrini, stranieri, curiali ed ebrei,” 234.

²⁰ Nichols, ed., *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* 37-38.

The association of “Rome” with “empire” was first revived in the ninth century when Charlemagne began the custom of journeying to Rome to be crowned by the pope in St. Peter’s Basilica. Although it was the pope who granted or withheld the crown, Romans played an important symbolic role as a consenting body. This arrangement derived from ancient Roman rituals, in which representatives of the citizenry had appeared at imperial coronation ceremonies to perform a symbolic political exchange: the Roman *plebs* supported the new emperor’s claims to legitimacy, while he sustained the image of their political relevance. Medieval German kings, by traveling the long road to Rome, symbolically upheld the political relevance of contemporary Rome and maintained its fictive connection to empire. The exchange benefited both parties.

With the great weight of the past and the prestige of being the center of the Christian empire, the symbolic power of Rome became so great that, in the words of Charles T. Davis, “If Rome no longer ruled the world, it was still essential that he who wished to rule the world should rule Rome.”²¹ At certain moments, such as the *renovatio senatus* of 1143, the memory of empire had been briefly resuscitated. In the fourteenth century, Romans’ political decisions reveal their eagerness to once again revive it. This was especially so in 1313 and 1327, when German kings appeared outside Rome’s gates hoping to be crowned. The departure of the papacy sparked a crisis of identity that sent Romans in search of their political roots, causing several ensuing political insurrections to aim at reviving Rome’s claim to empire. Gathering support in the early fourteenth century, the imperial ideal would culminate with the 1347 tribunate of Cola di Rienzo.

That a city as small and unstable as fourteenth-century Rome aimed to don the vestments of empire might seem absurd, even comic. We can perhaps better

²¹ Charles Till Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957) 10.

understand it by clarifying what they envisioned. In his classic study of Rome in the memory and imagination of the Middle Ages, Arturo Graf noted an important distinction between the ancient and medieval concepts of empire.²² In the Middle Ages, he argued, the idea of empire acquired a moral function that had not been a defining characteristic in ancient thought. For ancient Romans, the *imperium Romanorum* consisted of the conquered provinces, and the assembly of all the peoples subjected to Roman rule. “Conquest,” he wrote, “was its foundation and its right; power, opulence, and glory were its guises and its principal moments.”²³ Even if philosophers or poets occasionally alluded to higher missions the Empire was destined to fulfill, Graf argued that these ideas were not common currency.²⁴ The objectives of the ancient empire were thus fulfilled when its armies had conquered and Roman law was imposed. The medieval empire, according to Graf, transcended worldly ends. Its mission was to extend the rule of God’s law, to make of its citizens an assembly of God’s people. The emperor and pope were its two guides, vicars of God inheriting their powers from Caesar and Peter.²⁵ The emperor too, then, was in a sense a pastor of souls.

The spiritualization of empire is attested to by the mystical aura surrounding the German king Henry VII when he trekked to Italy in 1312. Henry was greeted by many Italians, not least by Dante, as a savior come to rescue Italy from the ravages of war and time. Dante had lamented Rome’s loss of empire, and

²² Arturo Graf, *Roma nella memoria e nelle immaginazioni del medio evo: con un'appendice sulla leggenda di Gog e Magog* (Turin: Loescher, 1882. Reprint 1987).

²³ “La conquista era il suo principio e il suo diritto; la forza, l’opulenza, la gloria erano gli aspetti e i momenti suoi principali.” Ibid. 705.

²⁴ Graf cites as an exception Virgil, who reminded Roman citizens of the mission entrusted to them of bringing peace, justice and Roman ways to the world: “Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento/ Haec tibi erunt artes; pacisque imponere morem/ Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos...” *Aeneid*, I.6, vv.852-54, cited from Graf, *Roma nella memoria*, 705, n.37.

²⁵ Dante wrote of the dual power of pope and emperor in a letter to the princes and people of Italy, “...a quo velut a puncto bifurcatur Petri Caesarisque potestas.” Cited from Graf, *Roma nella memoria* 707-8.

saw in Henry's visit an opportunity to set things aright. In the *Divine Comedy*, he depicted the city as dejected and spiritually lost:

Come and see your Rome who cries
A widow and alone, and day and night calls out:
"My emperor, why are you not with me?"

Vieni a veder la tua Roma che piagne
Vedova e sola, e dí e notte chiama:
"Cesare mio, perché non m'accompagne?"²⁶

The distinction between the ancient and medieval concept of empire explains how Romans, living among the ruins of their past, could believe that, phoenix-like, a Roman empire could rise anew on its throne of old. The papacy had already demonstrated that the ancient instruments of persuasion – the armed legions, the complex and finely-tuned cadres of trained administrators and bureaucrats – were no longer essential, that complex political structures could be maintained without vast armies.

In the pope-less fourteenth century, Romans expressed their desire to renew their imperial mission by repeatedly entreating the German king to return to Rome. They were not, therefore, proposing to establish a new political entity, so much as to transfer the medieval empire back to its natural home. At mid-century, Cola di Rienzo would have more ambitious plans for the imperial ideal, but until then Romans appear to have espoused the simpler idea of transferring the German emperor back to Rome. Conceived in this way, the idea of a new Roman empire rebuilt on the foundations of the past was not at all inconceivable.

Despite the enthusiasm for the imperial model that flickered throughout the Roman Middle Ages, the relationship between the medieval city and the German empire was not without its strains. One major point of contention was Romans'

²⁶ My translation. Alighieri, *La divina commedia: Purgatorio* VI 112-14.

assertion that they possessed the right to appoint the emperor. This resonated with fourteenth-century conciliarists such as Marsilius of Padua and William of Ockham, who were then debating the origins of the seven imperial electors' authority. Though Marsilius thought their authority to elect the emperor should derive from a "supreme legislator," consisting either of the whole (*universitas*) or part (*valentior pars*) of the empire's citizens, Ockham claimed that the inhabitants of the city of Rome should be the sole representatives.²⁷

Romans, for whom the issue was not new, derived the concept of their authority from the ancient *lex de imperio principis*, the law conferring imperial authority and legislative power on the *princeps*.²⁸ The original *lex* was modified in the late first century A.D. as the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*, in which the Roman senate and people (*senatus populusque romanus*) granted supreme power to the emperor to make treaties, call senate meetings, propose candidates for magistracies, extend the *pomoerium*, and declare edicts.²⁹ Medieval Romans exaggerated the original meanings of the *lex* to claim their right to approve the emperor, and even to select him.³⁰ Although rarely given an opportunity to employ the *lex*, this rarely prevented them from threatening to try. The *lex*'s altered meaning was incorporated into the mythologized vision of the Roman past.

²⁷ Robert Folz, *L'idée d'empire en Occident du Ve au XIVe siècle* (Paris: Aubier, 1953) 158. Folz, in chapter 12 of this work, offers a useful synopsis of the fourteenth-century attempts to resuscitate a universal Roman empire.

²⁸ "...cum ipse imperator per legem imperium accipiat," Gaius I.5. Cited from George Long, "Lex Regia," in *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, ed. William Smith (London: John Murray, 1875), 697.

²⁹ A large fragment of the *lex de imperio Vespasiani* survives, now housed in the Capitoline Museum. Recent studies of the *lex de imperio* include: Peter A. Brunt, "Lex de imperio Vespasiani," *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1972): 95-116. Michael Crawford, *Roman Statutes*, 2 vols. (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1996) II:549-50. François Hurlet, "La *Lex de imperio Vespasiani* et la légitimité augustéenne," *Latomus* 55 (1992).

³⁰ For example, in 1305, when Romans threatened that if the pope refused to return to Rome, they would elect an emperor to reside there.

With serious controversies surrounding imperial elections in the fourteenth century, the issue of the Roman *popolo*'s rights in imperial elections became a juristic hot topic.³¹ Judges and lawyers in Italy debated whether the ancient Romans had granted power to the emperors in perpetuity (*translatio*), or whether the concession of power (*concessio*) had been merely temporary.³² Many jurists hazarded hypotheses. Bartolus of Sassoferrato, for example, claimed that the Roman people had originally granted a temporary *concessio*, but that so much time had passed that they eventually forfeited their ancient right. His student Baldo degli Ubaldi, on the other hand, believed that Romans had granted sovereignty only temporarily, and that they could revoke it at will.³³ Ultimately, Cola di Rienzo would dream of a *renovatio imperii*, a reborn Roman empire that would incorporate the Italian city-states. In his "Italian Plan," enumerated in letters to cities all over Italy, Cola claimed for Rome and Italy the right to appoint the emperor.³⁴ His brash maneuvering was derided by Cino of Pistoia, a jurist and a teacher to both Bartolus and Petrarch, who responded that "In these matters you may believe whatever most pleases you, because I do not care. For if the Roman people should in fact make a law or custom [or attempt to revoke their grant of the empire], I know that it would not be heeded outside of the city."³⁵

Even if they were not always taken seriously, Romans' careful preservation of their imperial memory provided lustre to a tarnished present. Medieval Rome was obviously much smaller and far less wealthy than its ancient ancestor, and its

³¹ Civil war broke out, for example, when Louis of Bavaria's 1314 election was challenged by the rival claimant Frederick the Fair, who had received two of the seven electoral votes. John XXII declared the election void, but was ignored.

³² Collins, *Greater than Emperor*. Collins analyzes at length Cola di Rienzo's usage of the *lex de imperio*. See especially pp. 41-47.

³³ *Ibid.* 46.

³⁴ The impressive response that he received is detailed in Ettore Mazzali, ed., *Anonimo Romano. Cronica: vita di Cola di Rienzo* (Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1999) 216-20. See also Musto, *Apocalypse in Rome* 160-65.

³⁵ Cited from Carrie E. Benes, "Cola di Rienzo and the *Lex Regia*," *Viator* 30 (1999): 249.

political ambitions naturally far less broad. The memory of distant but glorious origins offered prestige, fostering hopes that Rome would someday rise again. So political upheavals were often explained using a rhetoric of imperial revival. For example, when communal officials wrote to king Conrad III following the *renovatio senatus* of 1143, they asked him to return to Rome, because they desired “...to exalt and amplify the Roman kingdom and empire...to that state in which it was in the time of Constantine and of Justinian...”³⁶ The Roman letter reveals the perception that a Roman kingdom (*regnum*) or empire (*imperium*) already existed, only needing to be increased, or augmented, to restore it to its former greatness. The belief in Rome’s latent authority imbued city politics with consequence and magnitude.

Though the myth of empire was certainly, in some ways, a Roman fantasy, it was also part of a deliberate political strategy, used as bait for those vulnerable to its charms. Communal officials, as we have seen, played up the imperial myth to persuade German emperors to comply with their desires. In this manner, Charles Davis has claimed that the “strategic position” that the name ‘Rome’ offered was used as a weapon with which to develop communal government and to manipulate popes and emperors.³⁷ Both church and empire desired to rule Rome, and the competition between them gave Romans the opportunity to play them off one another. Both entities, moreover, had some claim to Rome’s history, and both tried to use it to full advantage.

While the memory of a celebrated past provided some positive comforts, it also generated a nostalgic melancholy that often left visitors to the city marveling

³⁶ The translation is mine. Latin text cited in Chapter 2, n.79

³⁷ “The citizens of the municipality itself used the name ‘Rome’ and the strategic position it gave them as weapons in the battle to form a commune, break the grip of the surrounding territorial lords, and obtain material advantages from popes and emperors.” Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome* 34.

at the cruel ravages of time. The Carolingian scholar Alcuin expressed a common sentiment when he wrote of Rome:

Rome, capital and ornament of the world, golden Rome,
Now so much cruel ruin is left to you...

Roma, caput mundi, mundi decus, aurea Roma,
Nunc remanet tantum saeva ruina tibi...³⁸

Centuries later, Petrarch in a letter to his friend Giovanni Colonna expressed his humbled awe at seeing the Roman ruins: “I now marvel not that the world was conquered by this city, but that it was conquered so late.” (“Iam non orbem ab hac urbe domitum, sed tam sero domitum miror”).³⁹ Among medieval visitors, the remains of empire engendered both solace and regret.

The myth of empire was greatly aided by the presence of tumbled ruins in every part of the city. These ruins contoured the Roman landscape and reminded visitors of the city’s former power. Their visual impact was so powerful that many medieval visitors seem to have hardly noticed the living city around them. Most medieval travelers commented almost exclusively on Rome’s crumbling monuments and fallen obelisks, symbols of a great but fallen power, rather than on the realities of medieval Roman city life. Perhaps an exception, Benjamin of Tudela closely observed the city’s Jewish population, naming its most prominent members and commenting on its relations with the papacy and Roman citizenry. Yet even his commentary is dominated by descriptions of history, ruins, and statuary. Calling attention to a powerful symbol of passing time, for example, he marveled at piles of bones near the Colosseum. “There were battles fought [in the

³⁸ My translation. Citation from Paul Hetherington, *Medieval Rome: A Portrait of the City and its Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994) 33.

³⁹ Petrarch, *Rerum Familiarum* II.14, cited from Emilio Bigi, ed., *Opere di Francesco Petrarca*, 2nd ed. (Milan: Ugo Mursia, 1964) 724. Petrarch also lamented the condition of the medieval city, writing, “the queen of nations has sunk into abject misery.” Cosenza, ed., *The Revolution of Cola di Rienzo* 110.

Colosseum] in olden times, and in the palace more than 100,000 men were slain, and there their bones remain piled up to the present day.”⁴⁰

While visiting Rome during the Jubilee of 1300, the Florentine chronicler Giovanni Villani noted how the city’s ancient ruins and eloquent histories had inspired him to write a history of his own city:

And finding myself on that blessed pilgrimage in the holy city of Rome, seeing her great and ancient objects, and reading the histories and the great deeds of the Romans, written by Virgil and Sallust and Lucan, and Orosius and Valerius and Livy, and other master historians who wrote both of the minutia and of the greatness of the acts and deeds of Romans, and still more of other peoples of the whole world, to pass on memory and example to those yet to come, I took my style and form from them, as if as such a diminutive disciple I were not worthy of undertaking such a task.

E trovandomi io in quello benedetto pellegrinaggio ne la santa città di Roma, veggendo le grandi e antiche cose di quella, e leggendo le storie e’ grandi fatti de’ Romani, scritti per Virgilio, e per Salustio, e Lucano, e Paolo Orosio, e Valerio, e Tito Livio, e altri maestri d’istorie, li quali così le piccole cose come le grandi de le geste e fatti de’ Romani scrissono, e eziandio degli strani dell’universo mondo, per dare memoria e esemplo a quelli che sono a venire presi lo stile e forma da lloro, tutto sì come piccolo discepolo non fossi degno a tanta opera fare.⁴¹

Villani’s language in this passage is worth noting. When describing his experience, his first phrases are replete with Christian terminology. “Benedetto pellegrinaggio” and “la santa città di Roma” emphasize the spiritual nature of his experience. Even the opening line of the passage “e trovandomi io” echoes Dante’s initiation into his spiritual pilgrimage “...mi ritrovai in una selv’oscura...” thus perhaps offering the impression that he, like Dante, was on a kind of pilgrimage of which he was not entirely in control. Very quickly, though, Villani abandoned his Christian spiritual

⁴⁰ Signer, Adler, and Asher, eds., *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela* 64.

⁴¹ All translations of Giovanni Villani are mine. Villani, *Nuova cronica* IX.36.

language for the “grandi e antiche cose” of Rome. Perhaps he was referring to churches? Probably not, as in the next phrase he turned his attention to “le storie e’ grandi fatti de’ Romani,” the distinctly unspiritual world of deed, action, and worldly history. Thus it was Rome’s past, the accumulation of literature and history that most impressed Villani. His fixation on “grandi fatti,” and “geste” illustrates the past’s living presence in Rome. Finally, however, ruminating on Rome’s great monuments led Villani to ponder the world of written history, the “maestri d’istorie,” and it was this that most greatly impressed him.

Giovanni da Ignano and the communal government of 1305

The Rome that Villani viewed in 1300, however, would soon be dramatically changed. Pope Benedict XI’s death in July 1304 initiated a lengthy vacancy of the papal throne, followed by the election of the French Pope Clement V and the subsequent departure of the papal court to Avignon. In Rome, changes came swiftly. Taking advantage of the papal absence, a popular revolt in December 1304 expelled the noble, papally-appointed Orsini and Savelli senators. The following month, the senate dispatched a delegation to Bologna to recruit a *capitano del popolo*.⁴² Bologna had long cultivated a reputation for producing skilled magistrates specialized in serving in communal governments.⁴³ Surviving evidence unfortunately does not clarify who initiated this movement, but the revival of the *capitano del popolo* reflects popular initiative. Only twice before had

⁴² According to the Bolognetta chronicle, which is one of four original Bolognese chronicles, the delegation was in search of “uno sufficiente homo per capitano del povolo de Roma.” “Corpus chronicorum bononiensium,” in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, ed. L.A. Muratori (Milan: 1727). See also the document “Atti della elezione di Giovanni da Ignano a capitano del popolo di Roma,” appended to G. Cencetti, “Giovanni da Ignano 'capitaneus populi et urbis romae,’” *Archivio della Società romana di storia patria* 63 (1940): 164-71.

⁴³ Perugia, for example, declared in 1256 that their *podestà* should come from “Lumbardia et spetialiter de civitate Bononie.” Cencetti, “Giovanni da Ignano,” 158-59, n.2.

the Romans elected a *capitano del popolo*: Angelo Capocci in 1267, and his predecessor Brancaleone in 1252, who had pursued a stringent anti-magnate policy and promoted municipal law-making.⁴⁴ In addition, the names of the delegates indicate popular influence: headed by Matteo d'Angelo, then the syndic of Rome, the others were Giovanni Montanario, Angelo di Giovanni, Prete de Prehynis, Giovanni Mathei, and Giovanni Tignoso, and the scribasenatus (senatorial scribe) Paolo di Lorenzo.⁴⁵ No nobles here.

The Bolognese council elected in early January 1305 the financially successful and politically active Giovanni da Ignano. Despite having just commenced a captainship in Milan, he accepted the post at Rome “with due reverence and good cheer” (“cum debita reverencia et yllaritate”).⁴⁶ Two weeks later he was back in Bologna readying himself for the position. By February 1, he had arrived in Rome.

Giovanni da Ignano's origins and outlook would probably have been familiar to the few Romans still living who could remember the former Bolognese captain Brancaleone. Like Brancaleone, Giovanni hailed from a modestly wealthy Bolognese family. While Brancaleone came from a family of jurists, many of Giovanni's relatives were well-known merchants who had frequently participated in Bologna's communal government. And like Brancaleone, Giovanni became an outspoken advocate of anti-magnate policies, drawing him into the political sphere of communes such as Florence. During the 1280's, for example, he initiated his political career by promoting anti-magnate legislation in Bologna,⁴⁷ while also

⁴⁴ Salimei, *Senatori e statuti* 81.

⁴⁵ Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 386.

⁴⁶ Cencetti, "Giovanni da Ignano," 153, n.1.

⁴⁷ Gina Fasoli and Pietro Sella, eds., *Statuti di Bologna dell'anno 1288*, vol. 1 (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1937-39) 415-6. Augusto Gaudenzi, ed., *Statuti del popolo di Bologna del secolo XIII: gli ordinamenti sacrali e sacratissimi colle riformazioni da loro occasionate e dipendenti ed altri provvedimenti affini* (Bologna: F.lli Merlani, 1888) 242-43.

supporting a Bolognese White alliance with the Florentine party. He was involved in creating the League of the Romagna, which solidified ties between Whites and Ghibellines, and supported exiled Florentines.⁴⁸ Elected *podestà* of Ancona in 1302, he served then as *capitano del popolo* in 1305, first briefly in Milan, then Rome, where he continued to pursue communal reforms and defend popular interests.⁴⁹

Wanting as usual to appoint a foreign senator, the Roman *popolo* also dispatched a delegation to Milan.⁵⁰ They found Paganino di Mosca della Torre, a member of the ruling Guelf house of the Della Torre. Like Giovanni da Ignano, Paganino boasted a history of communal service. He had served as *podestà* of Sacile (near Treviso), Aquileia, and Como, and, like Giovanni, he was educated in law and involved in legislative reforms. Following his senatorial term, he would serve on the board of jurists revising the Milanese statutes.⁵¹ In Rome, it is thought that both Paganino della Torre and Giovanni da Ignano were involved in creating a new set of communal statutes.⁵²

Paganino della Torre served as senator beginning in April 1305 for a one-year period. As a foreigner, and as *summus senator*, his political status was unusual for Rome. Since Innocent III, the senate had been dominated by the city's most powerful families, and foreigners only rarely attained the post. Brancaleone had been one exception, though, and between 1266 and 1284, the post was offered in perpetuity to king Charles of Anjou. Instead of with a co-senator, della Torre governed with a *capitano del popolo*, Giovanni da Ignano, who had preceded him

⁴⁸ Cencetti, "Giovanni da Ignano," 147-51.

⁴⁹ Bolognese citizens served regularly as magistrates in Ancona, most recently in 1292 and 1300. Ibid.: 150, n.1.

⁵⁰ As described by Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 387ff.

⁵¹ G.L. Fantoni, "Pagano della Torre," *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 37 (1960-): 641-43.

⁵² Rota, "Il codice degli 'Statuta Urbis' del 1305," 147-62.

in office by several months. His delayed appointment might have been intentional, for it would have made him dependent on the more experienced *capitano*. It is nonetheless likely that Paganino della Torre found his powers more restricted than was usual for a senator.

The popular government of 1305—including the senator and the *capitano del popolo*, together with the judiciary, the major and minor councils, and the thirteen *anziani* (neighborhood representatives)—survived for the better part of a year. Its existence reveals that some Romans wanted communal government, and were knowledgeable about how it should function. The Romans organizing the 1305 delegation hired officials competent in law, known for anti-Black Guelf policies, and who would not shrink from dealing with Roman nobles. With a dual magistracy at its head, flanked by councils, and pursuing anti-magnate legislation, the government of 1305 was the closest approximation of the northern communal model that Romans achieved in the fourteenth century.

One reputed incident that raises some questions about the aims of the 1305 government was the arrival in Avignon in December 1305 of a group of ambassadors from Rome and Tuscany. A Catalan informant to King Jaume II of Aragon, Dinus Silvestri, wrote in his report:

...from Rome and Tuscany ambassadors came to the Holy Father to say to him that he should go to Rome, to the papal see, and that he should hold court there. And if he did not want to do it, those Romans would make an emperor.

...de Roma e de Toscana venen enbaxadors al sant pare, per dir a el, que deia anar a Roma, a la sua sedia, et que tangra aqui cort. E se non vol fer, quels Romans faran emperador.⁵³

Dupré Theseider characterized the description of the event as “tutt’altro che ufficiale,” but asserted that the king of Aragon’s informants were usually accurate

⁵³ My translation. Heinrich Finke, ed., *Acta Aragonensia*, Reprint of 1908 ed., 3 vols. (Basel: Verlag, 1968) 511-12.

in their reports.⁵⁴ In the absence of names, however, we cannot ascertain for certain whether the ambassadors represented private interest or a government. If private interest, then whose? If public, was it a Tuscan, Roman, or perhaps a joint initiative? And why? The papal court had been absent from Rome for less than a year and a half when the delegation arrived. One possible explanation, if the Romans were indeed behind it, is that Giovanni da Ignano had in mind the model of his much-admired predecessor Brancaleone, who had also begun his term during a papal absence and had forcefully encouraged the pope to return. Or, the delegation might have intended to publicize the assertiveness of popular government before the nobles at the Avignon court. Such rhetorical grandstanding might have kept the Roman *popolo* feeling politically relevant. The alleged inherited right to approve the emperor, after all the *rex romanorum*, was one of the *popolo*'s few political assets. In other words, it is possible that a delegation threatened the pope to win the ear, and the obedience, of those hostile to the popular government at home. Empty threats, but not idle!

Little has been made of the delegation's comprising both Romans and Tuscans. Like Romans, many Tuscans also wanted the papacy to return to Rome, or at least Italy. Dino Compagni, for example, noted with surprise that Clement V chose to be consecrated at Lyons rather than return to Rome. God's wrath at the abandonment of Rome was revealed during the consecration, when a wall collapsed under a crowd of spectators, killing a cardinal and the pope's brother, and knocking Clement from his horse such that "the crown fell from his head."⁵⁵

⁵⁴ "...la notizia ha carattere tutt'altro che ufficiale, e potremmo anche trascurarla come una semplice diceria. Ma gli informatori del re d'Aragona lavorano in genere con accuratezza, e proprio una simile notizia era fatta per attirare l'attenzione. Insomma, crediamo che essa risponda al vero..." Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 389.

⁵⁵ Daniel E. Bornstein, ed., *Dino Compagni's Chronicle of Florence* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1986) 75.

Yet Clement earned a positive reputation among some when in the summer of 1305 he tried to reconcile Tuscan Blacks and Whites, even supporting the Ghibellines and Whites against the Black Guelf regimes controlling Florence, Lucca, and Siena.⁵⁶ Tuscan Whites, out of power and offered papal support, would have had ample reason to want Clement to return.

Many Tuscans might also have had economic incentives for wanting the papacy to return. Although Romans had once been the primary papal bankers, by 1250 they were eclipsed by Sienese, then by Florentine banking companies.⁵⁷ With branches in numerous realms, the large Florentine banks made the transfer of money across borders efficient and safe.⁵⁸ But Avignon was far from Florence, and communication not always easy. Other dominant trades, such as silk and wool-working, lost one of their major markets.

Although documentation is scarce, and most of it from Bolognese rather than Roman sources, it is profitable to try to identify the supporters of the Roman communal government of 1305. As stated before, we know from their names that the delegation arriving in Bologna in January 1305 was made up of *popolani*. The form of government that they chose, a pair of foreign magistrates heading councils and boards of jurists, mirrors other communal structures. Although the senate was particular to Rome, Paganino della Torre's duties as head of the judiciary and the city administration made him nearly identical to other cities' *podestà*.

⁵⁶ Holmes attributed Clement's support of the Whites to the influence of cardinals Napoleone Orsini and Niccolò da Prato, both among the pope's principal advocates during his election. George Holmes, *Florence, Rome, and the Origins of the Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) 188.

⁵⁷ Carocci and Venditelli, "Società ed economia (1050-1420)," 87. Venditelli, "Mercanti romani," 91-92. See also P.J. Jones, "Economia e società nell'Italia medievale: la leggenda della borghesia," in *Storia d'Italia, Annali 1: Dal feudalismo al capitalismo* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1978), esp. 208ff. and Raymond De Roover, *The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank* (New York: Norton & Co., 1966) 2-3.

⁵⁸ Bernard Guillemain, *I papi di Avignone, 1309-1376*, trans. Bruno Pistocchi, Italian ed. (Milan: San Paolo, 2003) 50-51.

Also indicating the new government's popular provenance is that the two noble senators ruling in 1304, Luca de' Savelli and Gentile Orsini, were likely forced from office. Although one record claims they resigned, senators rarely did so voluntarily, and it seems little coincidence that an organized popular government followed on their heels of their departure.⁵⁹ Revealing their resentment, moreover, the two ex-senators took part in plots against the new government.⁶⁰ They were probably joined in their bitterness by other noble families resisting curtailment of their traditional powers. When the one-year term of the senator and *capitano del popolo* expired, Clement quickly returned to the old system of two noble senators, Gentile Orsini and Stefano Colonna.⁶¹ All clues—sending a delegation of *popolani* to Bologna, pursuing anti-magnate policies, and resistance from nobles—point to a 1305 administration supported by the middle, and possibly lower, tiers of Roman society.

One final clue lies in the legislation issued by the 1305 government. Although they survive only in fragments, most scholars believe that the Statutes of 1305 served as the foundation for a later 1363 redaction.⁶² It was common for popular governments to favor the codification and enforcement of written law. In his article on the 1305 Statutes, Antonio Rota claimed that Giovanni da Ignano's regime promoted the codification of a new set of statutes.⁶³ Both in form and content, these statutes mirrored other communal legislation. Rationally ordered into books and chapters, they gave preference to communal authority over private

⁵⁹ "Senatores Urbis...resignarunt officium suum." Relatio de...papa capto et liberato, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, XXVIII, p.625.

⁶⁰ Pflugk-Hartung, *Iter Italicum* (Stuttgart: Verlag von W. Kohlhammer, 1883) 593.

⁶¹ Clement V numbered among his principal supporters cardinal Napoleone Orsini, a distant uncle of senator Gentile Orsini. Possibly a favor to Napoleone, reinstating Gentile as senator would also have maintained the prominence of papal supporters in Rome.

⁶² Re, ed., *Statuti*.

⁶³ Rota, "Il codice degli 'Statuta Urbis' del 1305," 148.

privilege. According to Rota, though, Romans by 1305 were already familiar with this type of communal legislation. He argued that the 1305 statutes re-elaborated preexisting anti-magnate legislation, some of which might have dated as far back as the late twelfth century.⁶⁴ In her recent study of Cola di Rienzo, Amanda Collins claims to have discovered previously unnoted references to civic statutes from 1279, 1317, 1338-41, and 1359. This would seem to lend nice support to Rota's hypothesis.⁶⁵

The 1305 Statutes can help illuminate the priorities of the Roman government of that year. Like many collections of communal law, the 1305 Statutes contain a list of noble families⁶⁶ required to swear the *sequimentum*,⁶⁶ an oath of loyalty to the commune. Entitled "de sacramento nobilium virorum Urbis," the statute forbade specific families from receiving suspects, murderers, counterfeiters, deceivers, or banned or infamous persons in their homes or castles.⁶⁷ The statute listed the ten noble families required to swear the *sequimentum*: the Orsini and Colonna (always first in line), the Sant'Eustachio, Normanni, Romani, Savelli, Poli, Capocci, Boccamazza, and Caetani. At the same

⁶⁴ Ibid.: esp. 149. Maire Vigueur and Brentano support his argument: Brentano, *Rome Before Avignon*, Maire Vigueur, "Il comune romano." Agostino Paravicini-Bagliani, on the other hand, rejects the manuscript as the work of a sixteenth-century forger. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, "Alfonso Ceccarelli, gli 'Statuta Urbis' del 1305 e la famiglia Boccamazza. A proposito del codice vat. Lat. 14064," in *Xenia Medii Aevi historiam illustrantia oblata Thomae Kaeppli O.P.* (Rome: 1978). Giorgio Cencetti traces the influence only as far back as Brancalone: Cencetti, "Giovanni da Ignano," 161.

⁶⁵ For 1279, Collins refers her readers to *BAV*, Vat. Lat. 7931, f.163r-v. Unfortunately, her reasoning eludes me at present, since that document contains no clear reference to 1279. While the manuscript does refer to the *statuta Urbis*, it dates to 1308, not 1279, and therefore, it probably referred to the 1305 statutes. One should therefore probably regard the matter as still undecided. For 1317, 1338-41, and 1359, Collins refers to the statutes of the merchant guild: Giuseppe Gatti, ed., *Statuti dei mercanti di Roma* (Rome: Tip. della Pace di Filippo Cuggiani, 1885) xxv-xxxix. See Collins, *Greater than Emperor* 168, n.95.

⁶⁶ The *iuramentum sequimenti* was the oath sworn by nobles affirming loyalty to the commune's authority. They swore not to shelter or aid any enemy of the commune. The 1305 Statutes specify that the oaths be taken during a general council session, with both senator and *capitano del popolo* present. Rota, "Il codice degli 'Statuta Urbis' del 1305," 156.

⁶⁷ "Item statuimus et ordinamus quod omnes...teneantur iurare in Concilio generali coram Senatore et D. Capitano, non receptare aliquos diffidatos, homicidas, falsarios, fallutos et banditos aut infames personas in domibus et fortelitiis eorum..." Cited from Ibid.: 160-61.

time, the Anguillara, Annibaldi, and perhaps the Stefaneschi, families we might have expected to appear, do not.⁶⁸ The penalty for infraction was one thousand silver marks to be paid to the city treasury. The Roman anti-magnate provisions appear milder than in other communes since they did not prohibit elites from holding public office. As compared to Florence, for example, whose Ordinances of Justice originally listed thirty-eight magnate families, and seventy-two under Giano della Bella in 1293, in Rome the list of ten was comparatively small. Still, the recognition that elites posed a distinct threat suggests that the government headed by Giovanni da Ignano and Paganino della Torre possessed objectives and values like those of many other popular governments.

Although we have little concrete evidence, the supporters of this movement must have been the *popolo*, especially its more privileged and educated strata, those learned in law or medicine, or wealthy bankers or merchants. Having traveled in Italy and perhaps abroad for education or business, many would have been exposed to communal ideals. In addition, they would have been warm to the ideals of communal government, which offered social and economic safeguards. The anonymous Roman *popolano* who later chronicled the tribunate of Cola di Rienzo was precisely this type: a physician born in Rome but educated in Bologna. The chronicle attests to its author's interest in and knowledge of other Italian cities, not to mention distant Spain and Turkey. While it would be unreasonable to expect all Romans of his ilk to be as well-educated and well-traveled (after all, only one chronicle from the period has survived), most were probably familiar with other communal governments, and may have aspired to similar conditions at Rome.

⁶⁸ The reference to the Poli was probably meant to include the Conti who, though unnamed, took over the Poli estates during Innocent III's pontificate. Strange, though, that they should not be named. The Annibaldi, absent from this statute, appeared in its 1363 revision, while the Boccamazza dropped off. Facing texts of the relevant clause in the 1305 and 1363 Statutes are found in *Ibid.*: 160-62.

These conditions, after all, facilitated trade and learning, and perhaps more importantly, they reined in the nobility, their greatest obstacle to social and economic advancement.

Roman empire restored? Henry VII and the Arlotti regime of 1312

From the communal model of 1305, we move quickly into a period starkly different, as visiting German kings fanned old memories and dreams of empire. The six years following Giovanni da Ignano's popular regime saw a succession of noble senators, many appointed by Clement V from distant Avignon. But the arrival of the German king Henry VII in Rome in late spring 1312 sent out ripples of violence and political instability. Giovanni Villani described the city as torn in two:

...[The Guelf forces] captured the towers and fortresses at the foot of the Campidoglio above the market, and fortified the Castle of Hadrian, called Sant' Angelo, and the church and palaces of Saint Peter's; in that way they had more than half of Rome, and the more populated part and all of Trastevere under their force and dominion.

...[I guelfi] presono le torri e fortezze a piè di Campidoglio sopra la Mercatantia, e fornirono Castello Adriano detto Santagnolo, e la chiesa e' palagi di San Piero; e così più della metade di Roma e la meglio popolata e tutto Trastevere ebbono per forza e signoria.⁶⁹

The traditionally pro-papal Orsini recruited support from Guelf allies all over Italy, with Florence, Lucca, and Siena all sending military aid.⁷⁰ By occupying Saint Peter's and Castel Sant'Angelo, the Guelf troops blocked the city from the northwest, so that Henry could not reach St. Peter's, the traditional site of coronation ceremonies. He was instead forced with his army to enter from the

⁶⁹ Villani, *Nuova cronica* X.39.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

northeast, following a route held open by their Colonna allies and Ludwig of Savoy, the popularly-elected Roman senator since 1310.⁷¹ Hacking his way through Rome's streets, Henry managed only to make it to the Basilica of St. John Lateran, a Colonna stronghold. When he eventually gave up trying to reach St. Peter's, the bishop of Ostia crowned him, contrary to custom, in St. John Lateran.⁷²

The city that Henry left behind was "barred up and in bad condition, and each side kept its quarters fortified and supplied." ("imbarrata e in male stato, e ciascuna parte tenea le sue contrade afforzate e guernite.")⁷³ Yet in the wake of considerable violence, Rome was also rediscovering the value of peace. Months after Henry's coronation, a marriage between the Colonna and Orsini solidified their reconciliation. The senatorship, moreover, empty during Henry's visit, was jointly reassumed by the Orsini and Colonna, as Francesco di Matteo del Monte Orsini and Sciarra Colonna agreed to rule together in a civil, law-abiding manner ("civili more").⁷⁴ The nobility was pacified, in one historian's estimation, by the alarming vigor of popular violence surrounding the imperial visit.⁷⁵

The peace proved temporary, followed a few months later by a violent insurrection against the Colonna and Orsini senators. Just as the 1305 popular government had been established soon after the papacy left for Avignon, the 1312

⁷¹ In 1310, Pope Clement V granted Romans the right to elect their senators. Addressing his letter to "consulibus bovacteriorum et mercatorum, collegio iudicum et notariorum, consulibus artium, tredecim bonis viris electis per singulas regiones et populo romano," the letter read "Duximus vobis...concedendum...quod vos...a kalendis madii proximo secuturis usque ad annum completum senatorem vel senatores, capitaneum seu capitaneos quoscumque et undecumque volueritis eligere...valeatis." Quoted from: Alain De Bøiard, "Il partito popolare e il governo di Roma nel medioevo," *Archivio della Società romana di storia patria* 34 (1911): 498, n.1.

⁷² Villani gives a detailed account: Villani, *Nuova cronica* X.43. See also: Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter* 299-303; William M. Bowsky, *Henry VII in Italy: the conflict of empire and city-state* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1960) 155-70.

⁷³ Villani, *Nuova cronica* X.43.

⁷⁴ Albertino Mussato, "De gestis Henrici VII caesaris," in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, 10, ed. L.A. Muratori (Milan: 1727), 507.

⁷⁵ Ferdinand Gregorovius, *History of the City of Rome in the Middle Ages*, trans. Annie Hamilton (London: G. Bell, 1894) VI.1, p.72.

revolt followed in the wake of the German emperor's departure. A commission of twenty-six *buonumini* was "specifically delegated to reform the city" ("ad reformationem Urbis specialiter deputati"), and soon elected a new *capitano del popolo*, the noble Iacopo Arlotti degli Stefaneschi. A papal letter indicates that Iacopo Arlotti was also senator, thus holding, like Brancaleone, the two highest magisterial posts.⁷⁶

Although noble, the Arlotti degli Stefaneschi were not of baronial stature.⁷⁷ The Stefaneschi line to which Iacopo Arlotti belonged was "of decidedly less importance" than the main branch, making his social peers not the Colonna and Orsini, but rather other "second-tier" families such as the Boccamazza, Capocci, and Normanni.⁷⁸ Arlotti's more modest family origins might explain his dedicated pursuit of restricting baronial power. One of his first acts was to summon noble representatives to the Campidoglio, compelling them to swear the *sequimenta*, or oath of obedience, to the commune. He then banished three Orsini, three Colonna, two Savelli, and an Annibaldi from the city, forbidding them to leave their country estates on pain of death.⁷⁹ The Annibaldi, though not listed among the noble families in the 1305 Statutes, were evidently powerful enough to be singled out by Arlotti.

⁷⁶ "Clemens episcopus etc. Dilecto filio nobili viro Iacobo quondam Iohannis Arlocti, Senatori et Capiteo Urbis, salutem etc." Augustin Theiner, ed., *Codex diplomaticus domini temporalis Sanctae Sedis*, 3 vols. (Rome: Imprimerie du Vatican, 1861) I, doc.633, p.469.

⁷⁷ One indication of this is that the Stefaneschi obtained far fewer senatorships than the baronial families. Further, between 1191 and 1293, the Stefaneschi did not appear on the senatorial roster even once. See Salimei, *Senatori e statuti*.

⁷⁸ "...una famiglia del tutto autonoma, ma di rilievo decisamente inferiore a quella originaria." Carocci, *Baroni di Roma* 423.

⁷⁹ Mussato identified the banned persons as: Gentile Poncello Orsini, Ponceletto Mattei del Monte Orsini, and the recently deposed senator Francesco del Monte Orsini; Stefano Colonna, Sciarra Colonna, and Giordano Agapito Colonna; Giovanni Savelli and Pietro Savelli; and Annibaldo Annibaldi. Mussato, "De gestis Henrici VII caesaris," 508.

Arlotti's assaults on towers and noble fortifications have convinced some scholars that he took Brancaleone as a model.⁸⁰ The comparison was not lost on contemporaries either: Albertino Mussato wrote that Arlotti was even more zealous than Brancaleone in tearing down palaces, columns, sanctuaries, and baths.⁸¹ In the first months of his rule, he targeted much of the city's distinctive architecture. Areas of the Campidoglio, for instance, and the Torre Monzone near the Ponte Santa Maria (now the Ponte Rotto), were torn to pieces "by the fury of the *popolo*" ("sub plebis furore"). In Trastevere, the *popolo* assaulted the Orsini's Castel Sant'Angelo, the Tiber island, and other ancient *mirabilia*. Though without articulating why or in what spirit, Mussato reported that they even got hold of Brancaleone's remains.⁸² Like his predecessor, however, Arlotti quickly gained a reputation for strident anti-magnate principles.

Arlotti's favorable attitude towards Henry VII earned him the enmity of the Orsini and their allies, and also associated his government with Ghibelline policy. He even, according to Mussato, asked Henry to return the seat of empire to Rome.⁸³ That Roman popular governments often favored the empire has been interpreted as an expression of their Ghibelline political leanings. G. Cencetti, for example, argued for the "Ghibelline character of the Roman *popolo*'s political program" ("carattere ghibellineggiante dell'azione politica del 'populus'

⁸⁰ "Another Brancaleone had risen; and it is probable enough that the new Captain of the people took the celebrated Senator as his model." Gregorovius, *History of the City of Rome in the Middle Ages* VI, pt.1, pp.74-75.

⁸¹ "[Arlotti] ut si quidem Branchaleonem Bononiensem, qui Regum ac Ducum per tot ab Urbe condita secula palatia, thermas, fana, columnas verterat in ruinas, ipse memorabilior superaret, ad demolienda eminentia quaeque nova ac vetera insurrexit." Mussato, "De gestis Henrici VII caesaris," 508.

⁸² "Demoliendaeque sic erant Branchaleonis reliquiae excelsaque Castrum Sancti Angeli, insulae, et singula quaeque mirabilia in Urbis antiquae deformitatem, ipsorum contemptu magnatum, in quos et illi animadvertendum erat captatis qualitercumque causis, dum sola tribunitia, exterminatis patribus, potestas adolevisset illo sub magistratu." Ibid.

⁸³ "...omnia haec parari Caesari, ipsum evocandum in Urbem, vehendumque triumphaliter in Capitolium, principatum ab sola plebe recogniturum." Ibid.

romano”).⁸⁴ While it is true that the popular leaders Brancaleone, Giovanni da Ignano, and Iacopo Arlotti all appear to have harbored private sympathy for the Ghibelline cause, their governments did not generally pursue a unilateral Ghibelline policy, and Brancaleone, and possibly Giovanni da Ignano, also encouraged the papacy to return. Cencetti’s argument, I think, depicts these governments as too firmly ideological. In doing so, he overlooks the role of strategic posturing.

Cencetti also noted, however, that the *popolo*’s Ghibelline tendencies swelled over the first half of the fourteenth century.⁸⁵ This is an important observation that has received little attention. Cencetti attributed these tendencies to internal political alignments: nobles, receiving their privileges from the papacy, were naturally pro-Guelf, making the *popolo* Ghibelline.⁸⁶ Yet this, in addition to oversimplifying the political orientation of both elite and *popolo*, fails to explain the sudden change in the early fourteenth century. In my analysis, the Roman *popolo* was never firmly Guelf or Ghibelline, and its political decisions cannot be interpreted through the prism of ideology. Though many Romans coveted the prestige of a resident emperor, they simultaneously, and without perceiving any contradiction, wanted the pope to return.

What, then, caused Romans in the early fourteenth century to pursue, with increasing enthusiasm, not only an imperial return, but also to restore their role in imperial elections and coronations? The loss of the papacy, and the prestige and income derived from it, was surely a major influence. Accustomed to being in the spotlight, Romans needed to restore their city’s image. Playing up their

⁸⁴ Cencetti, "Giovanni da Ignano," 163.

⁸⁵ "...carattere [ghibellino] che sarà sempre più evidente e profondo poco più tardi nell’opera di Iacopo Arlotti e di Sciarra Colonna e poi ancora in quella di Cola di Rienzo." Ibid.

⁸⁶ "...a Roma i baroni e i comuni del Patrimonio, che le loro giurisdizioni derivano dal pontefice, sono naturalmente guelfi, e il comune dovrebbe professarsi ghibellino." Ibid.: 156.

connections to the German empire conferred relevance and maintained their status as an important political player. But to justify their contemporary connection to the empire, Romans had to go back in time, resuscitating memories of empire before the *translatio imperii*, and creating a mythology of their political past. Internal politics also helped heighten Romans' enthusiasm for empire, though not in the way that Cencetti described. We shall see later on how Romans began to use the myth of empire as a lever in internal socio-political struggles, as both *popolo* and elite, to gather support for their initiatives, appealed to the city's mythologized past.

Romans seldom hesitated to admit their lack of party allegiance. An Aragonese informant to King Jaume II recorded a conversation between the Roman cardinal Napoleone Orsini and John XXII, who charged the cardinal and his compatriots with Ghibellinism. Orsini denied the claim, stating that, moreover, he didn't even understand the difference between the two parties. Romans had many friends, he explained, and supported them whether Guelf or Ghibelline. Finally, he said, a true Roman ("verus Romanus") could not be found who was thoroughly Guelf or Ghibelline ("vere Guelfus nec Gebellinus").⁸⁷

Like most previous popular leaders, Arlotti continued expanding Rome's dominion over rival towns in the *distretto*, often at the expense of Roman noble families.⁸⁸ His main achievement was the November 1312 submission of Velletri, by tradition a politically neutral town southeast of Rome. Initially enthusiastic

⁸⁷ Dated 7 February 1324. "Vere pater sancte, nec sum Gebellinus nec Guelfus, nec bene intelligo, quid est dictum per Guelfum et Gebellinum, set vellem bonam pacem et concordiam. Et hoc reputarem esse ad honorem vestrum et ecclesie...Romani habent multas inimicicias et amicicias et iuvant se de amicis suis, sive sint Guelfi sive Gebellini. Iuvant etiam et dilligunt suos amicos, quicunque sint, set non invenietis, quod aliquis verus Romanus sit vere Guelfus nec Gebellinus." Finke, ed., *Acta Aragonensia* II, 615-16.

⁸⁸ The Roman militia around 1312 besieged Montalto, an Orsini lordship since 1309. Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 424.

about its new status that spared it from imminent Annibaldi lordship, Velletri received favorable economic conditions, in particular an exemption from the salt tax and the *grascia*.⁸⁹ Over the next fifty years though, Velletri would fight sporadically, though in vain, to win back its autonomy.⁹⁰

In contrast to Brancaleone, Iacopo Arlotti seems to have enjoyed the papacy's full support. In a letter of 10 February 1313, just two weeks after warning the Roman militia to steer clear of his possessions in the Patrimony, Clement V revealed that city officials had sought formal confirmation of Arlotti's election.⁹¹ After a lengthy praise of the benefits of peace and stability, Clement affirmed the legitimacy of Arlotti's popular election, confirmed his one-year term, and entreated the nobility to submit to him.⁹² Circulated to the noble families, the twenty-six *buonumini*, the major council,⁹³ and the senate and people, the letter displayed the papacy's hopes that Arlotti would bring stability to the city. The letter had little effect, however, arriving in Rome in late February 1313, just after Arlotti was deposed by a noble coup.

The Arlotti regime is not very well-understood. Many scholars have dismissed it as ephemeral, claiming it had little influence on later events. Others have disregarded it since it left a documentary trail so thin that its achievements or

⁸⁹ Ibid. 425.

⁹⁰ G. Falco, "Il comune di Velletri nel medioevo (sec. XI-XIV)," *Archivio della Società romana di storia patria* 36 (1913).

⁹¹ "Verum prefati populus in huiusmodi Senatorie ac Capitaneatus officio auctoritatis nostre fulciri munimine cupientes, nobis per easdem litteras humiliter supplicarunt, ut electionem huiusmodi dignaremur de prefate sedis benignitate solita confirmare" Theiner, ed., *Codex diplomaticus* I, doc.633, p.469.

⁹² "Quare nobilitatem tuam rogamus et hortamur attentius, per apostolica tibi scripta mandantes, quatenus huiusmodi regimen sic laudabiliter et solícite prosequaris, quod dicte Urbis status et populus quietis optate commodis perfruantur, tuque proinde nostram et dicte sedis benedictionem et gratiam merearis" Ibid.

⁹³ The major council was comprised of the consuls of the guilds and 104 regional representatives (8 for each of the city's 13 *rioni*). Gregorovius, *History of the City of Rome in the Middle Ages* VI, pt.1, p.77.

failures cannot be validated.⁹⁴ Indeed, we are once again faced with a discouraging dearth of sources: Albertino Mussato's *Historia augusta*, a handful of letters from Clement V, and a few documents in the archives of Velletri.⁹⁵ Fortunately, however, the documentary evidence was about to get much richer.

Past becomes present: a Roman imperial coronation

As when Henry VII arrived in 1312, political turmoil erupted in 1327 around the impending appearance at Rome of yet another imperial claimant. For fourteen years, the city had been under the relatively placid rule of Robert of Anjou.⁹⁶ Always the allies of Naples, in city politics the Orsini had the upper hand. But as the German king Louis of Bavaria headed towards Rome with a trail of troops, Romans feared repeating the unpleasant events of Henry VII's coronation. To endow the *popolo* with a leader, a faction installed Sciarra Colonna, a fervent supporter of the emperor, as *capitano del popolo*.

Sciarra was by 1327 already a well-known figure in Rome. He had participated in the Colonna intrigues against Boniface VIII in 1302, and though probably not involved in the 1297 plot to loot the papal treasury, he was punished alongside his kin by the angry pope, who in retaliation confiscated Colonna property and rights.⁹⁷ Among his contacts in 1303 was the French royal counselor

⁹⁴ Maire Vigueur, in his article on the Roman commune, mentions Arlotti as leading one of the five popular rebellions of the early fourteenth century, but does not delve substantially into Arlotti's regime. Sandro Carocci states only that Arlotti, after being nominated *capitano* and senator by an insurgent Roman *popolo*, pursued an anti-magnate political platform during his few months in office. Carocci, *Baroni di Roma* 423ff; Maire Vigueur, "Il comune romano," 142, 143.

⁹⁵ Gregorovius mentions a document in "L. cardinali autonom. di Velletri nel secolo XIV," *Atti della società letteraria di Volsca*, 1839, iii. 245. Gregorovius, *History of the City of Rome in the Middle Ages* VI, pt.1, p.78. Velletri city statutes reveal some conditions of the subjugation to Rome, such as the Roman right to name the *podestà*, and the obligation to send participants to the annual Roman games.

⁹⁶ A minor rebellion in 1318 while Robert was distracted by war with Genoa had few long-term repercussions.

⁹⁷ Villani is the only source claiming Sciarra's involvement in that plot: "E in questo avvenne che Sciarra de la Colonna loro nipote, vegnendo al mutare della corte di...a le some degli arnesi e tesoro de la Chiesa, le rubò e prese..." Villani, *Nuova cronica* IX.21. Waley has deemed Villani's account almost

Guillaume de Nogaret, who wanted to try Boniface before a general council. When later that year the pope was attacked in Anagni, Sciarra was one of the principal protagonists.⁹⁸ As part of a peace treaty after Henry of Luxembourg left Rome, Sciarra was made senator in 1312, together with Francesco del Monte Orsini, immediately prior to the captaincy of Iacopo Arlotti.⁹⁹ Like many Colonna, Sciarra was widely known for being an outspoken Ghibelline. Colonna loyalties to the empire were in 1315 reinforced when Louis of Bavaria conceded them numerous privileges such as minting coins and appointing notaries.¹⁰⁰ Despite cardinal Orsini's claim that no true Roman was strictly Guelf or Ghibelline, Sciarra became nearly completely identified with the imperial cause. He helped the banished Ghibelline faction in its 1320 struggle to retake Guelf-dominated Rieti.¹⁰¹ And, as *capitano del popolo*, he proved Louis' greatest advocate when the German king arrived at Rome.

We know more about Sciarra, and the socio-political climate in which he lived, than about his predecessors. This is primarily due to one of the most important documents of Roman medieval history, an anonymously-written chronicle spanning the years 1327 to 1354.¹⁰² While often called "The Life of Cola di Rienzo" because one of its four books describes that charismatic leader's life, the chronicle also covers the years before Cola's 1347 rise. The author, called "Anonimo romano" in the literature, wrote the chronicle between 1357 and 1358 in

certainly inaccurate. Daniel Philip Waley, "Giacomo, detto Sciarra, Colonna," *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 27 (1960-): 314.

⁹⁸ Villani, *Nuova cronica* IX.63.

⁹⁹ "Creati senatores Franciscus Matthei a Monte pro Ursinorum parte; Pro Columnensium vero Jacobus de Sarra Joannis de Columna..." Mussato, "De gestis Henrici VII caesaris," 507.

¹⁰⁰ Waley, "Sciarra Colonna," 315.

¹⁰¹ Villani, *Nuova cronica* X.125.

¹⁰² John Wright, ed., *The Life of Cola de Rienzo* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1975).

Romanesco dialect, updating it slightly in 1360 or soon thereafter.¹⁰³ Describing himself as “in the tenderness of youth” (“in tanta tenerezza de etate”) during the armed conflicts of 1325, the author was probably born in Rome between 1315 and 1320.¹⁰⁴ He studied medicine at Bologna, was well-read in classical literature and history, and was well-versed in political affairs both at home and abroad. Like Giovanni Villani, he organized his descriptions of events chronologically into chapters, and attempted to record the important events of his time. His attentions ranged from the communes of central Italy to as far away as Hungary and Turkey. The Anonimo romano’s chronicle is an important source, both for its narrative of the city’s history during an otherwise obscure period, and for its revelation of the political, social, and cultural perceptions of an educated and well-born, though not noble, Roman.

The chronicle describes in detail the battle of late September 1327 that erupted as Louis the Bavarian headed towards Rome. John XXII and his ally Robert of Anjou¹⁰⁵ had sent soldiers to prevent the German king from being crowned. Romans divided into camps: on the papal side were “all the Orsini barons, and many others’ (“tutti li baroni de casa Orsina....e moiti atri”).¹⁰⁶ On the papal side, the chronicler wrote:

¹⁰³ A recent edition of the Cronica offers a general introduction: Anonimo romano, *Cronica, Vita di Cola di Rienzo*, ed. Ettore Mazzali, 2nd ed. (Milan: Rizzoli, 1999) 4-40. Unless otherwise noted (by the different title), however, my references to the Anonimo’s text use Giuseppe Porta’s definitive edition: Anonimo romano, *Cronica*, ed. Giuseppe Porta (Milan: Adelphi, 1981). For more background on the Roma chronicler, see Gustav Seibt, *Anonimo romano. Scrivere la storia alle soglie del Rinascimento*, trans. Cristina Colotto and Roberto Delle Donne (Rome: Viella, 2000) 21-32.

¹⁰⁴ Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.2, p.9.

¹⁰⁵ Pope John in 1313 granted Robert of Anjou the senatorship *ad beneplacitum*. Although he ruled almost entirely through viceroys, Robert’s senatorship lasted nearly without interruption until late 1327, when Louis of Bavaria’s arrival occasioned a popular uprising, bringing an end to his command. Salimei, *Senatori e statuti* 96-100.

¹⁰⁶ According to Anonimo romano, John XXII and Robert of Anjou counted among their most influential supporters cardinal Napoleone Orsini, Bertoldo di Francesco del Monte Orsini (the nephew of the legate), Poncello Orsini, Andrea di Campo di Fiore, and anomalously, Stefano Colonna. Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.3, p.10. See also Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 459.

Romans, seeming to shield themselves well, prepared by making as *capitano del popolo* a most valiant Colonna baron—Sciarra was his name—who was along the most learned and wise in war of his time.

Romani, in semmiante de fare buono scudo, se ‘nantipararo e fecero capitano dello puopolo uno vertuosissimo barone de casa della Colonna – Sciarra fu sio nome – lo quale fu delli più dotti e savii de guerra che in quello tiempo fussi.¹⁰⁷

The chronicler called “romani” all those supporting Sciarra’s captaincy. To which Romans was he referring? Since they elected the *capitano del popolo*, it appears he used “romani” to connote a popular constituency. While the nobility were certainly technically Romans, he usually identified them by house (“de casa Orsina,” “casa della Colonna”) rather than by citizenship.¹⁰⁸ Elite families often owned estates in the *distretto*, were often identified by those locations instead, such as the Orsini da Marino, or the Colonna da Genazzano. The *romani*, on the other hand, were those who did not, and probably could not, frequently leave the city. The chronicler’s description thus suggests that Sciarra Colonna enjoyed broad support from the Roman *popolo*.

The Anonimo romano’s description displayed his admiration for the nobility’s great expertise in conducting war. He described, for example, the assembly of noble cavalry as “very beautiful and well-arrayed” (“moito bella e bene acconcia”).¹⁰⁹ Sciarra Colonna, moreover, he depicted as a skilled military commander. At the same time, Sciarra also came across as a capable administrator,

¹⁰⁷ All translations of the Anonimo romano, unless otherwise noted, are mine. Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.3, p.10.

¹⁰⁸ Citizenship was granted to foreign-born persons through “*littere civilitatis*,” the earliest surviving example dating from 1341. P. Savignoni, “Un documento di cittadinanza romana nel medioevo,” *Archivio della Società romana di storia patria* 17 (1894): 522. The 1363 Statutes required a foreigner to own and live in a house in Rome for at least three years, and own a vineyard within three miles of the city, before being granted citizenship. “...nullus forensis habens privilegium citadantie habeatur et reputetur pro cive seu gaudere possit privilegio civium Romanorum nisi habeat domum vel vineam, videlicet, domum in Urbe et vineam prope Romam per tria miliaria et habitet per tres annos in Urbe cum sua familia.” Re, ed., *Statuti* III.142, p.274.

¹⁰⁹ Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.3, p.10.

for as soon as he was elected captain Sciarra “put the *popolo* in order and appointed twenty-five *caporioni*,” all of them Romans (“ordinao lo puopolo e fece caporioni...tutti romani”).¹¹⁰ He also appointed constables (*conestavili*), ensured the city gates were guarded, employed spies, and “often held council” (“spesso faceva parlamento”).¹¹¹ When the city wall was damaged by the papal legate and his Angevin allies,¹¹² Sciarra, to inspire the *popolo*, delivered a rousing speech: unless they defended their city, he warned, invading troops would lop off the breasts of their women.¹¹³ The Anonimo warmly described Sciarra’s conduct, admiring him both for his military skill, and his willingness to work through communal institutions.

When composing his account of Sciarra in the 1327 conflicts, the Anonimo romano relied on memory. He affirmed, after all, that the events occurred when he was a tender youth, and yet he only began writing in 1357, a full thirty years later. Taking this into account, we see that in writing of the 1327 battle, the chronicler employed certain techniques both to remember what happened and to recount the events. Immediately noticeable are the visual and aural qualities of his memory. “The Roman *popolo*,” he wrote, “moved back and forth like a wave in the sea” (Lo puopolo de Roma vao ‘nanti e reto como onna de mare”).¹¹⁴ To convey the atmosphere of battle, he frequently incorporated not just sights but also sounds: “The whole area was covered with armed men. Great were the sounds of trumpets

¹¹⁰ The *caporioni*, or *capi dei rioni*, were neighborhood representatives.

¹¹¹ “Fare parlamento” meant to hold a council, connoting negotiation. Ettore Mazzali claims this was a common literary usage in classical texts. Anonimo romano, *Cronica, Vita di Cola di Rienzo* 295, n.15.

¹¹² The papal legate was cardinal Giovanni Gaetani Orsini, acting in concert with the brother of Robert of Anjou, John of Gravigny, the duke of Durazzo.

¹¹³ “Lo buono capitano parlao e disse ca venuti erano per entrare in Roma, per mozzare le zinne [mammelle] delli pietti delle donne de Roma.” Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.3, p.11.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. ch.3, p.12.

and horns, castanets and shawms” (“Tutto era coperto de iente armata. Bene sonavano tromme e trommette, naccari e cerammelle”).

The battle appears to have affected the Anonimo romano so greatly that his description betrays an emotional insistence, a need to tell:

So many were the dead bodies strewn about naked that one cannot express it. Throughout the whole piazza of Castel Sant’Angelo up to Saint Peter’s, from Santa Maria in Traspontina, from piazza Santo Spirito, in every portico, to the Armenian piazza, on every street they were lying like seeds,¹¹⁵ planted, cut up, naked, and dead...For many days after, men were found dead amidst the vineyards, armed, in sheds and in cavities of trees, those who had been injured in the multitude. On the way their spirits had forsaken them.

Tante fuoro le corpora morte che nude iacevano, che non se pote dicere. Per tutta piazza de Castiello fi’ a Santo Pietro, da Santa Maria in Trespadina, da piazza de Santo Spirito, per tutte puortica, dalli Armeni, per onne strada iacevano como la semmola seminati, tagliati, nudi, e muorti...Po’ moiti die fuoro trovati uomini muorti per le vigne, armati, nelle capanne e nelli cupi delli arbori, li quali nello stormo erano stati feruti. Per la via lo spirito li avea abandonati.¹¹⁶

The reader can trace the passage of the chronicler’s memory as it traverses the urban space, from piazza to piazza, then to streets and porticos, and then out to the vineyards and into trees, collecting memory images. Some images repeat: the way the bodies are strewn about, their nakedness, the disorder, and the death (variants of “morte” appearing three times).

The Anonimo romano reveals in this passage two elements essential to his narrative technique. The first is remembering. The memory images, as he progresses in steps, *seriatim*, over the city squares, suggest actual recollection. So too does his fixation on specific, recurring images, and the palpable emotion he displays. To all appearances, the Anonimo romano really witnessed these events.

¹¹⁵ Actually, like *semmola* (mod. ‘semola’), semolina.

¹¹⁶ Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.3, p.14.

Yet at the same time, his account hints at conscious narrative construction. This, the second element, is imagination, or storytelling. One detects it, for example, when he leads the reader from piazza, to street, to vineyards with sheds, to trees. He moves in these descriptions from urban spaces (squares and streets) outward beyond the *abitato* to nature (vineyards and trees). At the same time, his field of vision narrows, focusing at first on expansive piazze, then shifting his gaze to streets, then porticoes, and finally to small sheds. There is artifice to these telescopic techniques.¹¹⁷

That the Anonimo romano used storytelling techniques in his styled narrative is also revealed by his employing a vocabulary of symbolism that would have resonated among his fourteenth-century audience. He described, for example, a traitorous Roman throwing the flag of the *popolo* (“lo confallone dello puopolo de Roma”) into a well in order to discourage the people. For this, the Anonimo wrote, “the traitor really ought to have lost his life” (“bene debbe lo traditore perdere la vita”). The symbol, in this scenario, is the reality: when the flag is defiled, the *popolo* lose heart. Sciarra’s changing of his garb soon after “comforts his men” (“forte conforta soa iente”), restoring their morale. The Anonimo romano thus smoothed over the random chaos of war, reducing it to a series of symbolic anecdotes that, placed in a certain order, imparted sense and historical meaning.

We can attribute the Anonimo romano’s stock imagery of valorous noblemen, hard-fighting popolani, and fearsome but treacherous enemies to the passage of several decades and his considerable youth at the time of the events. It

¹¹⁷ John Wright, the editor of the chronicle’s English edition, argues in his introduction that “[i]t is a mistake to believe, as many commentators have, that the *Life of Cola di Rienzo* is the work of an amiable primitive who happened to have a good eye for detail. Its author was an educated and literate man, who employed sophisticated rhetorical techniques, such as alliteration, assonance, etymological puns, and careful manipulation of prose rhythms and shifts in stylistic level, throughout his chronicle.” *The Life of Cola di Rienzo*, 25.

is probable that his memories of the battle had fragmented, reducing myriad details to their essences. This does not mean, however, that his account is unreliable, for although we must beware the details, they nonetheless convey the author's perceptions and understanding. Thus, the detail of the flag in the well means that Sciarra's men were disheartened, and Sciarra's change of clothes, that they, like their leader, had recovered their fighting spirits. Sciarra's fundamental qualities, as perceived by the *Anonimo romano*—his military skill, his ability to inspire, and his approach to ruling—are ultimately visible to us through the chronicler's prism of anecdotes and symbolic imagery.

That Sciarra, a baron, was elected to preserve the interests of the Roman *popolo* seems not to have troubled the Roman chronicler. Although there had been elite custodians of popular interest—Giovanni da Ignano and Iacopo Arlotti, for example—they had never been of baronial stature. The Roman barons were legendary throughout Italy, and somewhat maligned, for their dominance of city politics. Bartolus of Sassoferrato, for example, famously commented that the Roman political system was a “*res monstruosa*” in which multiple petty tyrants competed for control. And, unlike in many Italian communes, Romans did not exclude magnates from public office. Such an acceptance of elite power is evident in the Roman chronicler's admiration for Sciarra.

Now, to gain a significantly different perspective of Sciarra, we turn to the Florentine chronicler Giovanni Villani. Villani too recognized that Sciarra was expected to work alongside the communal government: “and they named Sciarra Colonna as *capitano del popolo* in Rome to rule the city with the council of fifty-two popolani, four per neighborhood” (“*e chiamaro capitano del popolo di Roma Sciarra della Colonna che reggesse la cittade col consiglio di 52 popolani, 4 per*

rione...”)¹¹⁸ But Villani was more critical than the Roman chronicler, hardly disguising his hostility to Sciarra, as well as to Louis the Bavarian and to the Ghibelline mission in general.¹¹⁹ He noted that when Sciarra got together with Iacopo Savelli and Tebaldo di Sant’Eustachio, “great and powerful Romans” (“grandi e possenti Romani”), the *capitano* demonstrated scant regard for popular interests.¹²⁰ Those three, Villani said, the real cause behind the “revolution,” always met in secret, avoided the *popolo*, and had private reasons, political and financial, for supporting Louis’ coronation.¹²¹ They even, he wrote, asked the German king, when stationed at Viterbo, to ignore any messages received from the Roman *popolo*, and come to Rome immediately.¹²² Villani thus appears to have been more disturbed than the Roman chronicler by Sciarra’s noble stature and by his methods of governance.

What might account for the Anonimo romano and Giovanni Villani’s diverging opinions? The first, a Roman, viewed Sciarra as an opulent and powerful

¹¹⁸ Villani, *Nuova cronica* XI.20.

¹¹⁹ For a discussion of Villani’s Guelf sympathies, see Louis Green, *Chronicle into History: An Essay on the Interpretation of History in Florentine Fourteenth-Century Chronicles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) 9-25.

¹²⁰ Giovanni Cavallini, writing in the margins of a manuscript of Valerius Maximus, revealed nothing but scorn for Tebaldo, accusing him of pillaging the altar of Santa Maria Rotunda, where the author was canon: “Theballum de Sancto Eustachio et illos de genere suo, qui assidue spoliante altare ecclesie Sancte Marie Rotunde oblationibus ibidem per fedeles exhibitis et concessis.” Later in the text, he launched further invective: “Theballus de Sancto Eustachio vivit vita mala, auferendo et spoliando altare ecclesie Sancte marie Rotunde...ergo morietur mala morte quia cupidus, id est pecuniarum amator, inflatus, volens aliis tyrannice dominari, blasphemus deum spoliante heretico more.” Cited from Massimo Miglio, “Et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma,” in *Scritture, scrittori e storia. I. Per la storia del Trecento a Roma*, ed. Massimo Miglio (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 1991), 46, n.144.

¹²¹ According to Villani, Castruccio Castracani, along with the Ghibelline league of Tuscany and Lombardy, had bribed them to support the German king’s coronation at Rome. “...Sciarra della Colonna e Iacopo Savelli, ch’erano capitani del popolo, coll’ aiuto di Tibaldo di quegli di Santo Stazio, grandi e possenti Romani, i quali tre caporali erano stati cagione de la revoluzione a Roma...I sopradetti tre capitani del popolo sempre nel segreto, dissimulando il popolo, ordinavano e trattavano la venuta del Bavaro e di farlo re de’ Romani, per animo di parte ghibellina, e per molta moneta ch’ebbono da Castruccio duca di Lucca, e de la parte ghibellina di Toscana e di Lombardia.” Villani, *Nuova cronica* XI.55.

¹²² “Incontanente mandarono segreti messi e lettere a Viterbo al Bavero, che lasciasse ogni dimoranza, e venisse a Roma, e non guardasse a mandato o detto degli ambasciadori del popolo di Roma.” Ibid.

baron whose valor and tactical expertise saved the Romans from yet another period of Angevin overlordship. His description is steeped through with admiration for Sciarra's bravery and military skill. Like Dino Compagni,¹²³ who decried the senseless violence and callous cruelty of the Florentine elites, but who nevertheless betrayed his awed respect for their grandeur, the Roman chronicler also mythologized the Roman elites.

Villani, on the other hand, was suspicious of Sciarra's elite stature. He portrayed Sciarra almost, we could say, as a tyrant, usurping the machinery of communal government and using it to achieve private ends. One explanation for these diverging accounts concerns, of course, political orientation. The Roman chronicler supported Sciarra's objective of reducing Angevin influence in Roman city politics, while Villani, a Guelf, opposed Sciarra's plans for a Roman imperial coronation.

A second reason for the chroniclers' diverging opinions derives from the changing nature and expectations of the Roman captaincy. On account of his antimagnate policies, the first *capitano del popolo*, Brancaleone degli Andalò, was known as a defender of the popular cause. Even if weak in effect, anti-magnate policies continued to define the office under Angelo Capocci in 1267, Giovanni da Ignano in 1305, and Iacopo Arlotti in 1312. After Arlotti, however, the office lost its populist quality, as absentee senators, with increasing frequency, nominated *capitani* serving simultaneously in numerous other offices. Robert of Anjou, in

¹²³ Compagni's description of Corso Donati displays similarities: "...he lived dangerously and died reprehensibly. He was a knight of great spirit and renown, noble in blood and behavior, and very handsome in appearance even in his old age...He was a charming, wise, and elegant speaker, and always undertook great things...He was the enemy of the *popolo* and of *popolani*, and was loved by his soldiers; he was full of malicious thoughts, cruel and astute." Bornstein, ed., *Dino Compagni's Chronicle of Florence* 84.

both 1314 and 1315, appointed one combined senator and *capitano del popolo*.¹²⁴ Amassing titles peaked in the 1330's, when Robert of Anjou was appointed by John XXII senator, syndic, *capitano* and rector for life.¹²⁵ It had become common practice by 1338, when Benedict XII appointed Iacopo Gabrielli and Bosone Novello of Gubbio as senators, *capitani*, syndics and defenders of the city.¹²⁶ While accumulating titles does not necessarily imply a dilution of the office, it is indicative that Iacopo Arlotti was the last *capitano* involved in a true popular revolt.¹²⁷

Going back to our chroniclers, their conflicting perceptions of Sciarra also reflect differing attachments to communal ideals. Villani was disappointed by Sciarra's failure to comply with his expectations of a communal leader, and was disturbed when Sciarra utilized communal machinery to pursue private ends. He was holding Rome up, in short, to the model of communal government with which he was familiar from Florence. That Rome's unruly politics did not correspond to his expectations caused the chronicler some evident consternation.

The Anonimo romano, by contrast, appears not to have held the armed and, in his eyes, valiant Roman nobleman to the communal standard, instead marveling at his strong and confident leadership. As one of the few Roman accounts of Trecento Rome, the Anonimo's chronicle reveals his detachment from ideals often prized in communes such as the rule of law, standardized electoral procedures, or political exclusion of magnates. Absent from his account, too, is the kind of

¹²⁴ In 1314, Robert appointed Guglielmo Scarreri, and in 1315, Gerardo Spinola di Lucolo. Cardinal Giovanni Orsini served in 1331 as rector and *capitano del popolo*.

¹²⁵ Salimei, *Senatori e statuti* 102.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* 104.

¹²⁷ The accumulation of offices by one, or occasionally by a pair, suggests that one or more of the offices had devolved into sinecures, or changed function. This accords with Daniel Waley's statement that, in Italian cities over the course of the fourteenth century, the *capitano del popolo* devolved into a largely judicial post. Waley, *The Italian City Republics* 186.

intergenerational family hostility linked to party identity often seen in Florentine sources, revealing Rome's more fluid networks of enmity and alliance. Class conflict, instead of determining Roman politics, appears and disappears suddenly, often without explanation. The Roman *popolo*, as a consequence, is not portrayed as a party pursuing particular social reforms, or even as a cohesive class. Still less is it portrayed, as it sometimes was in Florence, as an idealized community.¹²⁸ The Roman chronicler instead portrays the *popolo* as an anonymous mass, always ready to protest or fight in the streets, yet without apparent common values or enduring objectives.

In addition to Sciarra's status as a powerful noble, I would argue that crucial to explaining his success with the *popolo* in 1327 were his claims to connections with the empire. Depicting Sciarra as a valiant general, the Anonimo saw in him the ability, by cooperating with Louis the Bavarian, to bring imperial authority back to Rome. Through his commanding stance and military expertise, Sciarra offered Romans a *renovatio imperii*, a phoenix-like regeneration of the Roman empire.

An important symbolic moment in Sciarra's captaincy was his 1328 crowning of Louis of Bavaria. Unfortunately, the portion of the Anonimo's chronicle describing this event has not survived.¹²⁹ Villani, however, stated that Sciarra, two senators,¹³⁰ and the knight Pietro di Montenero crowned Louis.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Seibt, *Anonimo romano* 114.

¹²⁹ The titles of each segment, or chapter, are known, however, since they were listed at the beginning of the manuscript, which has survived. The title pertaining to the imperial coronation is "De papa Ianni e della venuta dello Bavaro a Roma e della sua partenza e dello antipapa lo quale fece." Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.4, p.15.

¹³⁰ Buccio di Proresso and a certain Orsino. The manuscript was apparently damaged where the family name, or patronymic, should be.

¹³¹ The *Cronica senese* records that Sciarra, Iacopo Savelli, and Tibaldo di Sant'Eustachio performed the coronation. Many Siennese had accompanied to Rome Castruccio Castracani, who was knighted by the emperor, appointed count palatine and senator of Rome, and, later, head of the imperial court. Villani sarcastically condemns him for his arrogance. Villani, *Nuova cronica* XI.60. In addition,

They were flanked by the fifty-two *buonuomini*, the prefect of Rome, Iacopo Savelli and Tibaldo di Sant'Eustachio, many Roman barons, and a judge.¹³² As Louis was crowned, he read out imperial decrees concerning the universal faith, revering clerics, and protecting widows and orphans. "This hypocritical dissimulation" ("la quale ipocrita dissimulazione"), Villani scathingly remarked, "was very pleasing to Romans" ("piacque molto a' Romani"). Villani's account reveals his stupefaction at the audacity of Louis, Sciarra, and their Roman allies to conduct a coronation without participation of the pope: "In this way," he wrote, "Louis of Bavaria was crowned emperor and king of the Romans by the Roman *popolo*, in great disrespect and dishonor to the pope and the Church of Rome, without safeguarding any reverence of the holy Church." ("In questo modo fu coronato a imperadore e re de' Romani Lodovico detto Bavero per lo popolo di Roma, a grande dispetto e onta del papa e della Chiesa di Roma, non guardando niuna reverenza di santa Chiesa."¹³³

Romans appear not to have shared the shock and dismay at this usurpation of papal authority that Villani felt, who was put off, moreover, by their apparent enjoyment of the situation. It is therefore plausible to argue that Sciarra Colonna derived his popularity, at least in part, from his association with the German king and the dreams for imperial revival that he symbolized. Romans knew, when they elected him *capitano del popolo*, that Sciarra staunchly supported the Ghibelline cause. They certainly saw in him an escape from Angevin aggressors, and perhaps a way toward a grander Rome. It would clearly be straining the narrative evidence

Sciarra's daughter Alasia was promised in marriage to one of Castruccio Castracani's sons. Waley, "Sciarra Colonna," 315.

¹³² Villani, *Nuova cronica* XI.55.

¹³³ Villani did not stop there: "E nota che presunzione fu quella del detto dannato Bavero, che non troverai per nulla cronica antica o novella che nullo imperadore cristiano mai si facesse coronare se non al papa o a suo legato, tutto fossono molto contradi della Chiesa, o prima o poi, se non questo Bavero." Ibid. XI.56.

to claim this hypothesis irrefutable. Yet given what we know it is certainly possible. Sciarra's popularity, based on his Ghibelline past and, Louis' popular support while in Rome both point to a *popolo* that still harbored imperial pretensions. What is most interesting about Sciarra's captaincy was the way he employed the Roman memory of empire, and its myths, to garner support among the Roman *popolo*. By bringing the German king to Rome, and offering a public coronation ceremony in which Romans of all social backgrounds participated, Sciarra offered them political relevance they had been lacking at least since the papacy left in 1305. And although nominating an antipope may have appeared ludicrous and offensive to contemporaries such as Villani, I would argue that Sciarra knew the ritual would touch a deep note in the Roman political memory, one that medieval Romans, whatever the reality of their situation, were loathe to surrender.

For the post-coronation period, the Anonimo romano is silent, and we again depend on Giovanni Villani. Romans' elation at crowning the emperor, he reported, soon waned as the cash-starved Louis imposed numerous heavy taxes.¹³⁴ Upon hearing of Louis' plans to appoint a new pope, the wise men ("savi uomini") were troubled, while the "simple people" ("semplice popolo") rejoiced. Villani's description suggests that some desired to be freed from the city's traditional papal master.¹³⁵ "To content the Roman *popolo*" ("per contentare il popolo di Roma"), therefore, Louis, together with the Roman government, decreed a new law requiring the pope to stay in Rome, and forbidding him to travel without Roman permission or more than two days' distance from the city.¹³⁶ When Louis soon

¹³⁴ Villani reports that Louis imposed a tax of 30,000 gold florins, demanding 10,000 from the Jews, 10,000 from clerics, and 10,000 from the city population at large, "...per la qual cosa a' Romani cominciò a crescere la loro mala volontà e indegnazione contra il detto Bavero." Ibid. XI.68.

¹³⁵ Ibid. XI.70.

¹³⁶ Ibid. XI.72.

thereafter appointed anti-pope Nicholas V, the Romans were divided. Villani gives the impression, however, that the reaction among the Roman “buona gente” was predominantly negative, as many were distressed by Louis’ usurpation of papal power.¹³⁷ An impoverished and disgraced Louis left the city in early August 1328, accompanied by his pope Nicholas V, the new cardinals, and many staunch supporters. Sciarra Colonna, now banned from Rome, left with them, his property subsequently destroyed. The departure, as Villani described it, was ugly and hostile: Shouting insults and threats, Romans hurled stones, and gestured vulgarly at the departing troops. They dug up German graves, dumped corpses into the Tiber, and razed the property of the banished.¹³⁸ Sciarra died in exile only a few weeks after his ignominious departure.

In the end, can we say that Sciarra Colonna led a popular government? Most scholarship, after all, has designated 1327-28 as one of the significant Trecento Roman popular revolts. Some aspects of Sciarra’s rule might suggest this was so. All contemporary accounts, for example, indicate that he had the *popolo*’s overwhelming support. The opposition consisted mainly of nobles—the Orsini and their allies—as well as troops coming from Naples, Tuscany, and Lombardy. In addition, Sciarra ruled alongside the communal government, allowing the councils, senate, and *buonuomini* to function as before. Although the evidence does not reveal whether Sciarra ruled in accordance with these structures, some testimony, like Villani’s, suggest that he ruled in an autocratic fashion.

¹³⁷ “Di questa lezione e confermazione del detto antipapa la buona gente di Roma forte si turbarono, parendo loro che ‘l detto Bavero facesse contra fede e la santa Chiesa; e sapemmo poi di vero de la sua gente medesima, che quegli ch’erano savi, parve loro ch’egli non facesse bene...” Ibid. XI.73.

¹³⁸ “E a la sua partita i Romani gli feciono molta ligione, isgridando lui e ‘l falso papa e loro gente, e chiamandogli eretici e scomunicati, e gridando: ‘Muoiano, muoiano, e viva la santa Chiesa!’...” Ibid. XI.95.

Yet popular support does not, of course, equal popular government. Villani, describing the battle waged by Sciarra as a “revolution,” probably did not intend it to mean a popular overthrow of a formerly elite government.¹³⁹ Rather, Sciarra’s movement overthrew Robert of Anjou and his unremitting influence on Roman civic life. In other words, the conflict was less social than political. Sciarra’s military takeover did indeed reverse the hierarchy of power, but the reversal was not vertical, (*baronia vs. popolo*), but rather horizontal (Orsini & papacy vs. Colonna & empire).

“I romani feciono popolo”

Scholars have classified two other periods before 1345, namely 1338-39 and 1342, as popular regimes. The Anonimo romano, occupied with his medical studies in Bologna, paid little heed to Rome in these years. A famine striking Rome and Italy, though, was grave enough to warrant his attention. Had the boat of provisions from Pisa not arrived, he said, all Rome would have perished.¹⁴⁰ Perhaps this was why, in November 1338, Romans, “by divine inspiration” according to Villani, came to a general peace, nobles and popolani putting aside their long-standing disagreements. The next summer the Romans “feciono popolo,” sending ambassadors to Florence to retrieve a copy of the Ordinances of Justice and other “buoni ordini,”¹⁴¹ an event that Villani duly enjoyed as he meditated on the cycles of history.¹⁴² The two new papally-appointed senators, Matteo del fu

¹³⁹ “...Sciarra della Colonna, e Iacopo Savelli...coll’ aiuto di Tibaldo di quegli di Santo Stazio...i quali tre caporali erano stati cagione de la revoluzione a Roma...”Ibid. XI.55.

¹⁴⁰ “Nella citate de Roma, se non fusse stata una nave de grano la quale succurze – per mare da Pisa venne – tutta Roma periva.” Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.9, p.35. Dupré Theseider notes that the Roman chronicler neglected to mention Benedict XII’s monetary donation to the Romans.

¹⁴¹ The “altri buoni ordini” were probably new systems of taxation, since later in that year Pope Benedict protested against the new gabelles and duties that the Romans had recently put in place. Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 505.

¹⁴² “...in calen di novembre, i Romani per certe revelazioni di sante persone, e fu quasi spirazione divina, si convertirono a pace generale i nobili insieme e’ popolani, dimettendo per l’amore d’Iddio

Napoleone Orsini and Pietro del fu Agapito Colonna, were expelled from their positions. The first was allegedly cudged, receiving horrible bodily injury, (“atroces corporales iniurias”) while his colleague was imprisoned.¹⁴³ Two popularly-appointed senators, Stefano Colonna and Giordano Orsini, replaced them.¹⁴⁴ The *popolo* also effected several changes of city government, mirroring Florentine popular regimes: they instituted a college of thirteen priors, one per *rione*, of which twelve were *capitani*, and one the standard-bearer (*gonfaloniere*) of justice.¹⁴⁵ The senate, in this case, was seen as the primary vehicle for the *popolo* to press its claims to power, though the pope, perceiving this move as encroaching on his political turf, complained.¹⁴⁶ The two recalcitrant senators stayed only briefly in office, and were replaced in early January by papal nominees.

Like small ripples announcing a tide, there was to be one more minor moment of popular rule in Rome before the eventful tribunate of Cola di Rienzo in 1347. When in 1342 Pope Benedict XII died, Romans sent a large delegation, led by Stefano Colonna but comprising both elites and popolani, to Avignon.¹⁴⁷ Their purpose was manifold: to greet the new pope Clement VI, and to reaffirm his right

l'offensioni l'uno all'altro, che ffu una mirabile cosa...E nota come si mutano le condizioni e lli stati del secolo, che' Romani che anticamente feciono la città di Fiorenza e diedolle le loro leggi, in questi nostri tempi mandaro per le leggi a' Fiorentini.” Villani, *Nuova cronica* XII.96.

¹⁴³ Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 504.

¹⁴⁴ The two new senators, although they were also a Colonna and an Orsini, were from different branches of those families. Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 505.

¹⁴⁶ In his letter of 21 July 1339, Benedict reproved the Romans for revolting against his legitimately appointed senators, and demanded that they reinstate Matteo Orsini to his position. Salimei, *Senatori e statuti* 105.

¹⁴⁷ There were six members of the baronial families: Stefano Colonna (the younger), Francesco Orsini, Bertoldo Orsini, Pietro di Agapito Colonna, Rainaldo Orsini, and Jacopo del fu Riccardo Annibaldi. There were then citizens of lower stature: Giovanni “de filiis Boni”; Giovanni di Capoccia de' Capocci; Jacopo, the precept of Santo Spirito; Giovanni, the bishop of Bagnoregio; Stefano Rubei; Angelo “Lello” del fu Pietro Stefani de' Tosetti; Donato di Nicola Ilperini; Giovanni di Matteo Ilperini; the knight Giovanni del fu messer Bartolomeo Pappazzuri, the doctor Rainaldo di S. Passera; Tommaso di Giovanni di Gregorio; and finally, Jacopo di Francesco de' Tedelgarii.

to appoint senators, but also, to convince him to return to Rome, and finally, to obtain permission for a 1350 Jubilee.¹⁴⁸ Rome at this time was under the rule of a government of thirteen *buonuomini*, who had possibly assumed power during a senatorial absence.¹⁴⁹ Like the previous delegation, the thirteen *buonuomini* also sent an ambassador to Avignon to persuade the pope to return and to ask for the grant of a Jubilee year. They chose Cola di Rienzo, an ambitious notary.¹⁵⁰ Although clearly a popular government, we know little more about the 13 *buonuomini* of 1342.

This was the nature of many Roman popular revolts: they were short-lived, poorly documented, and often without clearly distinguishable aims. Some popular leaders, such as Brancaleone and Arlotti, aimed to erode the base of elite power. Others, such as Giovanni da Ignano, tolerated elite power, but sought to create and enforce laws bringing it under communal control. Notably, the only major effort at codifying communal legislation in this period was completed under the direction of a Bolognese senator. If Antonio Rota was correct that Brancaleone too had tried to foster municipal legislation, then Bolognese jurists were the primary legislators for the Roman commune. The push towards communalism in Rome – manifested by institutional structures, legal systems, and attitudes towards government and commerce – seems less a deeply-rooted political movement than an occasionally attractive idea culled from abroad.

The myth of empire, on the other hand, became an increasingly important political tool. Sciarra Colonna's captaincy reveals that, in the early fourteenth

¹⁴⁸ According to Anonimo romano, "Questo dodici ambasciatori lo pregaro, da parte de Dio e dello puopolo de Roma, che lli piacesse de venire a visitare la sede dello sio vescovato de Roma. Anche lo pregaro che lli concedessi la indulgenza generale dello iubileo, che tornassi ciento anni a numero de cinquanta; perché la etate ène breve, pochi ne viengo a numero de ciento." Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.12, p.66.

¹⁴⁹ Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 526.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

century, Roman elites were able to utilize the myth to garner support among a populace hungry for political relevance. This raises the question of how the imperial myth affected the Roman *popolo*. Since elites won popular support by appealing to this myth, was the *popolo* ultimately weakened by it? Did they, for instance, abandon potentially advantageous communal objectives in favor of an elusive mythology that ultimately benefited the powerful? In the 1327 case of Sciarra Colonna, it seems so. Yet we cannot affirm this categorically, since we will later see the imperial myth successfully co-opted to popular advantage.

CHAPTER 4

Remembering the present: history and social conflict in mid-Trecento Rome

This chapter examines the role played by history and social memory in mid-fourteenth century Roman conflicts. ‘Social memory,’ as contrasted to the memory of individuals, refers to shared images of the historical past which, when incorporated into culture and a repertoire of commemorative activities, help social groups to construct their images of the world and of themselves. In this chapter, I attempt to explain why both classical education and history writing suddenly assumed such prominence among Romans of varied social backgrounds. A detailed review of the cultural world of Trecento Rome reveals that an emergent group of educated Roman *popolo* began to contest elite power by co-opting its traditional control over the ways Romans remembered their past.

The Decline of the nobility: Colonna and Orsini

The political instability of early Trecento Rome existed within the framework of a considerable economic shift. While there are still no systematic studies on the economic effects of the papal departure, it is generally agreed that the period witnessed stagnation or decline. For this the principal causes were the loss of major building initiatives promoted by popes and cardinals, the diminished influx of pilgrims, merchants, and clerics, the absence of the vast papal curia and of the numerous cardinals and their households, the lack of papal intervention regarding provisions and foodstuffs, and the drastic reduction of the many other economic benefits connected to the presence of the pope.¹

¹ Etienne Hubert has identified this period as one of “stagnation, or even contraction” within the urban space. For example, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Church of St. Basil in the Forum of Augustus owned about thirty houses in the center of the city. By 1333, a third of these houses were uninhabited, and the property revenues of St. Basil were down thirty percent in comparison to previous years. Etienne Hubert, “L’organizzazione territoriale e l’urbanizzazione,” in *Roma medievale*, ed. André Vauchez (Rome: Editori Laterza, 2001).

The early Trecento has often been termed a period of crisis for the Roman nobility, on which the papal departure had particularly deleterious effects. The elite families were characterized in the period 1300 to 1350 by economic withdrawal and heightened conflicts both between families and within individual family units.² Their traditional monopoly over the provision of foodstuffs, moreover, was taken over, in its productive and distributive elements, by an urban merchant class.³ Boniface VIII's policies had set off a violent quarrel between his family, the Caetani, and the Colonna, and their respective allies, that continued well into the 1320's. In addition, there was persistent fighting between the Orsini, Colonna, Anguillara, and Savelli, and even internecine conflict, as hostilities among various family branches broke out within the Caetani and Orsini. As some larger families fragmented into greater numbers of branches, the inheritance customs that had once preserved the unity of the families' estates now tended towards greater dispersal.⁴ That most families ceased acquiring new patrimonies, and simply relied on possessions and offices already held by tradition, is an indication of the precariousness of their position in this period.⁵

A major factor in the maintenance of family power in Trecento Rome was the capacity to obtain cardinalates. Once in Avignon, the college of cardinals became increasingly dominated by the French, and it was difficult for Romans to maintain their influence. The few families retaining their positions thus benefited exponentially,

² Carocci, *Baroni di Roma* 58ff.

³ Palermo, *Il porto di Roma nel XIV e XV secolo: strutture socio-economiche e statuti* 39-40.

⁴ Inheritance practices among noble families in Rome generally worked much like in the rest of central and northern Italy. Carocci claims it was guided by four principles: privileging the male (agnatic) line, denying patrimonial autonomy to sons, excluding women, and granting all sons equal parts. While the first three tenets were scrupulously followed (even more than in other cities, claims Carocci), under extenuating circumstances, the fourth was sometimes ignored, resulting in some unusual lines of succession. This happened especially in cases of heightened family conflict, when, for example, branches were estranged or hostile. When an agnatic line faced extinction (i.e. no sons), moreover, it often happened that property was not bequeathed to the closest line, but rather, because of alliances, clientage, or emotional attachments, to more distant branches, to the Church, to other families, or in rare cases, to female heirs. Preference was also commonly given to illustrious and powerful branches over minor ones, perhaps expecting protection or clientage in return. Carocci, *Baroni di Roma* 155-59.

⁵ *Ibid.* 61-62.

as others were denied the numerous benefits that came with curial offices. Most successful at this game were the Colonna and the Orsini, who consequently emerged by the 1330's as the two poles of baronial power as the weaker families arranged themselves around them in constellations of alliances. The Colonna of Palestrina, one of the most illustrious branches of the family, maintained a cardinalate until 1348, after which they would have to wait thirty years for their next cardinal. The Orsini found themselves without a family cardinal after the death of the long-lived Napoleone Orsini in 1342, though they had only to wait until 1350 to regain the office. By contrast, the Caetani lost representation after 1317, and the Stefaneschi after 1341.⁶ To explain the curious success of the Colonna and the Orsini in this period, Sandro Carocci has cautiously posited that, in addition to curial benefices, the two families benefited from their large size, the expansion of their rural holdings, their fixed networks of alliances, and the southward migration of the Caetani family that left large tracts of land for acquisition.⁷

Thus, one early outcome of the papal departure was not so much a crisis among the whole nobility, as scholars once thought, but rather a partition of noble ranks into two distinct tiers.⁸ By 1300, the upper nobility, often referred to as the baronage, comprised about five families, headed by the Colonna and the Orsini, and including the Savelli, Annibaldi, and to a lesser extent, the Conti.⁹ To marshal a few statistics: of the 78 senatorships held by these ultra-elite families in the period 1306 to 1347, the Colonna and the Orsini alone held 51—16 and 35 respectively.¹⁰ Letters

⁶ Ibid. 61.

⁷ Carocci treads lightly here, without many specific case studies with which to substantiate his point. Ibid.

⁸ The traditional "crisis" theory is given by Gennaro, "Mercanti e bovattieri." Sandro Carocci was the first to articulate the theory of a bifurcated elite, which is now generally accepted. Carocci, "Una nobiltà bipartita."

⁹ "Barones" was used even by contemporaries. The Anonimo romano used the term to refer to the most elite Romans.

¹⁰ Only 17 out of 95 senatorships went to families other than the Colonna, Orsini, Savelli, Annibaldi, and Conti. Carocci, "Una nobiltà bipartita," 98, n.62.

from the Avignon curia also attest to the hegemony of these families in this period: of 250 letters to the five most powerful Roman families between 1321 and 1353, the Orsini received 85, the Colonna 59, the Annibaldi 56, the Savelli 28, and the Conti 22.¹¹

As the last chapter demonstrated, however, Rome's elite families were challenged during the first half of the Trecento by people who had differing visions of what Rome should be. This struggle over civic identity was inherently political, since it disputed how the city was to be governed. But the economic instability also created social conflict between those jockeying for newly attainable prestige and power. I argue in this chapter that one locus for the social tensions surrounding this particular conflict was the arena of culture. That is, as Roman society entered into a period of unusual social mobility, some parties attempted to use culture, and particularly history, as a lever for social power. This had, of course, been done before. It is common for protagonists of social and political movements to appeal to a real or imagined past to justify their ambitions. But in mid-Trecento Rome, these attempts appear to have been more numerous, and more successful, than in previous centuries.

The contest over history in Trecento Rome is notable in that it was not utilized solely by elites. The previous chapter demonstrated how Sciarra Colonna employed the memory of empire to garner support among a Roman populace that was eager to feel politically relevant. In the 1330's and 1340's, however, there emerged various

¹¹ Ibid.: 99-100. The lists of letters must be used with caution, however, since various circumstances might have necessitated more letters to one family than another: the political orientation of the recipient was of course relevant, as there were certain nobles, such as the de Vico family, who were in bad standing with the Avignon papacy but nevertheless powerful; also relevant was the number of adult males in the family. A full study of 28 letters was conducted by Jean Coste, "Les lettres collectives des papes d'Avignon à la noblesse romaine," in *Aux origines de l'état moderne: le fonctionnement administratif de la papauté d'Avignon. Actes de la table ronde organisée par l'École française de Rome avec le concours du CNRS, du Conseil général de Vaucluse et de l'Université d'Avignon* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1990).

individuals from the middle or lower ranks of Roman society who contested the elite “possession” of memory and culture.

Roman memory

One theme developed in my last two chapters is how myths and memories of Rome’s past influenced the Roman present. But I am also concerned with the flip side of this issue, which concerns how Romans in this period were construing their past either to legitimize homeostasis or to introduce reform.¹² Memory, then, was used by individuals or social groups as they grasped for power. Further, the useful elements of history—those culled, revived, written and talked about—were rendered important because the conditions and needs of the Trecento city made them so. This premise, in which what is remembered is intimately connected to context (the conditions under which things are remembered), as well as to utility (the value or use of a memory), draws on recent multi-disciplinary studies of memory.

The subject of memory has been a particularly active field of research since the end of World War I, as psychologists, neurobiologists, anthropologists, sociologists, and historians have investigated how individuals and groups remember their pasts, how they select what to remember and what to forget, and how this process of selection is guided by presentist needs. The influence of social groups on remembering was an idea first explored by the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, who in the 1920’s expounded his greatly influential, though also debated, theory of collective memory.¹³ Halbwachs’ theory remains useful in that it posits that memory is essentially a reconstruction of the past in light of the present. To Halbwachs, all

¹² Carrie Beneš’ 2004 dissertation explores this theme for Padua, Genoa, Siena and Perugia. Carrie E. Beneš, "Roman Foundations: Constructing Civic Identity in Medieval Italy" (University of California Los Angeles, 2004).

¹³ Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1925).

memories are conditioned by the social framework in which they are remembered, and in fact are remembered the way they are because those remembering, the rememberers, are responding to that framework.¹⁴ All social groups, such as classes, religious groups, families, guilds, or universities have distinctive memories in which their members partake, to which they contribute, and that they bequeath to their successors. These social groups, through such media as language, ritual, or architecture, provide the network of social customs and conventions through which, and within which, individuals construct their memories.¹⁵

Though historians were slow to incorporate theories of memory, such theories were rapidly applied to anthropology and psychology.¹⁶ Anthropologists, for example, have stressed that the ultimate function of reconstructing the past is to ensure the continuity of the social group or society. Evans-Pritchard, in his study of the Nuer, discovered that awareness of the past was “less a means of coordinating events than coordinating relationships...for relationships must be explained in terms of the past.”¹⁷ Thus, when these structures change, or are threatened with change, group memory will adjust to compensate for it. As J.G.A. Pocock has accordingly explained,

¹⁴ This idea is delineated in his essay “The Social Frameworks of Memory,” in Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 37-40. The socially-dependent concept of memory is supported by psychological and neurobiological research. The German psychologist Ebbinghaus in the 1880’s conducted experiments revealing that subjects were hardly able to remember nonsense syllables in a completely decontextualized environment. Following on, but diverging from his work, the Cambridge psychologist Frederick Bartlett discovered that memories were highly dependent on context and reason, that is, on the rememberer’s ability to make sense of them. Frederick C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge: University Press, 1932). For a synopsis of the development of theories of memory, see James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992) ch.1.

¹⁵ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* esp.173-82.

¹⁶ Medieval historians were particularly measured about taking up the history/memory puzzle. Of this, Mary Carruthers wrote, “Before 1960, no historian, with the exception of Helga Hajdu, had written at any length about medieval mnemonic practices (though one could find dismissive references to them).” Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 258.

¹⁷ Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and the Political Institution of Nilotic People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940) 108. See also J.G.A. Pocock, “The Origins of Study of the Past: A Comparative Approach,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4, no. 2 (1962): 212.

[i]f a traditional relationship with the past has been ruptured, the first instinct of society's intellectuals may be to restore it, and this may be attempted by reshaping myth, by historicisation or by the construction of a new image of the past in terms of some new continuity of which society has become aware in the present.¹⁸

Historians, for whom relationships between individuals and social groups in the societies they study is often of primary importance, have found particular relevance in this inquiry. It has changed the way they look at and understand the historical sources that constitute the foundation of their work.

In medieval history, several studies have been dedicated to the *ars memoriae*, or art of memory. An essential point of departure for many of these was the seminal text on mnemotechnics in Greek and Roman thought, *The Art of Memory*, by Frances Yates.¹⁹ Though primarily concerned with the Renaissance, Yates explained that medieval traditions of memory were primarily Aristotelian. Memory techniques were valued for their practical ability to heighten perception and convey moral lessons. Yet, at the same time, the art of memory was viewed with apprehension by some as a tainted pagan inheritance.²⁰ On medieval remembering, an important work is Mary Carruthers' *The Book of Memory*, which traces medieval mnemonic practices, illustrating how *memoria*, and the practices and values that it acquired, fit into the cultural and intellectual frameworks of the Middle Ages.²¹ Others have attempted to enumerate the great variety of memory techniques existing in the Middle Ages, examining treatises as well as charting

¹⁸ Pocock, "The Origins of the Study of the Past," 217.

¹⁹ Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).

²⁰ Ibid. 31-36.

²¹ Though acknowledging Yates' contribution for the Renaissance, Carruthers wrote, "...Yates left the firm (though perhaps unintended) impression that any learned interest in artificial memory during the Middle Ages resulted from involvement with the occult, and not from a commonplace tradition." Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* 258.

historiographical shifts.²² Other studies have illustrated how medieval attitudes towards remembering fit into the long-term development of Western consciousness.²³

Medieval historians in particular have applied many concepts and questions that the inquiry into memory has produced, asking, for example, how and why medieval writers composed their narratives, or “wrote history” in the way they did. Such efforts can have extensive implications. Patrick Geary, for example, in *Phantoms of Remembrance*, posited that many of our perceptions of the sparsely documented, largely oral culture of the early Middle Ages have been determined by the eleventh-century writers who recorded the history of their progenitors. Geary warned that “[u]nless we understand the mental and social structures that acted as filters, suppressing or transforming the received past in the eleventh century in terms of presentist needs, we are doomed to misunderstand those earlier centuries.”²⁴

Historians have also taken interest in how sociopolitical context affects the memory and historical writing of different societal groups. Bernd Schneidmüller’s article “Constructing the Past by Means of the Present” explores the needs and yearnings in the late Middle Ages of four types of groups: an institution (the Capetian monarchy), a dynasty (the Welfs), a people (Frisians), and a social group (north German urban elites).²⁵ In the last section, Schneidmüller shows how German elites “exploited history as a method of argumentation,” demonstrating

²² Janet Coleman, *Ancient and Medieval Memories: Studies in the Reconstruction of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

²³ Jacques LeGoff, *History and Memory*, trans. Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).

²⁴ Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 7.

²⁵ Bernd Schneidmüller, “Constructing the Past by Means of the Present: Historiographical Foundations of Medieval Institutions, Dynasties, Peoples, and Communities,” in *Medieval Concepts of the Past*, ed. Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried, and Patrick Geary (Cambridge: University Press, 2002).

that, when challenged, they appealed to the past to legitimize their inherited claims to power.²⁶ Schneidmüller’s study illuminates the element of dispute, or conflict, often present behind investigations into history. This, I shall argue, is distinctly relevant to Trecento Rome, where social tensions frequently pulled the strings of historical inquiry.

By acknowledging the “presentist needs” of medieval writers—not just the contexts in which they wrote, but also their objectives, the social or political pressures on them, and also importantly, the needs of their society—we can begin to understand why they shaped their narratives as they did. These choices are only sometimes conscious. As I have argued, the Anonimo romano’s adulation of Sciarra Colonna was less a rationalized evaluation of Sciarra’s performance as *capitano del popolo*—for he had actually ended his term in disgrace, shunned and exiled by the *popolo*—than a reflection of the chronicler’s nostalgic esteem for the Roman noble class whose status and values had by that time much waned. In addition, we must keep in mind that the received past is suppressed and transformed in the hands of any writer. We can often glean as much understanding from analyzing what the author selected and ignored as from what he or she actually stated.

Of the Anonimo romano, one must ask: to which “presentist” societal needs was he responding when writing his chronicle? In many ways, the Anonimo romano appears a peace broker in the conflict between Cola and the Roman nobility as his text negotiates the increasingly disputed possession over the Roman past. This past, I will argue, had historically been utilized and manipulated with greater ease and effectiveness by Roman elites, who had both education and capital at their disposal. As we will soon see, many thirteenth-century building projects evidence how greatly many elites valued ancient ruins and spolia. Although the Roman *popolo* occasionally

²⁶ Ibid., 191.

attempted to imitate this—the twelfth-century revival of the senate is one example—the Roman past remained largely the domain of the elites.

When examining the textual evidence from Trecento Rome, the relative abundance of history-writing, particularly by non-elites, is striking. This proliferation, in my opinion, had a *raison d'être*: in writing histories, numerous Romans of middling background challenged the elite “possession” of the past. The Anonimo romano, for example, a physician as well as a chronicler, was university-educated and knew Latin. Although sometimes ambivalent about Cola di Rienzo’s immoderate enthusiasm for curbing Roman elite privilege, the Anonimo’s chronicle preserved for posterity the memory of the mid-century popular struggle against the Roman baronage. His chronicle is a fine example of strategic remembrance amidst a struggle that pitched against each other both classes and myths.

Communal uses of the ancient past

Medieval Romans lived cheek to jowl with their ancient past. But at times groups made special efforts to seize possession of that past, to own it. Memory, of course, cannot be privatized. It can, however, be appropriated, utilized, symbolically represented, and displayed to serve the needs of the present. In the fourteenth century, this practice was not new. Since the fifth century, Romans had been using their classical past to make a case for the continued political relevance of their city, to solidify and legitimize their social structures, and to create a mystique that would sustain their pilgrim trade economy. Some scholars have noted that the twelfth century in particular witnessed a sudden flowering in the fascination with the ancient past, and have attributed this to the cultural environment of the “twelfth-century Renaissance.”²⁷

²⁷ Herbert Bloch, “The New Fascination with Ancient Rome,” in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982). Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City* ch.7.

In Rome, the twelfth century was also, as discussed in the first chapter, a period of significant social upheaval. Consequently, the new interest in the past manifested itself in both the material and political culture of the day. Urban architecture quickly came to reflect this: buildings throughout the city flaunted ancient spolia,²⁸ and the ancient arts of mosaic and marble-working were revived. In literature as well, pilgrim guides such as the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* reveled in colorful expositions of Rome's legendary past. In addition, an anonymous work called the *Graphia aureae urbis Romae*, partially based on the *Mirabilia*, but containing many additions, revisions, and omissions, appeared shortly thereafter.²⁹

Twelfth-century Roman political culture also shows Romans adapting ancient, especially republican, governmental forms to the present burgeoning communal culture. The *popolo's* 1143 revival of the senate clearly relied on ancient political precedents, and yet, the early senate was, in form and function, much like the councils seen in many Italian *comuni*. Unlike their ancient predecessors, twelfth-century senators did not comprise an order. Still less were they of distinguished social provenance. The early senate, therefore, reflects principles similar to those that characterized communal councils. The twelfth-century senate is a nice example of how, during moments of revolt, the Roman *popolo* could invoke classical imagery, rhetoric, and material culture to bolster their claims to authority. In other words, when dominant social or political structures were challenged, the *popolo* re-formulated its relationship to the ancient past. The revival of the senate offered immediate legitimacy

²⁸ Notable examples are S. Maria in Cosmedin, S. Maria in Trastevere, and the church of the Quattro Coronati, all of which make use of sliced columns as constitutive elements of their decorative pavement patterns. See Bloch, "The New Fascination with Ancient Rome," 618, and fig. 19., and Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City* 161-66.

²⁹ Valentini and Zucchetti, eds., *Codice topografico* v.3. The *Graphia*, known to both Giovanni Cavallini (to be discussed later) and Cola, is preserved in a thirteenth-century manuscript in the Laurentian Library, Florence. See also Collins, *Greater than Emperor* 52, and Nichols, ed., *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* xviii-xix.

to the commune's founders by appealing to a venerated historical precedent. The choice of the senate as the governing body reflected Romans' desire to move away from the autocratic leadership embodied by the papacy, and towards a collective, or communal, form of government.

The decades following the *renovatio senatus* display a significant increase in communal attempts to preserve ancient artifacts. One inscription declares that in 1157 the Roman senate and *popolo* repaired the "age-old and decayed" Aurelian Wall ("SPQR hec menia vetusta et dilapsa restauravit").³⁰ A similar inscription informs passersby that the bridge of Cestius was restored, in 1191-92, at the behest of senator Benedictus Carushomo.³¹ Although such efforts were often motivated by the practical need to conserve civic architecture, the way they were recorded also reveals a heightened civic pride. The city's walls, bridges, and municipal architecture became symbols of communal strength, reinforcing its inherited claims to authority. Perhaps less obviously functional was the 1163 provision, issued by a commission of popolani judges and lawyers, protecting the Column of Trajan.³² The column, they claimed, "should be allowed to stand whole and uncorrupted as long as the world endures," in honor of the nearby church of SS. Apostoli Filippo and Giacomo and of the Roman

³⁰ Angelo Silvagni, *Monumenta epigraphica christiana*, vol. 1 (Vatican City: 1943) plate 25.5.

³¹ Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City* 198. For a study of the senator, see Moscati, "Benedetto 'Carushomo' summus senator a Roma."

³² The document is transcribed in full in Bartoloni, ed., *Codice diplomatico* doc.18, pp.25-27. The communal officials involved were: Pietro the first judge, Gregorio the second, Roberto the first defender, Martone the vice-secretary (*protoscrinarius*), Filippo the sacellarius, Paolo the librarian, Gregorio Primicerii the treasurer (*arcarius*). The appointed judges were: Pietro de Rubeo, Landolfo, Bonsignore, Paolo, Giovanni Gregorii, and Tebaldo. The lawyers were Bartolomeo, Pietro Mazzaguerra, Giovanni Parentii, Pietro de Avvocato, and Giovanni Gonzolini. Bartoloni, ed., *Codice diplomatico* 26. I have tried to match these names to the lists of communal officials of the same year, but without overwhelming success. The tendency to exclude family names in the list above makes identification difficult. Two names, however, do appear recognizable: Giovanni Parentii, listed above as a lawyer, had served as one of ten senators in 1157. And Gregorio Primicerii, the treasurer, had served as one of the twelve consuls of 1151. Bartoloni, "Per la storia del senato romano," 79.

people in general. To stress the importance of the column and the authority of the commune, the penalty for damaging it was death and confiscation of property.³³

We cannot know the circumstances that caused the communal officials to proffer their protection to the column of Trajan. Were they protecting it against random acts of vandalism? Against the *marmorari* who scoured the city in search of marble for their lime kilns? Or was the church of SS. Apostoli involved? This would have meant that a church, and a small church at that, had under its protection one of the grandest artifacts of the ancient, pagan empire. Standing one hundred feet tall, it surely dwarfed the modest church beside it. It was an unabashed pagan war memorial whose swirling friezes depicted the victory of Trajan's armies over Dacia.³⁴ It was not uncommon, of course, for the Church to utilize artifacts of the ancient past. Often, however, the artifacts chosen were those more easily adaptable to Christianity. For the whole sweep of the Middle Ages, for example, the famous equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius guarded St. John Lateran, the nucleus of papal power in Rome. That medieval Romans thought it was Constantine, and not Marcus Aurelius, who gazed imperiously from atop the bronze horse conveniently mitigated a potentially awkward symbolic contradiction.³⁵ They saw a Christian emperor, not a pagan philosopher. By comparison, the column of Trajan was less easily reconciled to Christian history.³⁶ But the communal document reveals less concern with the column's aesthetic, or religious,

³³ "...sed ut est ad honorem ipsius ecclesie et totius populi Romani, integra et incorrupta permaneat dum mundus durat, sic eius stante figura." Bartoloni, ed., *Codice diplomatico* 27.

³⁴ The column of Trajan had originally been spectacularly painted. The *Mirabilia*, despite offering ample detail, make no mention of the paint. "The winding pillar of Trajan is one hundred thirty-eight feet high, one hundred eighty-five steps, and has forty-five windows...[it is] a pillar of marvelous height and beauty, carved with the stories of [Trajan]..." Nichols, ed., *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* 11, 39.

³⁵ The Lateran served as a warehouse for several of the great prizes of antiquity: first, the head and hand of a colossal statue, possibly Constantine; the bronze she-wolf, symbol *par excellence* of the founding of Rome; and a bronze tablet whose writing Cola was the first to decipher: it turned out to be Vespasian's *lex de imperio*. All three pieces are now in the Capitoline Museums. Musto, *Apocalypse in Rome* 51-52.

³⁶ This was solved in 1588 when a statue of St. Peter was placed atop the column. The same method of Christianization was also used for the city's numerous Egyptian obelisks.

value than with its value as a status symbol representing the ancient political and cultural inheritance of the city.³⁷

Also signaling communal authority was an ancient obelisk, at some point between 1150 and 1250 repaired and transferred to the northeast corner of the Campidoglio. Given a base of four lions, it was erected between the Palazzo del Senatore and the church of Santa Maria in Capitolio.³⁸ Richard Krautheimer has posited that it “may well have stood as a symbol of the *comune* and the Senate, the Roman republic revived.”³⁹ Certainly its location, in front of the medieval center of communal government, was not haphazard. The symbolic placement of the obelisk supports our hypothesis that the early communal period was one in which the remains of the Roman, particularly republican, past were used to legitimate communal authority.

The Roman commune’s most significant symbolic use of the ancient past was perhaps the physical location of the capitol atop the Campidoglio. The hill had been abandoned for pasture for most of the Middle Ages, thus earning the name “Monte Caprino,” or “Goat Hill.” Yet the space was historically imbued with spiritual and political power. After the 509 B.C. death of Tarquinius Superbus, the last Tarquin king, a temple was erected there to the divine triad Zeus, Juno, and Minerva, earning it the name “Capitolium.” This site of pagan worship became the principal center for the state cult until 83 A.D., when it was destroyed by fire.⁴⁰ The new senators of the mid-twelfth century likely chose the ruins of the ancient temple for their senate house

³⁷ Serena Romano, "Arte del medioevo romano: la continuità e il cambiamento," in *Roma medievale*, ed. André Vauchez (Rome: Editori Laterza, 2001), 268. Bartoloni, ed., *Codice diplomatico* 27. Michael Greenhalgh has posited that the column of Trajan survived “because of [its] high curiosity value and indeed fame, and because of the uselessness of [its] sections for building purposes.” Michael Greenhalgh, *The Survival of Roman Antiquities in the Middle Ages* (London: Duckworth, 1989) 118.

³⁸ Perhaps under the direction of Arnolfo di Cambio, Santa Maria in Capitolio was rebuilt in the 1280’s, by the Franciscans. It would from then on be called Santa Maria in Aracoeli.

³⁹ Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City* 198.

⁴⁰ The temple was inaugurated in 509 B.C., the first year of the Republic. *Guida d'Italia: Roma*, 440.

because of its legacy of spiritual and political authority. The site was also centrally located and overlooked the ruins of the abandoned Forum, the seat of ancient government, which in the Middle Ages was indicatively called the “Campo Vaccino,” or “Cow Pasture.” Adjacent to it was the Benedictine monastery Sta. Maria in Capitolio, where legend had it that the Sybil of Tivoli prophesied the coming of Christ. Finally, positioned atop a hill, it dominated the surrounding space—only by a long, imposing stairway was the Campidoglio accessible to those without ichor in their veins. At its feet lay the commercial heart of the medieval city—the central market. Uniting the legacies of the ancient spiritual and political past, the location of the medieval Roman government spoke to the many roots of its authority.

After the twelfth century, instances of communal protection, or symbolic use, of ancient artifacts are difficult to procure. We must leap forward almost two hundred years, to Cola di Rienzo, who, utilizing a vast repertoire of classical rhetoric and learning, regularly incorporated ancient symbolic objects into his political performances. Two notable examples are the ancient bronze tablet inscribed with Vespasian’s *Lex de imperio*, and the baptismal font used by Constantine in the Lateran Basilica.⁴¹ Cola also spearheaded one of the fourteenth century’s few large building projects, constructing a daunting stairway, all of marble reaped from Roman spoils, leading vertiginously up to Santa Maria in Aracoeli, the church flanking the medieval Senate House.⁴² The project, which put pagan artifacts to use for the Christian present, reflected the deeply-imbedded spiritual element of Cola’s political agenda.⁴³

⁴¹ These two objects are the subject of an illuminating article by Chiara Franceschini, “Rerum gestarum significatio’: L’uso di oggetti antichi nella comunicazione politica di Cola di Rienzo,” *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore, Classe di lettere e filosofia* Quaderni 14, no. 4 (2002).

⁴² Georg Satzinger, “Spolien in der römischen Architektur des Quattrocento,” in *Antike Spolien in der Architektur des Mittelalters und der Renaissance*, ed. Joachim Poeschke (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 1996), 249. See also E. Guidoni, “Roma e l’urbanistica del Trecento,” in *Storia dell’arte italiana. Dal Medioevo al Quattrocento*, ed. F. Zeri (Turin: 1983), 363-68.

⁴³ On which, see Collins, *Greater than Emperor*.

The communal statutes of 1363 contain legislation aiming to preserve antiquities. One clause prohibited the disposal of garbage behind the Porta Settimiana in Trastevere. The reasoning was that “...men and women have, from time immemorial, been walking this road to get to St. Peter’s, and this road has always been called the *via sancta*.”⁴⁴ In a different manner, the statutes also protected ancient buildings, and even ruins, that they might “display the *decorum* of Rome.”⁴⁵ While the first statute emphasized practical use, the second prioritized display, reflecting concern that Rome *should* look a certain way. Since ruins were often seen as mines of material for the city’s lime kilns, to protect them was an innovative move. In doing so, the commune preserved and in some cases transformed the physical reality of Rome’s political inheritance.

Comparing the twelfth- to the fourteenth-century efforts at protecting and reviving ancient architecture and artifacts reveals an indicative shift: overall, the twelfth-century accomplishments appear to have been largely directed to reviving the republican past. The *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*, for example, repeatedly recounts events occurring “in the time of the consuls and senators,” rather than under the emperors.⁴⁶ The senate, though it continued to exist under the late empire, always remained a powerful symbol of republican rule. In the fourteenth century, on the other hand, evocations of the Roman past were less specific: Cola di Rienzo, as we shall see, employed a mixture of imperial and republican rhetoric without, it appears, distinguishing clearly between the two. In addition, the two examples cited above –

⁴⁴ “Cum per ipsam viam omni tempore romani femmine et masculi ad sanctum petrum vaddunt, et ipsa via semper appelletur via sancta...” Re, ed., *Statuti* 2.190, p.87.

⁴⁵ “Ne ruynis civitas deformetur et ut antiqua edificia decorem Urbis publice representent, statuimus quod...” Ibid. 2.191, p.88.

⁴⁶ For instance, the construction of the Pantheon, which actually took place under Augustus. Nichols, ed., *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* 21.

the stairway to S. Maria in Aracoeli and the mid-century legislation – both emphasize the new spiritual authority of the commune.⁴⁷

The Roman nobility and the ancient past

Elite Roman families were also aware of the benefits of associating with the past. Many of them tried to create when necessary, and preserve when possible, links between their families and the ancient empire. This was reflected in their institutional affiliations, the art and architecture that they sponsored, and in the quasi-mythical lineages and symbols that they adopted. The medieval senate, for example, was attractive to Roman elites both for its inherited prestige and for the actual power that it offered. In the earlier Middle Ages, the senate had been the stomping ground of Rome's most elite families, and the term "senatus" referred to the most prominent lay members of Roman society.⁴⁸ Even though the early medieval senate had been stripped of real power and relegated essentially to ceremonial functions, elites still clung to their senatorial titles.⁴⁹

The senate, revived in the mid-twelfth century to defend communal prerogatives, was in my estimation a primary locus for social dispute from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. The large twelfth-century assembly, originally comprising as many as fifty-six senators, was peopled by many of humble, if not obscure, origin.⁵⁰ It remained a popular representative institution for about seventy years. After Innocent III, however, it was reduced to two men, often papally appointed. At this point, the

⁴⁷ It is possible that the commune, with the papacy departed, assumed a greater role in the administration of spiritual life. The Statutes of 1363 in general confirm this notion. An opening statute, for instance, treats the commune's authority to punish heretics. Re, ed., *Statuti* I.2, p.3.

⁴⁸ Federico Marazzi, "Aristocrazia e società (secoli VI - XI)," in *Roma medievale*, ed. André Vauchez (Rome: Editori Laterza, 2001), 58.

⁴⁹ Marazzi has claimed that the senate's only function in this early period was participating in the installation of new popes. *Ibid.*, 59.

⁵⁰ Senatorial lists can be found in Salimei, *Senatori e statuti*. Several of Salimei's errors are corrected in Bartoloni, "Per la storia del senato romano."

senate became the main office, other than the papacy, through which Roman elites exercised power and influence. To advertise their control of the senate, Roman noble families, by the end of the thirteenth century, festooned the facade of the Senatorial Palace on the Capitoline Hill with their coats of arms.⁵¹ In addition, the two noble senators of 1299 painted the walls of the Capitol palace with Latin verses proclaiming the rights and responsibilities, and the civil and criminal jurisdiction, of the senators and the city government.⁵² The Roman nobility, with the help of the papacy, had successfully co-opted an important part of the Roman republican past.

The association between Roman elite families and the senate remained so strong throughout the Middle Ages that some scholars have termed the upper tier of Roman nobility “senatorial aristocracy.”⁵³ Of the 95 senators between 1306 and 1347, 78 came from only five ultra-elite families.⁵⁴ No wonder, then, that the Anonimo romano, and even Cola di Rienzo, often used the terms “barone” and “senatore” interchangeably. Elites promoted this association on their tombs, as they were often depicted donning not war attire, but senatorial robes.⁵⁵ An effect of noble sway in the

⁵¹ Musto, *Apocalypse in Rome* fig. 6.

⁵² The senators were Pietro Stefaneschi and Andrea Normanni. The verse runs, “Roma, senatores, mandat, si vultis honores/ Haec custodiri; se fertilitate potiri/ Iustitia laeta sit plebs et pace quieta/ Supplicio dignos cunctos punite malignos/ Dignaque maiores compescat poena minores/ Sit vobis cura camerae defendere iura/ Et pupillorum defensoresque domorum/ Sitis sacrarum sic pauperis et viduarum./ Partibus auditis vos respondere velitis/ Lites finite cito sed decernite rite./ Scripta super quae sunt fecerunt qui modo praesunt/ Omnipotens quare Deus hos semper tueare/ Transtiberim gaude quia cives sunt tibi laude/ Hi duo solemni digni famaue perenni. D. Lambertus Gaetanus de Pisis erat tunc Iudex et Conservator Camerae Urbis.” Quoted from Salimei, *Senatori e statuti* 89. See also Gian-Battista De Rossi, “La loggia del comune di Roma,” *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma* (1882).

⁵³ Carocci, “Una nobiltà bipartita.”

⁵⁴ The five families were the Colonna, Orsini, Annibaldi, Savelli, and Conti. *Ibid.*: 98, n.62.

⁵⁵ P. Delogu, “Castelli e palazzi. La nobiltà duecentesca nel territorio laziale,” in *Roma anno 1300. Atti della IV settimana di studi di storia dell'arte medievale dell'Università di Roma “La Sapienza”*, ed. Angiola Maria Romanini (Rome: Erma di Bretschneider, 1983). The differing depictions of nobles and *cavallerotti* (usually donning military garb) can be seen in plates 29-32 in André Vauchez, ed., *Roma medievale* (Rome: Editori Laterza, 2001). And finally, a fascinating study is Jörg Garms, Roswitha Juffinger, and Bryan Ward-Perkins, eds., *Die Mittelalterlichen Grabmäler in Rom und Latium vom 13. bis zum 15. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols. (Rome and Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981).

senate was that the primary loci for social conflict were shifted to the realm of culture. We will see, in fact, that the status quo of mid-Trecento Rome was increasingly challenged in the arenas of history writing, memory, and ability to make political use of the past.

Families such as the Colonna also sought to augment the family image by acquiring ancient artifacts. While in the East in the 1220's, cardinal Giovanni Colonna acquired a relic that came to symbolize Colonna power. Enshrined in the church of Santa Prassede, this "greatest of Colonna relics" was the lower fragment of a marble column, supposedly where Christ had been scourged.⁵⁶ The Colonna, who no doubt enjoyed the "colonna" pun, gained through its ownership prestigious connection, even if invented, to earliest Christianity and the Paleo-Christian heritage.⁵⁷

Within Rome, elite families competed to dominate neighborhoods and create enclaves in which they and their dependents could live in relative safety. While they engaged in frenzied tower-building as often as their counterparts in other Italian cities, the Romans also had at their disposal a vast array of ancient monuments by which they augmented both their military power and its symbolic manifestations. Some of these monuments were the most contested real estate in medieval Rome. The Colosseum, for example, was owned in the twelfth century by the blue-blooded Frangipane. A century later, however, they were forced to surrender it to the more prosperous and energetic Annibaldi. Opposing the transfer, Innocent IV tried unsuccessfully to claim the property as a papal fief. When, in the mid-thirteenth century, the Annibaldi split into several branches, one fulsomely named itself the "Annibaldi de Coliseo."⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Brentano, *Rome Before Avignon* 180. Jerusalem's church of the Holy Sepulchre also claims a column of the scourging.

⁵⁷ We will meet several more Giovanni Colonnas, at least one of them a cardinal. The complex genealogy of the elite Roman families has been mapped by Sandro Carocci. For the Colonna, see Carocci, *Baroni di Roma* 353-80.

⁵⁸ Brentano, *Rome Before Avignon* 190.

Besides offering prestige, ancient monuments were also frequently transformed into formidable fortifications from which Roman elites waged their rumbles. The Theater of Marcellus, for example, was the base for a Pierleoni fortress, and was later used similarly by the Savelli.⁵⁹ The Orsini owned the Theater of Pompey, though the jewel in their real estate crown was the tomb of Hadrian (Castel Sant'Angelo), a fact that forced numerous popes, fearing armed assaults on the Vatican, to rely on them for protection. Across the river, the Colonna owned of the Mausoleum of Augustus, like Castel Sant'Angelo an easily fortified circular structure used to dominate surrounding neighborhoods. These monuments, the tombs and civic structures of the ancient city, became in the Middle Ages the nuclei from which prominent Roman families projected their military force.⁶⁰

Such were the fates of the great, and enduring, Roman monuments. But there existed in Rome as well an incalculable rubble from which were plumed countless columns, inscriptions, marble slabs, decorative tiles—in short, spolia—that went to adorn, not only defensive structures, but domestic housing. The Crescenzi, for example, an older elite family, built a home in the mid-eleventh century using a hoard of spolia essentially as bricks in the framework.⁶¹ It was not that the owner, Nicolaus, was too parsimonious to buy new materials—spolia after all, were cheap, costing only the price of transport—but he recognized the prestige that using ancient artifacts proffered him. Above the main entrance, Nicolaus inscribed a proclamation that in building such a home, he chased not vainglory, but desired, rather, to restore the

⁵⁹ Ibid. 15.

⁶⁰ For summaries of the property holdings of particular Roman families, see in particular: Ibid. ch.5. and Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City*.

⁶¹ U. Gnoli, "La casa di Nicola di Crescente o casa di Pilato," *L'Urbe* 5 (1940). The Crescenzi house did actually have an original defensive tower above it. This tower, called the Tor Monzone in some sources (so-called because Nicola's inscription referred to the building as a 'mansione') was destroyed in 1312 during Henry VII's provocative visit. *Guida d'Italia: Roma*, 481.

ancient elegance of Rome.⁶² What precisely did he mean by this? By “*decorem veterem Romae*” did he refer to ancient architectural aesthetics? Or did it imply morality? If we can infer anything from Latin’s blurring the distinction between the beautiful and the morally good (note the close connection between *decorare* “to adorn, embellish” and *decorum*, “that which is suitable or fitting”), we can perhaps understand Nicola’s intent to cultivate architecture that was both classically beautiful and that inspired ancient propriety of comportment.⁶³

Despite the abundance of ancient Roman fragments and building supplies available for immediate use, the demand for materials of antique appearance was so great that there developed a vibrant market in imitation *spolia*. A problem with original *spolia* was that, in their infinite variety, one risked architectural chaos. Many Romans in this period preferred to have the look, without the effort, of ancient decorative style. There consequently flourished, from the early twelfth century, small-scale industries producing imitation columns and capitals designed to order.⁶⁴

The medieval Roman relationship to the past, however, did not consist simply of adulation and appropriation. Destruction, as well, was common. But it was a practical destruction, necessitated by the demand for building materials, especially marble, and the physical nuisance of fallen monumental structures. Thus was born the bustling medieval quicklime, or modern chalk industry, as chunks of ancient buildings large and small were melted down to a reusable chalk material, or sliced and shaped into smaller or more fitting forms. The industry was influential enough that the area surrounding the sheds and smelting pots was called the “*Calcarario*,” even boasting its

⁶² “Non fuit ignarus cuius domus hec Nicolaus [...] quod fecit hanc non tam vana coegit gloria quam Romae veterem renovare decorem.” Romano, “Arte del medioevo romano: la continuità e il cambiamento,” 268.

⁶³ A similar ambiguity carries on in Italian, where both can merit “bello.” For a recent, brief account of this linguistic occurrence, see Tobias Jones, *The Dark Heart of Italy: Travels Through Time and Space Across Italy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2003) 18.

⁶⁴ Romano, “Arte del medioevo romano: la continuità e il cambiamento,” 272-3.

own churches, S. Nicola and Ss. Quaranta Martiri in Calcarario. From the twelfth to the thirteenth centuries, a few Roman families—the Cosmati, Vassalletti, and Laurentii—dominated the marble-working market.⁶⁵ Over time, marble-workers, or *marmorari*, became, through ties of patronage, people of status. First commissioned by the church, then by noble patrons, the *marmorari* eventually became a profession peopled by architects and intellectuals, who with professional pride declared themselves “Magistri Doctissimi Romani.”⁶⁶

By the fourteenth century, most of the artisanal, architectural, and artistic activity had dried up. When the papacy left for Avignon, a flood of papally funded artists and artisans left Rome, compounding the cultural withdrawal. However, the notion that the ancient Roman past possessed worth and power did not disappear. Rather, the ancient past acquired a particular relevance in the first half of the fourteenth century as Romans, struggling to re-define Rome’s civic identity, appealed to historical precedent to guide them.

The coronation of Petrarch and the Colonna

We can clearly perceive the cultural dominance of elite families in early fourteenth-century Rome as it was displayed in a highly symbolic ceremony in the Senatorial Palace on Easter Day 1341. On this day the celebrated poet Petrarch was crowned poet laureate. The Angevins were intimately involved, as the Neapolitan king Robert of Anjou had examined the poet and decreed him worthy of the laurel crown. Although he had planned on officiating, ill health ultimately prevented Robert from attending. Petrarch initiated the ceremony with an address expounding on the nature of

⁶⁵ Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City* 180.

⁶⁶ Romano, “Arte del medioevo romano: la continuità e il cambiamento,” 270. Discussing the period 1100-1300, and with abundant plates, is the definitive text: Peter C. Claussen, *Magistri Doctissimi Romani: Die Römischen Marmorkünstler des Mittelalters, Corpus Cosmatorum I* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1987).

poetry, then formally requesting the crown.⁶⁷ In response, two nobles—Orso degli Anguillara, and Giordano Orsini, both papally appointed senators—delivered a lengthy oration, in Latin, enumerating the poet’s honors: in addition to the status of *magister* and the rights and immunities granted university graduates, the diploma also conferred full Roman citizenship.⁶⁸ Following the public’s affirmation, Giordano Orsini handed Petrarch his long-awaited *privilegium lauree*, while Stefano Colonna il Vecchio delivered a concluding *laudatio*.⁶⁹ Finally, in a procession reversing the path traditionally followed by newly installed popes, Petrarch and a cohort of nobles and *popolo* traced their way from the Campidoglio to St. Peter’s Basilica, where Petrarch on the high altar offered his laurel crown.⁷⁰

The coronation ceremony reveals elements of Rome’s political and cultural hierarchies. Notable, for instance, is the conspicuous absence of the Roman commune. At first glance, the presence of two senators would seem to represent the commune well enough. Yet the participants also had in common a stridently pro-Angevin, and pro-papal, political stance. Both senators, remember, owed their position to the pope,

⁶⁷ Petrarch’s speech has been translated in: Ernest Hatch Wilkins, *Studies in the Life and Works of Petrarch* (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1955) 300-13. A transcription of the Latin text can be found in: Attilio Hortis, *Scritti inediti di Francesco Petrarca* (Trieste: 1874).

⁶⁸ Joseph B. Trapp, "The Poet Laureate: Rome, *Renovatio*, and *Translatio Imperii*," in *Rome in the Renaissance: The City and the Myth*, ed. P. A. Ramsey (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1982), 103-04. Wilkins listed eight specific honors: Petrarch was declared “magnum poetam et historicum”; his title “magister”; the laurel crown; accreditation as a professor of the poetic art and of history; the right to confer the crown on other poets; approval of his writings; the rights and privileges of professors of liberal arts; and Roman citizenship. Ernest Hatch Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) 28.

⁶⁹ Already seventy-six years old at the time of the coronation, Stefano Colonna il Vecchio had lived a colorful and impressive life. He served as papal rector of the Romagna (1289), the vicar of King of Naples (1332) and several times as senator of Rome (1328, 1339, 1342). He was one of the principal aggressors against the Caetani family at the turn of the century, and had almost single-handedly ignited the rage of Pope Boniface VIII, resulting in the exile of many Colonna and the expropriation of their property. Later, he would become one of the most hostile adversaries of Cola di Rienzo, and, despite his status as an octogenarian, organized large military campaigns against the popular regime. Petrarch lauded him as “summum militie decus,” noting his “vis animi” and his “corporis robur.” The Anonimo romano wrote of him as a venerable and fierce baron. Daniel Philip Waley, "Stefano il Vecchio Colonna," *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 27 (1960-): 433-36.

⁷⁰ Musto, *Apocalypse in Rome* 55.

and one was an Orsini to boot. And, although the Colonna were generally known for their pro-imperial tendencies, a small cluster of Guelf-oriented Colonna had unsurprisingly found favor in the papal curia.⁷¹ Stefano il Vecchio and his children belonged to this group. Stefano had in 1327 opposed his brother Sciarra's plans to bring to Rome Louis of Bavaria. On the day of his ceremony, therefore, the three men flanking Petrarch were papal and Angevin supporters, linking Petrarch with a political constellation including the Angevin king and his Guelf allies.

Petrarch's coronation was very much an academic celebration, conferring a *privilegium* full of university terminology, and much of it in Latin. As such, the ceremony put the cultural dominance of participating Roman elites on display. The three Roman barons, according to Petrarch, delivered their speeches in Latin.⁷² The ceremony offered them a wide audience including Neapolitan officials and Romans of every stripe and color. In front of that assembly of the important, the well-to-do, the learned, the aspiring, and the utterly common, the three barons flaunted their connections to the Angevin king and to the international culture of Latin learning. Among the triumvirate of elite families represented beside Petrarch, the Colonna in particular had attained a kind of eminence. Some of this derived from their personal relationship with the fêted poet. For during Petrarch's extended stay in Avignon, cardinal Giovanni Colonna, son of Stefano il Vecchio, had taken the poet under the Colonna wing, offering him the benefits and securities of elite patronage.⁷³ By participating in the coronation ceremony of 1341, Roman elites emphasized their

⁷¹ Stefano's son, Giacomo Colonna, for example, a good friend of Petrarch, nailed the pope's excommunication of Louis the Bavarian to the door of the Colonna church of S. Marcello. Ibid. 69.

⁷² Perhaps illuminating the short reach of many Roman elites' education, Petrarch is thought to have helped compose the senators' speeches. There are few sources for the event other than what Petrarch has written about it. See Francesco Petrarca, "Collatio laureationis," in *Opere latine di Francesco Petrarca*, ed. Antonietta Bufano (Turin: UTET, 1975).

⁷³ The Anonimo romano praised Giovanni Colonna as "one of the most shrewd and magnificent men of Rome" ("era delli più scaitriti e mannifichi de Roma"). Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, p.108.

cultural dominance over the city, and publicly highlighted their far-reaching political connections with influential artists and patrons.

Cardinal Giovanni Colonna possessed other claims to intellectual prestige and influence within the cultural sphere of early Trecento Rome. He was well educated, probably having studied law at Bologna, and thereafter serving as a judge in Rome.⁷⁴ He was named papal notary in September 1327, and a few months later was elevated to the cardinalate by John XXII.⁷⁵ His appointment was probably significant to the Colonna, since the Avignon papacy was accepting Romans to the cardinalate with increasing reluctance.⁷⁶ Giovanni was named later that year cardinal-deacon of the church of Sant'Angelo in Pescheria, the very neighborhood where Cola would cut his political teeth. Over the course of his twenty-plus-year cardinalate, Giovanni also obtained prebends and ecclesiastical benefices in numerous dioceses in the East, in addition to holding offices in churches throughout Italy and France.⁷⁷ During his many years in Avignon, Giovanni Colonna became one of Petrarch's most powerful protectors, and it was he who convinced the poet to choose Rome over Paris for his coronation site.

There was, however, another Giovanni Colonna who was also an important personage in Trecento Rome. Regrettably, the two have often been often confused, or even conflated as the same individual.⁷⁸ The cardinal Giovanni discussed above was about twenty years older, and a good deal more politically powerful, than his younger

⁷⁴ Bologna was the university of choice for many Colonna. So often did Colonna youths go to Bologna to study, that the family maintained houses there for them. Sandro Carocci, "La nobiltà duecentesca: aspetti della ricerca recente," in *Roma medievale: aggiornamenti*, ed. P. Delogu (Florence: All'insegna del Giglio, 1998), 163.

⁷⁵ He probably replaced his recently deceased uncle Pietro Colonna. Musto, *Apocalypse in Rome* 68-9.

⁷⁶ Carocci, *Baroni di Roma* 61.

⁷⁷ He was, for example, archdeacon at Viviers (1327) and Châlons-sur-Marne (1342); canon at St. Martin of Tours (1331), and at the Roman churches of San Eustachio (1327) and Santa Maria Rotonda (1328); and archpriest at Santa Maria Maggiore (1336). For other offices, see Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, "Giovanni di Stefano Colonna," *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 27 (1960-): esp.333.

⁷⁸ For the convincing argument that they were not the same person, see F. Surdich, "Giovanni di Bartolomeo Colonna," *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 27 (1960-): 337.

namesake.⁷⁹ This younger Giovanni (who unfortunately must be differentiated from yet another younger Giovanni, or “Janni” Colonna of this same period), originated from a subsidiary Colonna branch, the lords of Gallicano. A Dominican friar, he had studied in Paris and then spent the late 1320’s as chaplain to the archbishop of Nicosia, Cyprus, who happened to be a Roman Conti. An adventurous type, Giovanni was thought to have traveled in these years to Persia, Arabia, and Egypt. Though a scholar “of no specially extraordinary achievements,”⁸⁰ Fra Giovanni played his part in correlating the Colonna name with cultural achievement.

Fra Giovanni was sent in 1332 to Avignon, where he became a close friend, and later, a correspondent of Petrarch.⁸¹ Following the 1341 coronation, the pair spent afternoons wandering about the Roman ruins, ruminating on the past and the present condition of Rome. In a letter to Fra Giovanni of November 30, 1341, Petrarch wrote:

We used to wander together in that great city...and at each step there was present something which would excite our tongue and mind...you know all these things not because you are a Roman citizen but because since your youth you have been intensely curious about such information. For today who are more ignorant about Roman affairs than the Roman citizens?⁸²

Petrarch’s disdain for the cultural and intellectual life of contemporary Rome is readily apparent, and he blamed Romans for their ignorance, and lack of curiosity, about the Roman past. Yet Giovanni he singled out as one of exceptional learning and intellectual curiosity. While in Avignon in the 1330’s, Giovanni had written *De viris illustribus*, an encyclopedia divided into two lists of 330 ancient pagan and Christian

⁷⁹ Braxton Ross, in his article on Giovanni Colonna’s *Mare Historiarum* accepts Surdich’s argument concerning the identities of the two Giovanni. Braxton Ross, "The Tradition of Livy in the 'Mare Historiarum' of Fra Giovanni Colonna," *Studi Petrarqueschi* n.s.6 (1989).

⁸⁰ Braxton Ross, "Giovanni Colonna, Historian at Avignon," *Speculum* 45, no. 4 (1970): 538.

⁸¹ Petrarch’s *Epistolae rerum familiarum* contains eight surviving letters to Fra Giovanni. They are II.5-8; III.13; and VI. 2-4.

⁸² Cited from: Musto, *Apocalypse in Rome* 56.

authors.⁸³ One of the valuable contributions of this work is his bibliography of the works of each author, in which he comments on each work's availability.⁸⁴ In the later 1330's, he set about writing a universal history covering creation to about 1250 A.D. marvelously titled *Mare historiarum*. Although Giovanni had intended to include the recent history and present condition of Trecento Rome, his early death in 1343 or 1344 curtailed its scope. Even so, it was a substantial text, comprising seven books and seven hundred and thirty-two chapters, and demonstrating Giovanni's familiarity with Augustine, Justin, Eutropius, Orosius, Seneca, and Valerius Maximus.⁸⁵

That the Colonna maintained their positions in the Avignon Curia better than most Roman elite families provided them with unmatched access to a vibrant cultural world. This was manifested not only in people—through, say, Colonna patronage of learned men like Petrarch—but also in access to materials unavailable at Rome. Giuseppe Billanovich stated long ago that Rome in this period “offered little opportunity for buying books.”⁸⁶ The few books that were for sale often came from France, and in particular through Chartres.⁸⁷ More recently, Massimo Miglio has lamented that no study of the Roman book trade has yet been conducted.⁸⁸ In the absence of a detailed study, however, we do know that families with substantial

⁸³ Surdich enumerates Giovanni's sources for the *De viris* as Jerome, Isidore of Seville, Lactantius, Eusebius, Seneca, Vincent of Beauvais, and Walter Burley. Surdich, "Giovanni di Bartolomeo Colonna," 337-38.

⁸⁴ For example, Fra Giovanni wrote that Livy's history “contains 150 books, but the whole, save only thirty, is by no means to be had, although rarely indeed forty may be found. Yet I did see the fourth Decade in the archives of the church of Chartres, but the script was so ancient that it could scarcely be read by anyone.” Of Valerius Maximus, one of Cola's principal influences, Colonna wrote, “he is very common among the Latins today.” Cited from: Ross, "Giovanni Colonna, Historian at Avignon," 541.

⁸⁵ Ross, "The Tradition of Livy," 85. The manuscript remains unpublished. G. Waitz found and published the chapter titles of the seventh book in: Giovanni Colonna, "Mare Historiarum," in *Monumenta Germanica Historiae, Scriptores*, v.24, ed. Georg Waitz (Leipzig: 1879), 337-38.

⁸⁶ Giuseppe Billanovich, "Petrarch and the Textual Tradition of Livy," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 14 (1951): 156.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ “L'esame della tradizione libraria romana del Trecento è ancora tutto da compiere...” Massimo Miglio, "Cortesia romana," in *Alle origini della nuova Roma. Martino V (1417-1431): atti del convegno 2-5 marzo 1992*, ed. Chiabò Maria et. al. (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1992), 321, n.42.

libraries tended to circulate books among themselves and their friends, reinforcing the point that, to fulfill literary ambitions, one had better know the right people.⁸⁹ The noble families' hereditary control over information restricted the flow of cultural capital in Roman society.

In contrast to Rome, France, and particularly Avignon, was quickly becoming a "promised land" attracting scholars in search of libraries and a cosmopolitan scholarly community.⁹⁰ Cardinal Jacopo Stefaneschi, a Roman noble whose three-volume *Opus metricum* recounted events from the 1280's to 1314, had been educated in Paris.⁹¹ As for Avignon, Giovanni Boccaccio's description of the papal city as the "womb of Muses" reveals the widespread success it had achieved in just a few decades as a cultural center of major importance.⁹² The papal library there is thought to have been among the best in Europe, containing over 2,000 volumes of law and theology, as well as biblical commentaries, history, sermons, philosophy, political treatises, and a sizeable collection of Roman texts.⁹³ In addition, with constant traffic of scholars and diplomats, Avignon became a nucleus for the north-south transmission of manuscripts. Many of these, classical texts and others, had been collected and preserved by the Carolingians and their descendants in northern Europe, and in Trecento Avignon they were compiled and occasionally edited and garnished with commentaries.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Miglio noted the Orsini's circulation of collections within the family. Ibid.

⁹⁰ The phrase is De Caprio's. Vincenzo De Caprio, "Roma e Italia centrale nel Duecento e Trecento," in *Letteratura italiana: storia e geografia. 1. L'età medievale* (Turin: Einaudi, 1987), 497.

⁹¹ Andreas Rehberg, "Rome," in *Medieval Italy: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Christopher Kleinhenz (NY: Routledge, 2004), 986.

⁹² "Avinioni Musarum alv[us]..." Giovanni Boccaccio, *Opere latine minori*, ed. A.F. Massera (Bari: 1928) 112.

⁹³ Ross, "Giovanni Colonna, Historian at Avignon," 534. See also M. Faucon, *La librairie des papes d'Avignon*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1886-1887).

⁹⁴ Baxton Ross marshals as examples the compilation of Livy, the revival of Seneca's *Tragedies*, and the transmission of texts such as the younger Pliny's letters, geographical studies such as those by Pomponius Mela, and the works of Propertius. Ross, "Giovanni Colonna, Historian at Avignon," 535-36. The centrality of Avignon as a nucleus of document exchange was propounded by B.L. Ullman, "Some Aspects of the Origin of Italian Humanism," *Philological Quarterly* 20 (1941): 29-33.

As a result of their Avignon connections, the Colonna established some of the largest private book collections of their age. A case in point was the impressive collection of the Avignon cardinal Pietro Colonna (d.1326), whose holdings outnumbered all but three other contemporary private libraries.⁹⁵ His possessions numbered many clerical books: a gradual, two antiphons, a pontifical, a *liber officiorum*, more than seventeen whole or partial Bibles, four volumes of saints' lives, twenty-seven volumes of sermons, seventeen volumes of patristic texts, including Saint Augustine and Saint Anselm, and numerous Biblical commentaries. This collection was supplemented by twenty-seven juristic works of both ancient and contemporary authors, Scholastic texts by Aquinas and Bonaventure, ten volumes of ancient and ecclesiastical history, and one medical text.⁹⁶ Such a library illustrates the unparalleled access to books that a Colonna could enjoy.

The Colonna also maintained a regular, almost inherited, succession to benefices in France, Flanders, and England.⁹⁷ Because of the rich libraries and cultural activities of these regions, these benefices opened to them valuable channels of learning. A prime example is Landolfo Colonna, uncle to Fra Giovanni, who was, for more than thirty years, canon at Chartres.⁹⁸ Like his nephew, Landolfo engaged in writing history. His *Breviarium historiarum* is a "ponderous" history spanning creation to the modern day.⁹⁹ He also wrote the *Tractatus de statu et mutatione*

⁹⁵ Not including, of course, the pope's libraries. Hermine Kühn-Steinhausen, "Il cardinale Pietro Colonna e la sua biblioteca," *Rivista di storia della chiesa in Italia* 5 (1951): 351.

⁹⁶ For the inventory of his collection, see: Ibid.: 353-57.

⁹⁷ Billanovich, "Petrarch and the Textual Tradition of Livy," 153.

⁹⁸ Like many Colonna, Landolfo had studied law in Bologna. He recorded his experiences in his *Tractatus brevis de pontificali officio*. Massimo Miglio, "Landolfo Colonna," *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 27 (1960-): 349

⁹⁹ As described by Billanovich, "Petrarch and the Textual Tradition of Livy," 154. When presenting his work to the pope, Landolfo stated: "a creatione primi hominis usque ad moderna tempora abreviare curavi, et pauca de multis brevissimaque de amplissimis a tot preclaris digesta scriptoribus iocundum satis compendium recollegi rerumque notabilium seriem...deducere procuravi." Giuseppe Billanovich, "Gli umanisti e le cronache medioevali. Il *Liber Pontificalis*, le *Decadi* di Tito Livio e il primo umanesimo a Roma," in *Italia medioevale e umanistica* (1958), 123.

imperii, a pro-Guelf treatise later studied by Marsilius of Padua and incorporated into his *De translatione imperii*, though only after converting it into a Ghibelline panegyric.¹⁰⁰

Although not particularly innovative as a historian, following as he did thirteenth-century models in his *Breviarium*, Landolfo was a curious and energetic researcher, and his stores of books reflect his wide-ranging interests.¹⁰¹ He never built a private library to rival Pietro's; rather, he frequently used the cathedral library, which kept registers of his loans. These registers, studied by Giuseppe Billanovich, illustrate the great variety of works to which Landolfo Colonna had access.¹⁰² Over many years, he assembled a respectable private collection, including some contemporary writings, and an impressive set of ancient histories including the *Ephemeris belli Troiani* of Dictys of Crete, the *Epitome* of Florus, and Decades I, III, and IV of Livy's *ab Urbe condita*.¹⁰³ When he left Chartres for Avignon in 1328, he brought with him a copy he had found there of the rare fourth Decade. Sharing the

¹⁰⁰ Billanovich, "Petrarch and the Textual Tradition of Livy," 153.

¹⁰¹ Miglio, "Et rerum facta est," 44.

¹⁰² The details are fascinating, indicating the range of Landolfo's interests: in 1299, and again in 1301, he borrowed Boethius' *De consolazione*; in late 1303, he returned John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, a volume of Livy, Boethius' *De consolazione*, and Cicero's *In Catilinam* and the *Philippics*. In 1308, he took out Orosius' *Histories*, which also contained some writings of Bishop Fulbert; later that year, he took Justinus' *Epitome* of the *Philippic Histories* of Pompeus Trogus, Peter of Blois' *Contra Judaeos*, and again the Livy. In 1318, he borrowed a glossed psalter. Billanovich, "Petrarch and the Textual Tradition of Livy," 154-55.

¹⁰³ Of the 142 books of Livy, thirty-five today survive (1-10 and 21-45). As to their availability in the fourteenth century, Billanovich supplies details: the first Decade survived in numerous, generally reliable, copies from throughout the early Middle Ages, most descending from an archetype prepared by two illustrious Roman families. The more problematic but compelling third Decade (it narrates Rome's struggle against Carthage) survived through various codices, many corrupt or incomplete. The fourth and fifth Decades, in subject matter of narrower appeal, were rarer. The fourth, though quoted at intervals, disappeared, without a single twelfth- or thirteenth-century copy. It reappeared suddenly in the early fourteenth century, spreading rapidly in a "flood of copies." The fifth Decade's first half, finally, was discovered in a single fifth-century manuscript in 1527 by Simon Grynaeus. *Ibid.*: 147-50. For particulars on Landolfo's collection, see: Billanovich, "Petrarch and the Textual Tradition of Livy," 157-58.

manuscript with Petrarch, both scholars worked to compile the most complete version of the history.¹⁰⁴

Returning in 1329 to Rome, Landolfo died only a few months after his arrival. As Billanovich wrote, “Landolfo deserved to be greeted with a public festival; since, like the swallow which heralds a new spring, he brought back to Rome a far more complete Livy text than had been seen between the Colosseum and the Pantheon for many centuries.”¹⁰⁵ He brought back many other books too, which were dispersed after his death. His copy of Lactantius, for example, went to his nephew Fra Giovanni, while Petrarch, when he came to Rome in 1337, bought several miscellaneous compilations of sacred authors.¹⁰⁶ Landolfo’s copy of Livy passed to his brother, cardinal Giovanni Colonna, and soon thereafter to Petrarch.¹⁰⁷

Clearly, the acquisition of books was an important part of the dissemination of knowledge and culture in Rome in this period. But it must be noted that not everyone bought books. Some books circulated amongst readers, perhaps while between owners. Landolfo’s copy of Livy’s *ab Urbe condita* (Paris Lat. 5690), for example, and the *Liber Pontificalis* (Vat. Lat. 3762) both circulated in the 1330’s around Rome to Colonna friends and family.¹⁰⁸ Elites such as Bartolomeo Carbone de’ Papazurri, for example, consulted Landolfo’s copy of Livy. Though poor, Giovanni Cavallini was able to buy the *Liber Pontificalis*, which he used in composing his *Polistoria*,¹⁰⁹ and he also owned a codex of Lactantius.¹¹⁰ In addition to buying or borrowing from elites, a humble cleric like Giovanni would likely have enjoyed access to the library of

¹⁰⁴ Billanovich, "Petrarch and the Textual Tradition of Livy," 162-63.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.: 166.

¹⁰⁶ Namely, Paris Lat. 1618 and 2540. Ibid.: 158. See also: Miglio, "Landolfo Colonna," 351.

¹⁰⁷ There is some question as to how and when this occurred. See Billanovich, "Petrarch and the Textual Tradition of Livy," 158, n.3.

¹⁰⁸ Billanovich, "Gli umanisti," 115ff.

¹⁰⁹ Marc A. Laureys, ed., *Iohannes Caballinus polistoria de virtutibus et dotibus romanorum* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1995) x. Like Cardinal Giovanni Colonna, Giovanni Cavallini was also a canon of Santa Maria Rotunda.

¹¹⁰ This codex still survives. Ross, "The Tradition of Livy," 85.

a Dominican house. One did not necessarily need to buy books to have access to them. One did, however, need the right connections.¹¹¹

The above discussion, based in large part on Billanovich's research, clearly illustrates the crucial role played by France and Avignon in maintaining culture and learning in Trecento Rome. We can infer from his results some relevant conclusions, particularly concerning the period from about 1320 to 1340. Immediately apparent is the central position occupied by the noble families in maintaining and controlling the influx of cultural capital into Rome. This was true especially of the Colonna, who appear to have dominated Roman cultural life. Their patronage of high-profile men of letters such as Petrarch offered them a degree of visibility in the cultural world at large, and especially at the papal curia. It was, as was noted, at cardinal Giovanni Colonna's behest that Petrarch chose Rome for his coronation. Furthermore, the Colonna's almost dynastic possession of benefices in southern France opened for them a rich world of learning, including libraries, archives and scholarly communities, that in bits and pieces filtered back to their native city. By the 1340's, their cultural hegemony would be challenged by Cola di Rienzo, who made the possession of knowledge and culture one of the pillars of his claim to power.

Although elite families such as the Colonna controlled to a great degree the cultural life of mid-Trecento Rome, it must be reiterated that they were not its sole proprietors. Further, their dominance over that world was then in many ways being called into question. An important figure in this development was Giovanni Cavallini dei Cerroni, mentioned already for his activity in the book trade especially following Landolfo Colonna's death. The Cerroni, on the rise in the fourteenth century, are a fine example of an economically successful family, many of whose members were

¹¹¹ A good example is Petrarch, the designated heir of several Colonna collections. Agapito the Elder, for example, bequeathed a collection to the poet, which Petrarch later returned to Colonna. Billanovich, "Petrarch and the Textual Tradition of Livy," 158, n.3.

bovattieri, the stockbreeders gradually replacing older aristocratic families whose fortunes were on the wane.¹¹² By 1325 they already had enough clout for the young Giovanni to obtain the position of canon at Santa Maria Rotunda. Later that year, he moved to Avignon, where he was engaged as a papal scribe.¹¹³ The humble friar was never promoted, and died twenty-four years later in the same office. Although Cavallini's career was far less remarkable than the Colonna careers cited thus far, he was well-learned and composed his encyclopedic *Polistoria* while in Avignon. The work followed the *Mirabilia* in expounding on the illustrious men of Rome and on the city's monuments and antiquities.

Although Giovanni Cavallini did not comment on contemporary Rome in the *Polistoria*, his comments in the margins of his copy of Valerius Maximus are highly illustrative of the social contest then being waged through the medium of culture. As Giovanni read, he glossed the ancient historian's text with comparisons to contemporary Rome. The manuscript's margins, in fact, are at points littered with Cavallini's hand. As noted in the previous chapter, he wrote a bitter comment about Tebaldo di Sant'Eustachio, a Roman noble who, in his opinion, "lived a bad life" ("vivit mala vita").¹¹⁴ We encountered Tebaldo back in 1327 when he was right-hand man to Sciarra Colonna in the struggles anticipating Louis the Bavarian's arrival. Villani, we remember, had accused them of conspiring and ignoring the wishes of the *popolo*.¹¹⁵ Cavallini's criticisms sometimes extended to the Roman nobility as a whole: "The Roman nobles, as long as they desire to rule singly, have all lost

¹¹² When the Annibaldi met with financial crisis, the Cerroni bought many of their properties. Gennaro, "Mercanti e bovattieri," 182-83.

¹¹³ Laureys, ed., *Iohannes Caballinus polistoria de virtutibus et dotibus romanorum* ix.

¹¹⁴ The rather lengthy invective is published in Miglio, "Et rerum facta est," 46-47, n.144.

¹¹⁵ Villani, *Nuova cronica* XI.55.

power.”¹¹⁶ His most vitriolic comments, however, he reserved for the Colonna: “Take note, ungrateful Colonna, did you ever have such friends as in the time of Boniface VIII? To which of their heirs did you return the booty? To none, of course...because [you are] abusive, dangerous, and savage to friends, inflicting them with servitude as unhappy and wretched servants.”¹¹⁷

What prompted in Cavallini such resentment against the Roman nobility? And why did he target in particular the Colonna? Cavallini’s civic pride was clearly part of it. This is evident in his signature on the Valerius manuscript: “I, Giovanni Cavallini, a Roman [read] these, and they are approved by genuine authorities.”¹¹⁸ It is also reflected in the acrostic poems he composed using the letters ROMA and SPQR,¹¹⁹ and finally, in his sweetly evocative rumination on the letter “R”: “Note the excellent letter R that stands for Rome.”¹²⁰ Cavallini clearly took issue with the way his beloved Rome was governed. His comments reflect his dismay concerning the excessive power of a few, a reasonable enough explanation for his hostility to Roman noble families. In one margin he wrote: “Note the tyrants and the Roman nobles made greater by the teats of the Roman church and the patrimony of the crucifix, that ought to be disbursed to the poor.”¹²¹ Cavallini’s civic-minded outlook made it difficult for him to accept the

¹¹⁶ “Urbis Romane nobiles dum imperare singulis cupiunt imperium omnes perdidere...” All of Cavallini’s marginal quotations have been cited from Miglio, “Et rerum facta est,” 46-48. All translations are mine.

¹¹⁷ “Notate Columpnenses ingrati, nonne tales Bonifatii pape VIII tempore amicos habuistis? qualia eorum heredibus premia reddidistis? Certe nulla, quia amicis contumeliosi, periculosi et inhumani, afficientes servitutibus domesticos infelices et miseros.” Or elsewhere, “Nota contra Columpnenses et quoslibet inhumanos pariter et ingratos...” Ibid., 47-48.

¹¹⁸ “Hec Iohannes Caballini Romanus, et auctoritatibus probantur autenticis.” Ibid., 47.

¹¹⁹ “Regalis sedes sacerdotii/ Origo armorum et legum/ Mater fidei et exemplorum/ Amicorum et regum auxilium” and “*Salus nationum/ Patrocinium populorum/ Quiritum disciplina/ Regum refugium.*” Ibid.

¹²⁰ “Nota excellentiam huius littere R que Romam designat.” Ibid., 47, n.145.

¹²¹ “Nota tyrannos et nobiles Romanos amplificatos ex uberibus ecclesie Romane et patrimonio crucifixi, quod deberet pauperibus erogari.” Cited from: Ibid., 50, n.154.

political instability wrought by noble fighting: “Note that because of private quarrels the republic is governed poorly.”¹²²

History in Trecento Rome

Ruminating on the twelfth-century fascination with ancient Rome, Herbert Bloch noted that, despite a renewed interest in ancient Roman arts and architecture, Roman history remained largely ignored. “Even the greatest historians,” he explained, “were content with poor compendia such as Paul the Deacon’s modernized and Christianized Eutropius or Orosius’ *Historia adversus paganos*.”¹²³ Though many ancient histories were available to them—among which were Valerius Maximus, Lucan, Tacitus, Suetonius, Florus, Caesar, Livy, Ammianus Marcellinus, Sallust, and Cornelius Nepos—few, if any, were curious about their historical contents, preferring instead to glean only stylistic influences. The twelfth-century chronicler Romuald of Salerno is a case in point: he cited as his principal sources Orosius, Jerome, and Bede, all of whom were deeply immersed in the Christian historical tradition.¹²⁴

J.G.A Pocock has attributed the general tendency of ignoring the ancient historians to the profound sense of discontinuity between pagan and Christian Rome. Roman histories, he argued, had little institutional value to medieval Romans, and were thus largely ignored.¹²⁵ But Pocock’s analysis does not apply to the whole of the

¹²² “Nota quod propter privatas dissentiones res publica inutiliter administratur.” Ibid. In a few cases, however, where one would expect Cavallini to condemn the Colonna for their part in this civil unrest, he went lightly on them: “Note in favor of the Colonna, who never start a fight unless they have reason or need” (“Nota pro Columpnensibus qui nunquam pugnam exercent sine occasione aut necessitate...”) Miglio, “Et rerum facta est,” 50, n.154.

¹²³ Bloch, “The New Fascination with Ancient Rome,” 634.

¹²⁴ D.J.A. Matthew, “The Chronicle of Romuald of Salerno,” in *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Richard William Southern*, ed. R.H.C. Davis and J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 259.

¹²⁵ Pocock argued that Roman jurisprudence, successfully integrated through the intellectual framework of scholastic rationalism, had a much greater impact on medieval society. Pocock, “The Origins of the Study of the Past,” 225-26.

Roman Middle Ages. Indeed, during the first half of the fourteenth century, many learned Romans began to pursue ancient history with particular fervor. To explain this, I would argue that ancient histories offered an alternative to the papal histories traditionally dominating the field of “Roman history” in the Middle Ages. It was exceedingly difficult for most earlier medieval chroniclers, Romans included, to conceive of a Rome independent of papacy or empire. But the particular exigencies of the fourteenth century made that improbability a reality, and thus the Romans developed a taste for ancient histories. In the preface to his chronicle, the Anonimo romano cited Livy, Sallust, Lucan, and “moiti atri scrittori,” or “many other writers” as the inspirations behind his work. By citing only ancient Roman historians as his primary influences, I believe that the chronicler emphasized the civic, and lay, character of his chronicle.

That the Anonimo romano was distancing himself from the tradition of Christian history is attested to by the general paucity of references to God in his work. Many medieval chronicles offered theocentric explanations for the progression of history, attributing to God the role of the moral balance-keeper. This was true for some of the Anonimo’s contemporary citizen-chroniclers, most notably Giovanni and Matteo Villani, for whom God played a decisive role in the development of the Florentine commune.¹²⁶

The Anonimo romano did not summarily excise God from his chronicle, but rather accorded him a minimal supporting role. The two major instances in which the

¹²⁶ More muted, though still relevant, I think, perhaps are the views of Dino Compagni. In his introduction, he wrote, “I now intend to write for the benefit of those who will inherit more fortunate times, so that they may recognize the gifts of God, who rules and governs through all times.” Later, in Book 1, he added, “[a]nd may [Florentines] look for God’s justice, which by many signs promises to visit upon them the evil which is the guilty’s due...” Daniel Bornstein claims that Compagni interpreted the ill fortune befalling Florence as divine retribution for its sins. Dino Compagni, *Chronicle of Florence*, trans. Daniel Bornstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986) xvii, 5, 6. Giovanni Villani, on the other hand, interpreted Florence’s successes of the early fourteenth century as a clear sign of divine approval. Villani, *Nuova cronica* v.1. See also Green, *Chronicle into History* 11,17.

Anonimo did mention God as a historical actor highlight episodes far removed from the ordinary, thereby emphasizing God's detachment from human affairs. In the first instance, he stated that God "waged a great vendetta" on a group of rebels who in 1353 seized the senatorship from the pope's control.¹²⁷ In this episode, God was not so much maintaining moral equilibrium in the universe, as he was, like a baron, responding to a personal insult, namely, the usurpation of his vicar's power.¹²⁸ In the other instance, the affluent Gianni Macellaro, having donated foodstuffs during the famine of 1338, found that his reserves had been miraculously multiplied. The Anonimo romano attributed this miracle to God's showing "that alms made in good faith to the needy please him great deal," and that "for each one, [God] would render one hundred, as it says in the Gospels."¹²⁹ Miracles, however, were exceptions to the norm, infrequent, and unrepresentative.

Medieval Rome, while never developing its own chronicle tradition, had a wide and varied historiographical foundation on which the Anonimo romano could have drawn.¹³⁰ There was, first of all, the considerable body of papal historiography such as the *Liber Pontificalis*, an extensive collection of papal biographies compiled between the sixth and the fifteenth centuries.¹³¹ There were also two important Roman texts, adapted from Latin originals, and dating from the mid-thirteenth century: the *Storie de Troia et de Roma*, a translation of an early twelfth-century work entitled the

¹²⁷ "Como papa Innocenzio fu creato, Dio li mustrao granne venetta de quelli che lli avevano tuoito lo senato." Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.26, p.163.

¹²⁸ Wright, ed., *The Life of Cola de Rienzo* 23-24.

¹²⁹ "Cosi Dio liberamente mustrao che bene li piace la elemosina de buono core nello bisuogno...e che per uno ne renne ciento, como nello Vagnelio dice." Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.9, p.37.

¹³⁰ Gustav Seibt has cited the "crushing weight of the ancient Roman and Christian inheritance" as one reason that Romans never fully developed a chronicle tradition reflecting their communal identity: "A Roma, il peso schiacciante dell'eredità della Roma antica e di quella cristiana rendeva difficile, per non dire impossibile, la creazione e lo sviluppo di un'identità comunale in senso stretto." Seibt, *Anonimo romano* 79.

¹³¹ For a discussion on whether the Anonimo romano might have been familiar with the *Liber Pontificalis*, see *ibid.* 73-74.

Liber Ystoriarum Romanorum; and *Le miracole de Roma*, a Roman dialect translation of the mid-twelfth century guidebook, the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*.¹³²

Also influential was the chronicle tradition maintained by the mendicant orders. The Dominican tradition of universal history was exemplified in Trecento Rome in three works: the *Mare Historiarum* of Giovanni Colonna, the *Breviarum historiarum* of Landolfo Colonna, and the *Polistoria* of Giovanni Cavallini.¹³³ While the Anonimo romano stated no intellectual debt to these writers, his assumptions as a historian share some important elements with them. For example, the unusual attention they devoted to Rome's two pasts – Christian and pagan – might have influenced the Anonimo. As will later be demonstrated, Cavallini and the two Colonnas were familiar with the *Liber Pontificalis*, but also with Livy and Valerius Maximus. Another similarity with the Dominican chroniclers is the Anonimo's interest in events outside his city. While much of his chronicle reflects his preoccupation with the civic identity of Rome, the Anonimo nonetheless attempted a synthetic analysis of the important events of his day both near and far.

The Anonimo romano seems also to have employed descriptive techniques reminiscent of the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*. Of particular note is the salient presence, and relevance, of the physical city for Rome's historical progression. In this he was perhaps influenced by the *Mirabilia*, and possibly Cavallini's *Polistoria*. These works are thought by some to typify a genre of historiography unique to medieval Rome, the proto-archaeological compendium, which wove narratives of the Roman past around monuments and ancient remains.¹³⁴ In the Anonimo's chronicle, as in the *Mirabilia* and the *Polistoria*, the remains of ancient buildings and monuments become reference

¹³² Anonimo romano, *Cronica, Vita di Cola di Rienzo* Introduction, 6-7.

¹³³ Seibt, *Anonimo romano* 75. Laureys, ed., *Iohannes Caballinus polistoria de virtutibus et dotibus romanorum*.

¹³⁴ Seibt, *Anonimo romano* 206.

points by which its author compares and contrasts the pagan past to the Christian present. By witnessing and recording the events occurring around him, the Anonimo placed the present into the larger context of a synthetic pagan-Christian past.¹³⁵ By extension, Rome's monuments, both standing and fallen, became relevant "actors" in Trecento Rome, influencing the course of the city's development.

It is also probable that the Anonimo romano found literary inspiration outside the restricted cultural sphere of Rome. One influence was the Dominican friar Martin of Troppau, whose chronicle he mentioned in the first chapter dedicated to Cola.¹³⁶ Like Martin, the Anonimo summarized his chapters, identifying each episode by as specific a chronological indicator as possible. G.M. Anselmi has suggested possible additional narrative models in Ferrara, Bologna, and Padua, though there is no clear evidence for them. However, Bolognese chronicles seem a likely influence, since the Anonimo spent years studying medicine there. Having moved there in learned circles, he was likely aware of how history was being recorded.¹³⁷ Other scholars have identified possible influences from the March of Treviso, most notably the *Cronica marchiae Trivixane* of Rolandino of Padua.¹³⁸

Like many contemporaries, the Anonimo romano held several Roman historians close to his heart. Explaining how ancient Romans had learned to record in writing their "fatti avanzarani e mannifichi," ("their illustrious and magnificent deeds"), he cited Livy, Sallust, and Lucan as examples of men who chronicled their people's past. One wonders whether he intentionally singled out these particular

¹³⁵ Ibid. 77.

¹³⁶ In a discussion about whether dreams can come true, the Anonimo romano noted that Fra Martin of Troppau had also commented on the topic. "Anco ne fao menzione frate Martino nella soa cronica." Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, p.126. Martinus Oppaviensis, *Chronicon Pontificum et Imperatorum*, ed. L. Weiland, vol. 22, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores* (Hannover: 1872). For a detailed analysis, see Seibt, *Anonimo romano* 74-5.

¹³⁷ G.M. Anselmi, "La Cronica dell'Anonimo romano," *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo e Archivio Muratoriano* 91 (1984). See also Seibt, *Anonimo romano* 81.

¹³⁸ G. Arnaldi, *Studi sui cronisti della Marca Trevigiana dell'età di Ezzelino da Romano* (Rome: 1963).

historians. First there was Livy, the noted annalistic historian whose imaginative evocations of human emotion and “tragic approach” to history appear to echo in the Anonimo’s portrayal of Cola’s rise and demise.¹³⁹ Like Sallust, the Anonimo romano in places depicted a greedy and ambitious aristocracy whose self-destructive behavior damaged and corrupted Roman society. Lucan, the epic poet, he mentions as one who recorded “li fatti de Cesari,” echoing his own fascination with “great deeds.” With all three, the Anonimo romano shared the tendency to craft models of mythical virtue and vice out of contemporary (or in Livy’s case, historical) figures to emphasize history writing’s didactic role.

The primary worth of the ancient Roman historians, to the Anonimo romano, was that “they did not allow the memory of many events of Rome’s history to perish.”¹⁴⁰ He made it clear in his introduction, however, that he knew, or liked, Livy best, frequently citing him. Of the five reasons he offered for writing history, two he attributed to Livy. Like Livy, he “wrote to put his mind at rest.”¹⁴¹ Explaining how his spirit had been stimulated by the material, he claimed he could not rest before writing of the great deeds and events he had witnessed in his life.¹⁴² Livy’s second reason was similarly personal: “while I am occupied with writing these things, I stay far away from, and do not see the cruelties long witnessed by our city.”¹⁴³ Similarly, the Anonimo claimed he found pleasure in writing, distancing him from his surroundings

¹³⁹ For brief introductions to Livy and Sallust, see Andrew Lintott, “Roman Historians,” in *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, ed. John Boardman, Jasper Griffin, and Oswyn Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 642-45.

¹⁴⁰ “...non lassaro perire la memoria de moite cose antepassate de Roma.” Anonimo romano, *Cronica* Prologue, 3-4.

¹⁴¹ “Questo faccio per ponere requie allo animo mio.” Ibid. Prologue, 4.

¹⁴² “Lo animo mio stimolato non posa finente dio che io non aio messe in scritto queste belle cose e novitati le quale vedute aio in mea vita.” Ibid. Prologue, 4-5.

¹⁴³ The Anonimo cited the preface to Livy’s *Ab Urbe condita*: “Mentre che sto occupato a scrivere queste cose, so’ remoto e non veggo le crudelitati le quale per tanti tempi la nostra citate hao vedute.” Ibid. Prologue, 5.

so that he did not have to experience the wars and the hardships overrunning his land.¹⁴⁴

By likening himself and his situation to Livy, the Anonimo romano drew parallels between Trecento and first-century Rome. Both, he seemed to be saying, witnessed great deeds deserving of recognition and commemoration. And both were prey to wars and violent conflicts threatening citizens' peace of mind. Furthermore, both historians wrote in the aftermath of political crisis and civil conflict, and both looked on the events of their lifetimes as crucial turning-points in their city's development.

By drawing intimate parallels between the ancient and medieval city, the Anonimo romano made a profound statement about his perception of history. He was saying, I would contend, that both Romes were on equal footing, both were worthy of being chronicled and remembered. What he was doing, and what Livy had done were in his view one and the same. His attitude towards the medieval Roman dialect, Romanesco, illustrates this point. Rather than considering the vernacular inferior to Latin, the Anonimo thought it was actually better suited to his work. "I am also writing this chronicle in the vernacular, so that it may be useful to all those who know how to read simple texts, such as common merchants, and many other distinguished people, who are not well-versed in Latin."¹⁴⁵ Realizing the greater usefulness to his audience of the Roman dialect, the Anonimo saw the issue of language as a practical concern. He informs us in his introduction that he first wrote his text in Latin, but that that version "was not as organized or prolific as [the Romanesco] one."¹⁴⁶ His frank

¹⁴⁴ "Mentre che prenno diletto in questa opera, sto remoto e non sento la guerra e li affanni li quali curro per lo paese." Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ "Anche questa cronica scrivo in vulgare, perché de essa pozza trare utilitate onne iente la quale semplicemente leiere sao, como soco vulgari mercatanti e aitra moita bona iente la quale per lettera non intenne" Ibid. Prologue, 5.

¹⁴⁶ "Ma l'opera [latina] non ène tanto ordinata né tanto copiosa como questa" Ibid.

and pragmatic approach towards language reflects his belief in the cultural worth of his contemporary city.

The Anonimo romano also cited examples from Livy to explain and contextualize the events of his own day. He compared the famine of 1338, for example, to one described by Livy to show that the effects on his contemporaries were less severe than on their predecessors.¹⁴⁷ He also made an extraordinary parallel when he compared Cola di Rienzo, after his victory at the battle of the Porta San Lorenzo in November 1347, to Hannibal after the battle at Cannae.¹⁴⁸ Seibt noted that the total lack of proportion in such a comparison—between a local war between nobles and commune, and a decisive battle in a showdown of empires—made little difference to the Roman chronicler.¹⁴⁹

To further get at the Trecento relationship to the Roman past, a few more comparisons will be useful. The Anonimo romano and the *Mirabilia* both perceived the relationship between past and present slightly differently than did Cola di Rienzo and Petrarch. Whereas the Anonimo saw inherent value in contemporary Roman society, Cola spoke and wrote of a fallen Rome, a widowed Rome, a Rome in need of a savior. The greatest exponent of this view was Petrarch, who exalted the ancient Roman past, dissolving the pagan-Christian synthesis that works like the *Mirabilia* had proposed.¹⁵⁰ Petrarch clearly differentiated between the classical Roman period, and Paleo-Christian Rome. The Rome of his own age he believed was fallen, and unworthy of mention.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. ch.9, p.34.

¹⁴⁸ At the battle of Porta San Lorenzo, Cola di Rienzo and his supporters eliminated members of three generations of Colonna men. The Anonimo felt that Cola, like Hannibal, did not know how to use his military victory. Ibid. ch.18, pp.149-52.

¹⁴⁹ Seibt, *Anonimo romano* 241.

¹⁵⁰ In a recent article, however, Jennifer Summit adduces strong arguments showing that Petrarch's concept of the ancient past owed much to the *Mirabilia*, fusing both classical and Christian traditions. Jennifer Summit, "Topography as Historiography: Petrarch, Chaucer, and the Making of Medieval Rome," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 30 (2000).

¹⁵¹ Seibt, *Anonimo romano* 216.

Cola di Rienzo's fascination with, and mastery of, Rome's ancient past has often been noted. Indeed, precisely that issue has been the subject of many studies.¹⁵² But scholars have disagreed on where exactly Cola stood with relation to the Roman past. Amanda Collins, in her recent biography of Cola, argued that he espoused a vision of the past similar to that of the *Anonimo romano*: a past, that is, that could serve as a moral exemplar for the present. Noting that Cola stood at the crossroads of two modes of political thought, namely, *renovatio*, or the revival of a past that was still fundamentally connected to the present, and rebirth (or "renaissance"), following a fundamental break with the past, Collins argued that Cola "clearly privileged *renovatio*, with concrete 'Dantean' political aims, putting the latter – the Petrarchan literary and aesthetic culture of *Romanitas* – very much to the service of the former."¹⁵³

Gustav Seibt, however, in his seminal work on the *Anonimo's* chronicle, argued just the opposite, placing Cola firmly in the ideological camp of Petrarch. He argued that Cola, like Petrarch, wanted to change the present, to fit it into the mold of the past. Both, he wrote, "advocated a return to the ancient glories, [Cola] through the recuperation of lost laws, [Petrarch] through the resurrection of the old *virtù*. Only after that had come about would history again be worth telling."¹⁵⁴ The *Anonimo romano* by contrast "took great pains to minimize the historical distance separating his text from his model [Livy], thus moving in a direction entirely opposite to Petrarch and Cola di Rienzo."¹⁵⁵ And finally, "the *Anonimo* was, therefore, profoundly distant from that melancholic vision of the present shared by Petrarch and Cola di Rienzo."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² Collins, *Greater than Emperor* esp. chapter 1, "The Sacra Res Publica: Antiquity and apotheosis in the city of Rome," 28-59.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* 57.

¹⁵⁴ Seibt, *Anonimo romano* 239. All quotations in English from Seibt are my translations.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 240.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 243.

Collins, it appears to me, is on the mark here, while Seibt glosses over many complexities of Cola's, if not of Petrarch's, outlook. One essential aspect of Cola's relationship to the past, for example, was his immersion in the mystic tradition of the twelfth-century abbot Joachim of Fiore who had applied typologies of biblical exegesis to the analysis of history.¹⁵⁷ He combined the notions of the seven *aetates*, or ages, that dated back to Augustine, to the two *tempora* of sacred history – the Old and New Testaments – each of which comprised forty-two generations of thirty years each. He also applied a Trinitarian concept of the gradual progression of sacred history through three great ages (*status*)– the past, or the age of the Father, the Hebrews, laws, and married men and women; the present, or the age of the Son, of grace, and of unmarried Christian clergy; and the future, or the age of the Holy Spirit, of full grace and understanding, in which the work of monks and hermits would bring the Christian life to perfection.¹⁵⁸ Cola's public art and rhetoric displayed conscious references to the coming of the third age. On a public mural in his neighborhood Sant'Angelo in Pescheria, for instance, a white dove, symbol of the Holy Spirit, was depicted carrying a crown of myrtle in its beak. Beneath the painting were inscribed the words, "I see the time of great justice (*granne iustizia*), so sit quiet until that time."¹⁵⁹ Thus Cola's conception of history was inflected with the belief that he and his contemporaries were on the cusp of a new age, that the realization of a just society was imminent, and that he would play a role in its creation.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969) 318-19, 420-21.

¹⁵⁸ Musto, *Apocalypse in Rome* 120. Cola's immersion in the Joachite apocalyptic tradition is the subject of chapter 2 of Collin's *Greater Than Emperor*.

¹⁵⁹ "Anco era nella aitezza dello cielo una bella palomma bianca, la quale teneva nello sio pizzo una corona de mortella...De sotto a queste figure staieva scritto così: 'Veo lo tiempo della granne iustizia e ìa taci fi' allo tiempo" Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, p.110. Here Cola paraphrased *Ecclesiastes* 20.7: "Homo sapiens tacebit usque ad tempus."

¹⁶⁰ There exists some uncertainty about when Cola was first influenced by Joachite ideas. The traditional view has been that he did not fully take on Joachite spirituality until after 1347, when, after the end of his first period in power, he fled to a Fraticelli camp in the mountains of Maiella, in the Abruzzi. Of this period, the Anonimo romano only offers the pithy statement "[H]e lived like a

Another element of Cola's thought that differentiated him from Petrarch was his willingness to borrow historical models "with chronologically indiscriminate abandon, from every century of the Roman past."¹⁶¹ Unlike the poet, who saw little cultural worth in the centuries after the fall of the Empire, Cola was such a devoted reader of Boethius that he claimed to have included in his official title the word "severus," in homage to the Neoplatonic philosopher.¹⁶² The Anonimo romano reported Cola's avid interest in contemporary literature as well: in addition to a copy of Livy and a Bible, Cola kept in his prison cell at the court of Charles IV a copy of *Le storie de Roma*,¹⁶³ an anonymously written universal history dating to the late twelfth or early thirteenth century.¹⁶⁴ The chronicler also reported that Cola loved recounting the *magnificentie de Julio Cesare*, a Roman dialect version of the thirteenth-century French hit *Li Fet des Romains*.¹⁶⁵ And finally, in a 1350 letter to Charles IV, Cola stated that he had learned "from Roman chronicles" ("ex Romanis cronicis") about Rome's long-standing abject condition.¹⁶⁶ Thus it is difficult to accept Seibt's

Fraticello, sleeping in the mountains of Maiella with hermits and penitents" ("Giò como fraticello iaceno per le montagne de Maiella con romiti e perzone de penitenza"). Ibid. ch.27, p.176. Marjorie Reeves, whose view is sustained by Amanda Collins, perceived elements of apocalyptic imagery in Cola's letters prior to 1347, although she also distinguished between this imagery and the overtly Joachite thought that he expressed by 1350. Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (London: SPCK, 1976) 70-71. Collins, *Greater than Emperor* 61.

¹⁶¹ Collins, *Greater than Emperor* 57-8.

¹⁶² His full title was: Nicola severo e pietoso, de libertate, de pace e de iustizia tribuno, anche della santa romana reipublica liberatore illustre, or, Nicholas the severe and merciful, Tribune of liberty, peace, and justice, and illustrious liberator of the holy Roman republic. Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, p.118. In a letter to Charles IV, he explains that "severus" was in homage to Boethius: "Et ego in meo titulo tribunali appellari volui ab eodem Boetio Severino Severus." Konrad Burdach and Paul Piur, eds., *Briefwechsel des Cola di Rienzo, im auftrage der Königl. preussischen akademie der wissenschaften* (Berlin: Wiedmann, 1912) 3:50, ll.247-48.

¹⁶³ "Aveva libri assai, sio Tito Livio, soie storie de Roma, Abibia e atri libri assai. Non finava di studiare." Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.27, p.178.

¹⁶⁴ Collins, *Greater than Emperor* 35. A modern edition is provided by Ernesto Monaci, *Storie de Troja et de Roma* (Rome: Società Romana di Storia Patria, 1920).

¹⁶⁵ "He often read Livy, Seneca, Cicero, and Valerius Maximus. He loved to recite the wondrous deeds of Julius Caesar" ("Moito usava Tito Livio, Seneca e Tulio e Valerio Massimo. Moito li delectava le magnificenzie de Iulio Cesari raccontare"). Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, p.104.

¹⁶⁶ "Sciens itaque ex Romanis cronicis, quod per quingentos annos et ultra nullus Romanus civis defendere populum a tyrannis propter animorum miseriam presumpsisset..." Burdach and Piur, eds., *Briefwechsel des Cola di Rienzo* 3:50, p.204. Amanda Collins identified the *cronicae romanae* to which

argument that Cola entirely rejected the cultural value of medieval Rome. Rather, he incorporated fragments of classical learning, both pagan and Christian, together with the achievements of his contemporaries, into a collage that suited his needs of the moment.

Cola, Roman history, and the struggle against the Colonna

Such detailed discussion of Trecento Romans' sensibilities about the past, about their outlook towards history and language, and about their use of ancient sources might seem a digression. But in fact there is a purpose: to illustrate the participation of Roman citizens of non-noble birth in the cultural milieu of Trecento Rome. Of the four major chroniclers of early Trecento Rome, two were Colonna, both clerics. Then there was Giovanni Cavallini, a papal notary, and a member of a rising Roman merchant family. Those three had connections to Avignon. Finally, there was the Roman chronicler, with access to Bologna, but who otherwise appears to have spent much of his life in Rome. He is thought to have been a man of sufficient, though not considerable, means and part of that social group of educated individuals increasingly inclined toward trade. In addition to sharing relatively similar social backgrounds, Cavallini and the Anonimo romano also shared a sense of municipal pride that showed itself in their writings. These men, whose families did not possess imposing ancient monuments to lend prestige to their name, and who could not claim prestigious ancestry, found other ways to claim Rome's history as their own.

Cavallini, who identified himself as a *civis romanus* in the introduction to his *Polistoria*, described the origins, geography, history, customs, and architecture of the

both Cola and Giovanni Cavallini referred as "mélanges drawn for the most part from the late antique and early medieval accounts of Isidore, Dares Phrygius, Orosius, Solinus, Paulus Diaconus, Eusebius, Florus, and Eutropius." Collins, *Greater than Emperor* 35, n.34.

ancient city.¹⁶⁷ His work reflects his extraordinary erudition, explicitly referencing classical and contemporary works of all kinds including Aristotle, St. Augustine, Avicenna, Bede, Boethius, Cato, Cicero, the *Corpus iuris civilis*, Eusebius, Josephus, Jacob of Voragine, Isidore, Justinus, Juvenal, the *Liber Pontificalis*, Livy, Macrobius, Orosius, Ovid, Peter the Deacon, Pliny the Elder, Plutarch, Prudentius, Sallust, Seneca, Suetonius, Thomas Aquinas, Valerius Maximus, Venantius Fortunatus, Vincent of Beauvais, and Virgil. Even though, as we have noted, the *Polistoria* was not particularly innovative in its approach, it was a tour de force of classical erudition.

Cavallini's merchant origins, combined with his lay status, made him an unusual candidate in Trecento Rome for an erudite historian. Rome had not developed, in this period, a strong sector of highly educated merchant elites. The Anonimo, remember, wrote his chronicle in Romanesco, so that "common merchants" ("vulgari mercatanti") could read it.¹⁶⁸ But I would propose that we begin to view Giovanni Cavallini, the Anonimo romano, and ultimately Cola, as the first examples of an increasingly educated Roman *popolo*.

The use of ancient exempla did not carry with it in Trecento Rome, as it eventually did in other Italian city-states, strong ideological significance. That is, Cola did not clearly distinguish, as later humanists would, between the varying moral or political virtues of republic versus empire. The Brutus-Caesar debate, which among Renaissance humanists became a touchstone for republican or monarchical sympathies, produces only a hopeless muddle when applied to Cola.¹⁶⁹ The Roman notary-turned-tribune picked seemingly at will from the endless cache of republican

¹⁶⁷ Laureys, ed., *Iohannes Caballinus polistoria de virtutibus et dotibus romanorum* Prologus, p.11.

¹⁶⁸ See this chapter, n. 146.

¹⁶⁹ The debate is actually a direct outgrowth of an early Renaissance dispute, whose two poles were argued respectively by Bruni and Salutati. See Ephraim Emerton, *Humanism and Tyranny: studies in the Italian Trecento* (Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1964). and Gordon Griffiths, James Hankins, and David Thompson, eds., *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni: Selected Texts* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1987).

and imperial rhetoric at his disposal. His lack of strong allegiance to either political form is reflected in a letter to Charles IV of 1347, in which he wrote, “I burn with a passion as great for the Republic as for the Empire, if not greater.”¹⁷⁰

Although the first title that Cola assumed after his revolt in May 1347 was “Liberator of the Republic,” he later assumed his preferred “tribune.” Although the term may seem to have republican overtones, since the tribune was, beginning in the fourth century B.C., the official representative of the Roman plebs (*tribunus plebis*), it devolved, by the late empire, into a para-military office.¹⁷¹ Collins has also shown that there were late antique precedents for associating the tribunes with record-keepers of city government, akin to notaries, that may have encouraged Cola to assume the title: the *primicerius*, in charge of the civil and military records of the Roman Empire from the fourth century on, was flanked by his *tribunus ac notarius*.¹⁷²

Cola’s incorporation of the ancient past into his political rhetoric, program, and performances, as noted above, has recently attracted much attention. So it is surprising that few have questioned why he employed ancient culture as he did. In part this is because many were eager to fit Cola into the humanist framework, to claim a spot for him in the early Renaissance hall of fame.¹⁷³ Yet I believe there were other reasons why love of classics, facility with Latin and deciphering inscriptions, and continual references to ancient Rome were so fundamental to Cola’s public persona. First, such rhetoric appealed to Romans’ memory of their collective past. As we have seen, Romans had long been cultivating their relationship to that past. What Cola did in this respect was not exactly new. As Collins remarked:

¹⁷⁰ Collins, *Greater than Emperor* 29. Unfortunately, Collins does not identify her source, and despite an extensive search, I have not located the original statement.

¹⁷¹ Nicholas Purcell, “The Arts of Government,” in *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, ed. John Boardman, Jasper Griffin, and Oswyn Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 572-73.

¹⁷² Collins, *Greater than Emperor* 38.

¹⁷³ Burdach and Piur, for example, in their monumental work, portrayed Cola as a harbinger of the Renaissance. Burdach and Piur, eds., *Briefwechsel des Cola di Rienzo*.

Cola can be said to have coasted along the surface of a new interest in the past, deriving political benefits from new cultural trends in the *studia humanitatis*. Rather than participating in new humanist discourses, however, Cola was busy welding all these disparate ideological elements into a working nexus behind what was mostly an impression, a facade of the authority of antiquity.¹⁷⁴

Collins is right in saying that Cola's rhetorical techniques were effective because they resonated with recent cultural trends. But, besides exaggerating the coherence at that early point of the *studia humanitatis*, her analysis does not fully explain why Cola engaged with and utilized the history and culture of the past to the extent that he did.¹⁷⁵ In the end, she falls back on a traditional explanation, namely that Cola was so passionate about Rome's ancient past because he was, even if distracted by politics, an early humanist. This may have to some extent have been true, but it does not satisfactorily answer the question of why Cola thought antiquity could somehow augment his political stature. After all, the recent upsurge of interest in ancient texts cannot alone account for Cola's initial wild popularity with the Roman *popolo*, who, furthermore, by the 1340's were accustomed to seeing their city's past woven into nexuses and facades of authority. Each time a German king wended his way towards Rome, the Romans were reminded of their inherited past, and of the continued influence of that past on their present. The countless spolia cemented into the sides of houses, staircases, and even the city walls, declared much the same message.

But while Cola's appeal to Roman memory was likely effective at procuring popular support for his cause, his appeal may also have been motivated by another very contemporary concern: the cultural hegemony of the elites, and of the Colonna in

¹⁷⁴ Collins, *Greater than Emperor* 34.

¹⁷⁵ Paul Kristeller claims that the term *studia humanitatis*, although originally used by ancient Roman authors to refer to a liberal education, was revived, with the same meaning, only in the late fourteenth century. Not until the early 1400's, however, did it come to signify a specific educational program comprising grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, and moral philosophy, in particular through the study of Latin, and also Greek, texts. Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanist Strains* (New York: Harper & Row, 1955) 9ff.

particular. As I have been trying to show, elites had, by the mid-fourteenth century, come to dominate the Roman memory of the ancient past. For example, the senate by that time was a symbol of elite power. As earlier demonstrated, elites also had come to dominate, in a material and concrete way, the cultural life of the city. Their privileged access to the books and intellectual circles associated with the papal curia transformed them into conduits of culture in a period when, in most other ways, they were suffering. Culture, then, was one avenue to power in this period, and that is precisely why Cola's appropriation of history and culture was so powerful and effective.

The *Anonimo romano's* chronicle supports this interpretation, for in the first chapter about Cola he immediately emphasized two aspects of Cola's character and political life: his impressive erudition regarding Roman history and the Latin language, and his conflict with Roman elites, particularly the Colonna. Cola's humble social status was also relevant to the chronicler, since he began his description of Cola with "Cola de Rienzi was of low birth" ("Cola de Rienzi fu de vasso lenaio"). By framing the subsequent discussion of Cola's impressive erudition in light of his humble social stature, the chronicler emphasized the exceptionality of his achievement. Thus, the well-known passage:

Fed from his youth on the milk of eloquence, [Cola] was a good Latinist, a better orator, a good scholar. Lord, what a fast reader he was! He often read Livy, Seneca, Cicero, and Valerius Maximus. He loved to recite the wondrous deeds of Julius Caesar. All day he would contemplate the marble inscriptions that lie about Rome. No one knew better than he did how to read those ancient engravings. He translated all the ancient writings. He correctly interpreted these marble figures. Lord, how often he said: "Where are those good Romans? Where is their high justice? If only I could live in their times!"

Fu da soa iuventutine nutricato de latte de eloquenzia, buono gramatico, migliore rettorico, autorista buono. Deh, como e quanto era veloce lettore! Moito usava Tito Livio, Seneca e Tulio e Valerio Massimo. Moito li delettava le

magnificenzie de Iulio Cesari raccontare. Tutta diè se speculara nelli intagli de marmo li quali iaccio intorno a Roma. Non era atri che esso, che sapessi leiere li antiqui pataffii. Tutte scritte antiche vulgarizzava. Queste figure de marmo iustamente interpretava. Deh, como spesso diceva: “Dove sono questi buoni Romani? Dove ène loro summa iustizia? Pòterame trovare in tempo che questi fussino!”¹⁷⁶

In this passage, the Anonimo expressed both admiration and surprise about Cola's mastery of Latin and history. This element of surprise reflects social tensions surrounding learning and education. Few people in Trecento Rome could read the ancient inscriptions, and so for Cola to do so really was exceptional. The Anonimo revealed his astonishment that someone of Cola's low social stature could have become so accomplished.

In the passage cited above, furthermore, the Anonimo romano wove together the issues of knowledge and social conflict. That is, by reading about the glories of ancient Rome, and by deciphering inscriptions on monuments, Cola began to harbor resentments about the type of city that Rome had become. In particular, his studies revealed to him the lack of justice in contemporary Rome, a complaint that Cola directed specifically at the Roman elites. The chronicler quickly explained Cola's grievances against Rome's powerful families:

...Cola spoke to [Clement VI] at length, saying that the barons of Rome were highway robbers; they permitted murders, robberies, adulteries, and every sort of crime; they wanted their city to remain ravaged.

Allora se destenne Cola e dice ca'lli baroni di Roma so' derobatori de strade: essi consiento li omicidii, le robbarie, li adulterii, onne male; essi voco che la loro citate iaccia desolata.¹⁷⁷

Cola, of course, voiced his criticism of the Roman elites in Avignon, where he was sent in 1343 to represent the communal government of the Thirteen Good Men. But

¹⁷⁶ Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, p.104-05.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. ch.18, p.105.

Avignon, as we have seen, was home to many Roman elites, and thus Cola's incendiary speeches immediately brought him into conflict with several families.

The chronicler then claimed that Clement VI, swayed by Cola's mellifluous phrases, took issue with the barons for their behavior. Retaliation against Cola swiftly came at the hands of Cardinal Giovanni Colonna:¹⁷⁸

But then at the petition of messer cardinal Janni della Colonna, Cola fell into such disgrace, such poverty, such infirmity, that it made little difference to go to the hospital. With his little coat on his back he stood in the sun like a snake. But he who laid him low raised him up: Messer Janni della Colonna brought him back before the Pope. He was pardoned and made notary of the Chamber of Rome, with plenty of rewards and benefits. He returned to Rome very exuberantly, muttering threats between his teeth.

Puoi, a petizione de missore Ianni della Colonna cardinale, venne in tanta desgrazia, in tanta povertate, in tanta infirmitate, che poca defferenzia era de ire allo spidale. Con sio iuppariello aduosso stava allo sole como biscia. Chi lo puse in basso, quello lo aizao: missore Ianni della Colonna lo remise denanti allo papa. Tornaio in grazia, fu fatto notaro della Cammora de Roma, abbe grazia e beneficia assai. A Roma tornaio moito alegro; fra li denti menacciava.¹⁷⁹

In this way, the Anonimo romano established at the very start of his *Life of Cola* the intricate connection between Cola's classical learning and his resentment of Roman elites. It is particularly striking, furthermore, that the only named individuals to appear in the first chapter are Cola, Clement VI, and cardinal Giovanni Colonna. And, among the noble families, only the Colonna does the chronicler mention by name.

In one further episode did the Anonimo romano carefully illustrate the conflict between Cola and the Colonna. Here as well, the issue of culture – who “owns” it,

¹⁷⁸ This cardinal Giovanni Colonna we met earlier in the chapter as one of Petrarch's primary protectors. In a letter, Petrarch addressed him as illustrious father” (“pater inclite”). *Rerum Familiarum* II.12. Cited from Bigi, ed., *Opere* 722.

¹⁷⁹ Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, p.105. Cola was made notary of the Capitoline chamber on April 13, 1344.

who can control it – assumes a central position. It centers around a meeting that Cola called, probably in 1343, in which he assembled many Roman nobles, judges, lawyers, and “many powerful men of Rome” (“moiti potenti di Roma”).¹⁸⁰ Again, the Anonimo revealed the identities of only two: Stefano della Colonna and his son, Janni Colonna, known to be an exceedingly bright youth.¹⁸¹ At this meeting, Cola assembled the illustrious citizens of Rome before an ancient bronze tablet, and ascended a raised platform where, after a speech decrying the city’s fallen condition, he had read out the contents of the plaque that he himself had deciphered, and that no one else had succeeded in reading. It was the *Lex de imperio* of Vespasian, which described the authority the Roman *plebs* had conceded to that emperor.

This episode demonstrates the fundamental role played by Cola’s classical learning in his conflict with the Colonna and other Roman elites. The form of communication alone—using a plaque to convey political objectives—was propaganda “all’antica.”¹⁸² In this case, he very clearly, and it seems very consciously, utilized his knowledge to gain an edge over his adversaries. By gathering them together around the plaque, and by standing on a raised platform, Cola lectured the Roman elites about their past, freely translating the contents of the plaque, and emphasizing that the Roman senate had willingly granted authority to Vespasian. According to the Roman chronicler, Cola declared, “You see how great was the magnificence of the senate, which gave authority to the empire.”¹⁸³ Cola then listed all the privileges that the Roman *plebs* had granted to the Roman emperors, but ended by

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. ch.18, p.108.

¹⁸¹ This Giovanni was nephew to cardinal Giovanni Colonna, and son of Stefano il Giovane, called “Stefanuccio” Colonna. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, “Giovanni di Stefanuccio Colonna,” *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 27 (1960-). The Anonimo refers to him as “delli più scaitriti e mannifichi de Roma.” Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, p.108.

¹⁸² Franceschini, “‘Rerum gestarum significacio’: L’uso di oggetti antichi nella comunicazione politica di Cola di Rienzo,” 236.

¹⁸³ “Vedete quanta era la mannificenzia dello senato, ca la autoritate dava allo imperio.” Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, p.108.

saying, “Gentlemen, so great was the majesty of the *popolo* of Rome that it gave authority to the Emperor. Now we have lost that...”¹⁸⁴ To the barons, Cola’s invocation of the *plebs* would certainly have connoted the contemporary Roman *popolo*—the large, amorphous group possessing citizenship but lacking titles, elite ancestry, and most importantly, political power. The ears of a Stefano Colonna would certainly have picked up the quivering hints of menace and accusation in Cola’s words.

Cola’s claim to be able to decipher the *lex de imperio* was all the more impressive since the contents of the bronze plaque had remained an unsolved mystery for centuries.¹⁸⁵ Although it is certain that Cola relished the spotlight, his dramatic display in front of the Roman nobles was not merely pedantic showing off. Rather, he was demonstrating his position as a vital medium. His message was that the barons should perceive the historical power of the Roman *popolo*. Further, he was saying, they needed Cola to unveil for them the secrets and lost meaning of Rome’s past. Cola’s statement was powerful, and it carried implications for his plans for impending social transformation. Yet he was trying to get the barons on his side. All of Rome needed him, both elite and *popolo*, to interpret the past, and to confer on them that historical relevance that the barons so vainly sought by displaying spolia and possessing ancient monuments.

The Anonimo reacted to Cola’s provocations with some ambivalence. He was clearly impressed, as noted above, by Cola’s abilities, and he initially supported Cola’s

¹⁸⁴ “Signori, tanta era la maiestate dello puopolo de Roma, che allo imperatore dava la autoritate. Ora l’avemo perduta.” Ibid. ch.18, p.109.

¹⁸⁵ Master Gregory, the thirteenth-century author of the *Narration of the Marvels of Rome*, claims to have had trouble deciphering the tablet: “In front of [the Lateran portico] there is a bronze tablet, called the tablet ‘prohibiting sin,’ on which are written the principal statutes of the law. On this tablet I read much, but understood little, for they were aphorisms, and the reader has to supply most of the words.” Quoted from Musto, *Apocalypse in Rome* 52. Another attempt was made by the Bolognese jurist Odofredus, who concluded that he was looking at the Roman Law of the Twelve Tables. Musto, *Apocalypse in Rome* 52. Robert Benson has noted that there is some doubt about which tablet he was looking at. Benson, “Political *Renovatio*: Two Models from Roman Antiquity,” 356, n.82.

plan to establish justice and peace. “Never was there seen such a man,” he wrote. “Only he cared for the concerns of Romans.”¹⁸⁶ Yet at moments he was also suspicious of Cola’s attack on the Roman elites, thinking perhaps that the tribune went too far in his theatrical displays, was too extreme in his political action. He criticized Cola, for example, for hanging a young nobleman who had done little apparent wrong, and who furthermore “really desired popular government” (“assai desiderava la signoria dello puopolo”).¹⁸⁷ The Anonimo saw in Cola a despotic streak that, even when aimed against nobility, worried him: “Then he began to act terribly wickedly... he was already taking whoever had money and confiscating it from them. He forced anyone with money into silence.”¹⁸⁸ As an interested party in this struggle, the Anonimo tried to reconcile Cola’s ambitions and achievements with what he perceived to be legitimate, or at least unassailable, elite prerogatives. Though acutely aware that Cola’s pursuit of knowledge of the Roman past was a way of undermining the authority of Roman elites, the Anonimo balked at Cola’s occasionally extreme measures.

In conclusion, the papacy’s departure in the early fourteenth century left the Roman nobility weakened, with few economic or political opportunities. Those families able to maintain connections in Avignon, such as the Orsini and Colonna, however, were secured political power and granted unhindered access to the rich cultural atmosphere of southern France. In Rome, the Colonna became a nucleus of cultural production, as members of the family compiled libraries, wrote histories, and established relationships of patronage and friendship with prominent intellectuals. Exerting some control over the cultural life of the city offered families such as the

¹⁸⁶ “Mai non fu veduto tale omo. Solo esso portava lo penzieri de Romani.” As noted in the previous chapter, the Anonimo often used *romani* to refer to the *popolo*. Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, p.192.

¹⁸⁷ Pandolfuccio di Guido. *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ “Allora comenzao terribilmente diventare iniquo...ià prenneva chi pecunia aveva e tollevala. A chi l’aveva imponevali silenzio.” *Ibid.* ch.18, p.153.

Colonna prestige and power in a period when, economically, they were increasingly challenged by a growing merchant elite. This new elite, since it could not break into the old venues of elite power—for example, the senate or the papal hierarchy—engaged with the nobility through the medium of culture. Historical memory, in this way, became a locus of social contest. For this reason, aspiring individuals and families, exemplified by Giovanni Cavallini, the Anonimo romano, and Cola di Rienzo, placed critical value on classical education and ancient learning. Ancient historians, for example, became the dominant prototype for chroniclers, as they largely eschewed the contemporary Christian histories. Acquiring knowledge of Rome's ancient past, of Livy and Sallust and Valerius Maximus, of inscriptions and the history of monuments, became for them a way to bypass elite control of Rome's cultural capital. As Romans in this period struggled to determine the course that their city would take, a significant part of this struggle was waged over memory.

CHAPTER 5

Memory and oblivion in late Trecento Rome

Until now, this study has examined the loci of social and political conflict in medieval Rome. With the papacy gone after 1304, the fields of history and memory became two focal points of that conflict. Chapter 3 traced the development of the imperial ideal, noting how the Roman nobility utilized that ideal to gain support among the populace. Chapter 4 identified memory as a locus of conflict between Roman elites, as the traditional proprietors of the past, and an emergent commercial class that engaged with history as a source of legitimacy and as a weapon against noble families. In mid-century, Cola di Rienzo appropriated Rome's political and cultural heritage, meeting unprecedented success in combining them into a coherent socio-political program. He represents the culmination of the imperial ideal in medieval Roman politics.

This chapter will examine the tidal changes that swept Roman society and politics in the period from 1355, following Cola's death, to 1377, when the papacy returned definitively to Rome. Paying particular attention to rituals, I identify transformations in the period following Cola's death in the Roman relationship to history and memory. I argue that, although there was some continuity with the recent past, the 1350's and '60's evidence a decided tendency towards forgetting that past. Dupré Theseider, in fact, has called the twenty-odd years after Cola as a period "without history."¹ The notable, sudden disappearance of the imperial ideal from Roman politics, and the Romans' problematic relationship to Cola's memory are the two main avenues through which I address remembrance and forgetting in late Trecento Rome.

¹ "Terminata [la morte di Cola], la storia di Roma pare accomodarsi nel ritmo del 'senza storia,' per vent'anni circa." Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 655.

Although Cola's political program in many ways failed, Romans' experience under the Tribune altered their society in several fundamental, irreversible ways. This argument challenges the still-prevalent opinion of Cola and late Trecento Rome, which attributes few, if any, long-term effects to Cola's rule. The words of John Wright, the translator of the only English version of the *Anonimo romano's* chronicle, are representative: "[Cola's] two periods of power, all told, lasted for less than a year; he had no permanent effect whatever on the political development of Italy or Rome."² Evidence, however, suggests otherwise. Romans embarked, in the late 1350's, on an unprecedented two decades of popular government, and Cola's influence is visible in its advocacy of social welfare issues. But also striking, for the depth of rage among Romans it reveals, is the horrible death suffered by Cola at the hands of fellow Romans. In light of the gruesome ritual of death that they performed on his body, it should not be surprising that afterwards Romans did not quite know how to remember him. And so, I believe, they preferred to forget. The imperial ideal, though a driving force of early fourteenth-century politics, later became intricately woven to Cola's persona, and thus, too, needed to be discarded. I argue here for Cola's legacy, perhaps strangely, since that legacy, if this is possible, consisted of silence and swift changes to make forgetting easier.

If many recent studies of Cola have failed to examine the long-term effects of Cola's rule, it is in part because they have not tried. Much recent Cola scholarship has instead challenged an older historical school that subjected the Tribune to the analyses of psychohistory and that portrayed him as either a delusional madman or a visionary announcing Italian national sovereignty.³ In recent years, therefore, many have aimed

² Wright, ed., *The Life of Cola de Rienzo* 20.

³ Amanda Collins wrote, "The...common assumption that Cola was insane must be repudiated at the outset, as prejudicial, pejorative, and ultimately irrelevant." Collins, *Greater than Emperor* 9. In addition, Ronald Musto argued that the narrative conceits and moral categories employed by the

to contextualize Cola as a historical figure, and to make sense of his ideas and political program in light of broader Trecento intellectual, social, and religious trends.⁴ They have not, as a result, taken much interest in what happened after Cola died.

Ronald Musto concluded his remarkable study *Apocalypse in Rome* imagining in this way the tribune's final end:

And so the ashes of Cola di Rienzo mingled with the granite and lime of the high mountain passes of the Alpi di Luna, with the muds and clays of farms in Umbria, with the sandy wastes of the Campagna. And Cola's dreams then joined those of so many Romans ancient and more modern, illustrious and obscure, out past Ostia to the mouths of the Tiber, to Fiumicino and the Island of the Dead, and then on, finally, to the broad sea itself.⁵

By emphasizing the varied geography of central Italy, Musto rightly calls attention to the debt Cola owed the rest of Italy—its political thinkers, jurists, and mystics—for the complexities of his political program. And by mentioning Romans ancient and modern, Musto identifies Cola's rule as one moment within a long historical trajectory of political dreams both broken and realized. Most importantly, however, the calmly poetic description of the Tribune's ashes sweeping out to sea seems to suggest that Cola's vision of a just society was extinguished and forgotten upon his death.

Leaving aside Cola's lasting influences, Rome was, in the 1350's and '60's, significantly transformed. Major social changes shook both the urban and rural fabric, as the baronial families suffered the cumulative effects of lost papal offices and the devastations of the Black Death. Although the epidemic is thought to have been less severe in Rome than in many Italian cities, it still drove down the value of land, and

Anonimo romano contributed to portraying Cola as mentally unbalanced. Musto, *Apocalypse in Rome* 339-41.

⁴ Both Amanda Collins' *Greater Than Emperor* and Ronald Musto's *Apocalypse in Rome* fall into this category.

⁵ Musto, *Apocalypse in Rome* 347.

drove up wages, ruining some Roman elite families.⁶ The Roman *distretto* was gravely affected: between 1348 and about 1420, almost all villages within fifteen miles were abandoned, their inhabitants either decimated by plague, or forced out from fear of mercenary companies.⁷ Noble and clerical landlords had little incentive to maintain these diminishing villages, as the seigniorial rights they derived from them—tithes, judicial fees, etc.—faded in comparison to the large sums they could get, up front and in cash, by leasing them out for grazing or specialized cultivation. The newly available lands of dispossessed villagers, as well as of cash-strapped elites, spelled opportunity for enterprising individuals seeing no reason to blush at commerce.⁸ These *bovattieri*, stock-breeders and agricultural entrepreneurs, rented or bought these estates, hiring seasonal wage workers to manage herds or sow fields.⁹ The *bovattieri* invested in these farms huge sums, creating a flow of cash from city to *distretto* and back.¹⁰

Largely due to the efforts of *bovattieri*, Rome's economic life in the 1360's and '70's picked up speed. The expanding sheep and cattle markets enlivened the

⁶ Probably due in part to lack of evidence, there are as yet no comprehensive studies of the effects of the Black Death on the Roman population. Carocci, however, identifies the Normanni, the Stefaneschi, and the Venturini as particularly hard-hit. Carocci and Venditelli, "Società ed economia (1050-1420)," 112.

⁷ Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur, "Les grands domaines de la Campagne Romaine dans la deuxième moitié du XIVe siècle" (Université de Paris I, 1974). Carocci and Venditelli, "Società ed economia (1050-1420)," 110-11.

⁸ The view of late Trecento Rome as an economically vibrant society dependent on the increasing wealth and commercial activity of the merchants and *bovattieri* was first proposed by Clara Gennaro in her pioneering article "Mercanti e bovattieri." Her work inspired many others to pursue the economic history of the late Trecento, utilizing above all else the notarial archives. Important works in this school are: Maire Vigueur, "Classe dominante et classes dirigeantes à Rome à la fin du Moyen Age"; Luciano Palermo, *Sviluppo economico e società preindustriali. Cicli, strutture e congiunture in Europa dal Medioevo alla prima età moderna* (Rome: Viella, 1997). Sandro Carocci believes that this view, beholden as it is to notarial documentation, slightly exaggerates the role of the *bovattieri* and underestimate the part played by the papacy. See esp., Carocci and Venditelli, "Società ed economia (1050-1420)," 108ff.

⁹ Carocci describes some *bovattieri* as "dynamic entrepreneurs, ready to exploit any opportunity for enrichment, to engage in small business, to invest in farming, and above all, to raise on the credit market (*mercato creditizio*) the capital necessary for managing country estates (*casali*)." Carocci and Venditelli, "Società ed economia (1050-1420)," 111.

¹⁰ The scholarship speaks, in large part, of a cash flow from city to *distretto*. Carocci, for example, writes, "i capitali cittadini sono affluiti verso le campagne." It appears to neglect the eventual return of that capital to the city. *Ibid.*, 108.

wool and butchering businesses. The Roman wool trade was by the 1370's fully developed and in contact with other major centers of production, with wool-workers coming to Rome from Orvieto, Aquila, and even Florence and the Marches.¹¹ The *bovattieri* also contributed to urban renewal by issuing loans, or seeds, to artisans and small farmers to cultivate plots and vineyards outside the city walls. Repaid at harvest, in cash or kind, the *bovattieri* also gained immense prestige as benefactors.¹² In these ways, the combination of papal absence and plague effected deep transformations on the structure of Roman society.

Rome also underwent swift political transformations after Cola's death. After 1358, an ideologically-driven popular government took firm hold. It was to rule the city for almost twenty years, until the definitive return of the papacy to Rome in 1377. Calling itself the *Felice Società dei Balestrieri e dei Pavesati*, the regime espoused popular rule on the model of the Tuscan communes, although with a decidedly military flavor. The power of the *Felice Società* rested on the city militia, which was dramatically expanded and developed in this period. The militia acted as an urban police force, patrolling the city streets and enforcing the ordinances of the government. It also endeavored to subjugate neighboring communes, propelling Rome into a period of heightened engagement with its surrounding territories.¹³ The *Felice Società* also promoted a strict anti-magnate agenda, excluding most elite families from municipal politics, and even banishing some to their rural estates.¹⁴ Reflecting the common interest of popular governments in legislation, many of the developments

¹¹ Gennaro, "Mercanti e bovattieri," 175-6.

¹² *Ibid.*: 180.

¹³ Some nearby towns, such as Tivoli, Vitorchiano, and Magliano Sabino accepted more willingly the imposition of Roman authority over their municipalities. Others, such as Viterbo, Corneto, Velletri, and Civitavecchia, were more resistant. A. Natale, "La felice società dei balestrieri e pavesati a Roma e il governo dei bandaresi dal 1358 al 1408," *Archivio della Società romana di storia patria* 62 (1939): 34ff.

¹⁴ Clerics were also banned from municipal posts. Re, ed., *Statuti* 3.21, p.212.

initiated by the *Felice Società* were encoded in the 1363 Statutes.¹⁵ Written by seventeen *popolani*, the Statutes provide myriad details regarding administrative structures, the election and payment of officials, the penalties and punishments for crimes, and the legal system. They indicate the stability the popular government had attained, and they reveal to some extent its values and ideals.

These rapidly developing administrative and military systems were in many ways outgrowths of Cola's regime. That is, they seized upon and enlarged successful elements of his program. But under the *Felice Società* Roman society also broke in significant ways from the dominant modes, values, and institutions of its recent past. In this chapter, I explore in particular two changes. The first is the plummeting of cultural output. Hardly any evidence survives, for example, for the writing of history or poetry after 1360 when the Anonimo romano completed his chronicle. The second is the disappearance of the imperial ideal from the political agenda and rhetoric. Instead of looking to the emperor, the papacy, or the past for legitimacy, the *Felice Società* looked instead to the central and northern Italian communes. Taken together, these changes suggest that Roman political ideals had undergone a profound transformation in as little as five years after Cola's death.

The execution of Cola and the death of the imperial ideal

As we have seen, the dream of reviving the empire, or of reversing the *translatio imperii* and returning the seat of empire to Rome, had dominated much of

¹⁵ The 1363 Statutes are edited in *ibid.* The date of their compilation is not known with certainty, but was estimated at 1363 by Camillo Re. *Ibid.*, xxxiii-lx. Cristina Carbonetti Vendittelli has recently offered convincing evidence that the Statutes were in fact compiled a few years prior, evidencing a letter dated November 1360 referring to Rome's "nuovi statuti." Although her argument appears convincing to me, and to Andreas Rehberg who supports her claims, most scholars still refer to them as the 1363 Statutes. Cristina Carbonetti Vendittelli, "La curia dei *magistri edificiorum Urbis* nei secoli XIII e XIV e la sua documentazione," in *Roma nei secoli XIII e XIV: cinque saggi*, ed. Etienne Hubert (Rome: École française de Rome, 1993), 15-16.

medieval Roman politics. The arrival of two German emperors, Henry VII and Louis of Bavaria, at Rome's gates in 1312 and 1327 had provoked displays of both popular enthusiasm and hostility. Although scholars have pieced together the major political and sociological shifts of late Trecento Rome, the startling decline of the imperial ideal as a driving force in Roman politics has only rarely been pointed out. In one instance, Massimo Miglio referred to its disappearance in the post-Cola period, writing, "...imperial dreams were decidedly abandoned in favor of a republican ideology."¹⁶ Ronald Musto, less specifically, wrote, "Roman society in the 1350s thus lived devoid of great myths and without a clear vision of civil society."¹⁷

The use of the imperial ideal as a political platform culminated with Cola, who developed it to a far greater extent than his predecessors, and who himself embodied, through his mastery of Latin and history, the revival of the past. On the first day of his coup, May 20, 1347, Cola was popularly acclaimed lord of Rome and was granted "pure and free authority as far as the jurisdiction of the Roman *popolo* extended."¹⁸ In a symbolic gesture not lost on the Anonimo romano, Cola rode one evening to St. Peter's, surrounded by an opulent procession, astride a great war horse, and dressed in green and yellow fur-lined silk. The Roman chronicler commented that Cola was preceded by a man tossing coins to the crowd, "in the style of imperial processions."¹⁹ In addition to symbolic imagery, Cola also utilized ancient legal precepts to shore up his claims to power. He had, for example, read and interpreted the *Lex de imperio* to underscore the inherited authority of the Roman people to appoint the emperor. In

¹⁶ "...i sogni imperiali furono decisamente abbandonati a favore di un'ideologia repubblicana." Miglio, "Tradizioni popolari e coscienza politica," 335.

¹⁷ Musto, *Apocalypse in Rome* 324.

¹⁸ "Anco li diero mero e libero imperio quanto se poteva stennere lo puopolo de Roma." Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, p.114. John Wright claims that this clause paraphrased the expression used in coronation ceremonies to confer power on the emperor. Wright, ed., *The Life of Cola de Rienzo* 43, n.12.

¹⁹ "...uno omo lo quale per tutta la via veniva iettanno e sparienzo pecunia a muodo imperiale." Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, p.121.

addition, Cola employed a vast repertoire of ancient political ideals, used spolia in his building projects, and appealed in his compelling speeches to the greatness of Rome's past. Although also appealing to republican precedents, and to the contemporary model of the commune, the fundamental underpinning of Cola's political program was the revival of Rome's imperial past.

While Cola's imperial trappings initially earned him supporters, his dreams of reviving antiquity ended as an embarrassing interlude in mid-century politics. His elaborate rituals displayed an ambition that sometimes far exceeded real possibility. For instance, in an elaborate ceremony of late July 1347 in the Lateran Basilica, Cola was baptized by the papal vicar in the font in which Constantine, according to legend, had taken his baptismal bath.²⁰ He was consecrated knight by a representative of the Roman *popolo*, assumed the title *tribunus augustus*, and two weeks later, adorned himself with a six-tiered crown, five of leaves in the old Roman republican tradition, and one of silver that, he assured the pope, did not cost more than five gold florins.²¹ The Anonimo romano reveals the skepticism, and even disappointment that many of Cola's followers felt upon witnessing Cola's sometimes exaggerated imperial claims. "After it became known that the Tribune had bathed in the basin of Constantine, and that he had summoned the Pope, many people remained very hesitant and uncertain about it. Some reproached him for audacity; some said that he was a madman, crazy."²² The Roman barons Cola had targeted with punitive policies publicly mocked his imperial pretensions.²³

²⁰ Chiara Franceschini analyses the performative value of Cola's baptism. Franceschini, "'Rerum gestarum significatio': L'uso di oggetti antichi nella comunicazione politica di Cola di Rienzo," 239ff.

²¹ "...sex coronis, quarum quinque fuerunt frondee, secundum Romanorum antiquum institutum dari aurentibus rempublicam consuete, et sexta fuit argentea, que valorem quinque florenorum non excedit." Burdach and Piur, eds., *Briefwechsel des Cola di Rienzo III*, doc.35, p.129.

²² "Puoi che palesato fu che vagnato era nella conca de Constantino e che citato avea lo papa, moito ne stette la iente sospesa e dubiosa. Fu tale che lo represe de audacia, tale disse che era fantastico, pazzo." Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, p.138.

²³ The Anonimo reports that Janni Colonna the younger and other Roman barons mocked Cola at a dinner banquet: "In those days...the barons made fun of his speech. They made him stand up and

After Cola's death in October 1354, the imperial ideal disappeared entirely from the public rhetoric and the municipal agenda. This sudden change, I would contend, can in large part be explained as a rejection of the ideals that Cola had espoused. The "death ritual" to which Romans subjected him suggests that they had become frustrated with Cola's vision for society. The event reveals deep dissatisfaction with Cola's rule, disappointment with his accomplishments, and discomfort with his dreams of reviving an empire. The *Anonimo romano* attributed Cola's violent death to popular discontent. "The people's rage," he claimed, had been incited by the imposition of an indirect tax, and by his increasingly despotic behavior, as when, without good reason, he executed a "rather noble, worthy, well regarded citizen."²⁴ The Florentine Matteo Villani, continuing the chronicle begun by his brother Giovanni, concurred, but specified that the Colonna and Savelli, along with "certain Romans, offended" by Cola's most recent execution, "began to raise a riot against the Tribune, and ran to arms."²⁵ Modern historians have further adduced Cola's failure to unite his socially-divided constituency,²⁶ his subjection to the pope,²⁷ and his leadership flaws combined with the simple bad timing of the Colonna uprising.²⁸

The *Anonimo romano* described Cola's assassination in acute detail, lending it the force of a tragic performance. To the resounding chant of "Viva lo puopolo, viva lo puopolo!," Cola was besieged on the Campidoglio in early October 1354 by a

preach. And he would say, 'I will be a great lord or emperor. I will persecute all these barons...'" "In questi dì usanno alli magnari colli signori de Roma, con Ianni Colonna, li baroni ne prennevano festa de sio favellare. Facevanollo sallire in pede e sì llo facevano sermonare: E diceva: 'Io serraio granne signore o imperatore. Tutti questi baroni perseguitarao...'" Ibid. ch.18, p.109.

²⁴ The citizen was Panalfuccio de Guido: "nobile assai, perzona sufficiente, saputa..." Ibid. ch.18, p.193.

²⁵ "E sparta già la fama della morte di Pandolfino fu più tra 'l popolo tra' Colonnese e Luca Savelli venire alla loro intenzione...e coll'aiuto de' Colonnese e Savelli, e di certi Romani offesi per la morte di Pandolfo...corsono al Campidoglio." Villani, *Cronica* IV.26, pp.509-10.

²⁶ Collins, *Greater than Emperor* 192-94.

²⁷ Musto, *Apocalypse in Rome* 329.

²⁸ Maire Vigueur, "Il comune romano," 151.

crowd.²⁹ They called him a traitor and demanded his death. The chronicler reports that the crowd originated from the neighborhoods of Sant' Angelo (firmly pro-Orsini), Ripa (pro-Savelli and Colonna) and Trevi (pro-Colonna). As Cola stood defenseless before the crowd, the Anonimo romano emphasized his great fear, his cowardly, but human, decision, to try to save himself, even if ignominiously. He described this as the moment in which the veil was lifted, and Cola's humanity was clear for all to see:

The Tribune, desperate, put himself in the hands of fortune. Standing in the open in front of the Cancellaria, he took off his helmet and put it on again over and over. This was because he was really of two minds. On the one hand he wanted to die honorably, dressed in his armor, with his sword in his hand, among the *popolo*, like a magnificent and commanding person. And this he demonstrated when he donned his helmet and took up his arms. On the other hand, he wanted to save his life and not die. And this he demonstrated when he removed his helmet. These two desires fought with each other in his mind. Victorious was the desire to save himself and live. He was a man like all others; he was afraid to die.

Lo tribuno desperato se mise a pericolo della fortuna. Staienzo allo scopierito lo tribuno denanti alla cancellaria, ora se traieva la varvuta, ora se lla metteva. Questa era che abbe da vero doi opinioni. La prima opinione soa, de volere morire ad onore armato colle arme, colla spada in mano fra lo puopolo a muodo de perzona magnifica e de imperio. E ciò dimostrava quanno se metteva la varvuta e tenevase armato. La secunna opinione fu de volere campare la perzona e non morire. E questo dimostrava quanno se cavava la varvuta. Queste doi voluntate commattevano nella mente soa. Venze la voluntate de volere campare e vivere. Omo era como tutti gli aitri, temeua dello morire.³⁰

In this beautiful passage, I think we can identify a critical moment. The way that the chronicler presented it, Cola was forced to choose between dying “like a commanding person,” (“a muodo de perzona...de imperio”) or pusillanimously

²⁹ Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, p. 194.

³⁰ The italics are mine. Ibid. ch.18, p.186.

saving himself. But when Cola chose the latter, the aura of grandiose, imperial dreams dropped away, leaving only the shaking timidity of “a man like all others.” The chronicler represented this transformation through Cola’s act of donning and removing his helmet, armor, and sword, the accoutrements of his power. But the act of raising and lowering the helmet and sword increasingly reveals the transparency, the impotence, of those symbols to fulfill their role: with every minute that Cola hesitated, the imperial myth evaporated drop by drop in the eyes of his observers. Thus, the *Anonimo romano* illuminates the moment of death of the imperial ideal.

Cola did not succeed in saving either himself or his image as an honorable, brave person. He was taken prisoner to the gallows on the Campidoglio over which he so many times had presided. “A great silence fell,” and for over an hour, Cola stood surrounded by a hostile but tentative crowd until, finally, a certain Cecco dello Viecchio loosed his sword, striking the tribune’s head. The notary Laurentio de Treio joined in, and then others, until Cola lay lifeless. His feet tied, he was dragged from the Campidoglio to the church of San Marcello, near the Colonna palace, where he was hung upside-down from a balcony. “He had no head. The bones of his skull were left behind on the road where he had been dragged. He had so many wounds, he looked like a sieve.”³¹ So dehumanized was he that the *Anonimo*, using the “ritualistic language of execution,”³² wrote that he was so fat, “he looked like an oversized buffalo or cow at the butcher shop.”³³ Boys threw rocks at his corpse. After one night

³¹ “Capo non aveva. Erano rimase le cocce per la via donne era strascinato. Tante ferute aveva, pareva criviello.” Ibid. ch.18, p.197.

³² Musto likens the ritual to the execution of the retinue of the duke of Athens in Florence in 1343. Musto, *Apocalypse in Rome* 345. Giovanni Villani described the incident in detail, calling it a “furiosa vendetta.” Villani, *Nuova cronica* XIII.17, esp.336-40.

³³ “Tanta era la soa grassezza, che pareva uno esmesurato bufalo overo vacca a maciello.” *Anonimo romano*, *Cronica* ch.18, p.197.

and two days,³⁴ Jugurta and Sciarretta Colonna commanded that his body be dragged to the Campo d'Austa, or the Mausoleum of Augustus, at that time a Colonna fortress.³⁵ There, the city's Jews, under orders from the Colonna, gathered twigs for a fire, and set the body alight. Of the death ritual, the Anonimo wrote, "Such an end had Cola di Rienzo, who made himself August Tribune of Rome, who wanted to be champion of the Romans."³⁶

I would argue that Cola's death was a highly performative drama that laid bare Roman sentiments concerning the Tribune and his policies. First, participating were not just elites, but a wide swath of Roman society. Cola, after all, was initially betrayed by a kinsman who, when Cola tried to flee his palazzo by descending furtively from a window, alerted the expectant mob below.³⁷ Furthermore, those who actually killed him were *popolani*. Among them was one of Cola's own, the notary Laurentio de Treio, and the otherwise unknown Cecco dello Vicchio. It is clear, however, that the Colonna played an instrumental part in the uprising. In the Anonimo's chronicle, the only other named accomplices were Jugurta and Sciarretta Colonna, who ordered that the corpse be transferred from the church of San Marcello to the Mausoleum of Augustus. Matteo Villani mentioned neither by name, though he did single out the Colonna and Savelli as principal instigators.³⁸ Dissatisfaction with

³⁴ It is possible that one night and two days was the customary period of time for a hanging. The chronicler also reports that when Cola had executed the young aristocrat Martino de Puerto, he had allowed his body to remain strung up on the Campidoglio for the same length of time. Ibid. ch.18, p.119.

³⁵ The "munitio Auguste" was built on the ruins of Augustus' Mausoleum. Surviving sources indicate that it had come into Colonna possession in 1241. Carocci, "Baroni in città," 170, n.1.

³⁶ "Questa fine ebbe Cola di Rienzi, lo quale se fece tribuno augusto de Roma, lo quale voize essere campione de Romani." Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, p.198.

³⁷ The kinsman was named Locciolo Pellicciaro, though nothing more is known of him. Apparently on the basis of his name, Musto surmises that he was a furrier. Musto, *Apocalypse in Rome* 341-42.

³⁸ "...con lieve movimento alquanti amici de' Colonesi e' Savelli della riva del Tevere, a lloro stanza cominciarono a llevare romore contro al tribuno a corsono all'arme." Villani, *Cronica* IV.26, p.509.

Cola, therefore, was to be found not solely among elites, but throughout the network of clientage that linked all stations of Roman society.³⁹

The route of Cola's "death parade," perhaps down the long stairway he had commissioned for the 1350 Jubilee, then north to the church of San Marcello, and from there to the Mausoleum of Augustus, would have had meaning to a medieval Roman observer. Primarily, it would have evoked memories of the Tribune's numerous celebratory processions. Cola was known for lavish parades in which he distributed money to the populace, publicized his political and social programs, and reinforced his image as a leader. They were, as processions often were in medieval Rome, a most effective form of public relations. In his first parade, the morning of his coup on May 20, 1347, Cola proceeded from his neighborhood church Sant' Angelo in Pescheria to the Campidoglio. He went "dressed in all his arms, with only his head uncovered. He went out well and in the open; crowds of retainers were following him, all shouting."⁴⁰ Emphasizing Cola's armor, his uncovered head, and the shouting crowd surrounding him, the Anonimo eerily presaged the macabre scene at the end of Cola's life when he stood feebly donning and removing his helmet.

Cola's penchant for parades grew out of a lively medieval custom for pageantry, among the most significant of which was the so-called "solenno processo," when new popes traversed the city from the Vatican to the Campidoglio to St. John Lateran.⁴¹ Of the four major processions Cola staged, three followed a portion of the

³⁹ Massimo Miglio identifies the supporters and opponents of Cola's regime, noting that many of Cola's original supporters eventually became his most entrenched adversaries. Massimo Miglio, "Gruppi sociali e azione politica nella Roma di Cola di Rienzo," *Studi Romani* 23, no. 4 (1975).

⁴⁰ "...armato de tutte arme, ma solo lo capo era descopierito. Iesse fòra bene e palese. Moititudine de guarzoni lo seguitavano tutti gridanti." Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, p.112.

⁴¹ The three routes roughly following the papal processions are routes B,C, and D on the map. The starred portion is the actual route taken by the popes, and the route I imagine Cola might have taken as he traversed from the Vatican to the Campidoglio. The late twelfth-century *Liber Censuum* contains processional instructions for newly elected popes. Paul Fabre and Louis Marie Olivier Duchesne, *Le liber censuum de l'église romaine*, 2 vols. (Paris: E. Thorin, 1889) 58, p.311. See also: Krautheimer, *Rome: Profile of a City* 278.

papal route. The medieval papal procession was itself an outgrowth of the ancient triumphal parades enjoyed by Roman generals returning from great military victories, in which they had entered the city from the (no longer extant) Porta Triumphalis, arriving on the Campidoglio in front of the Temple of Jupiter.

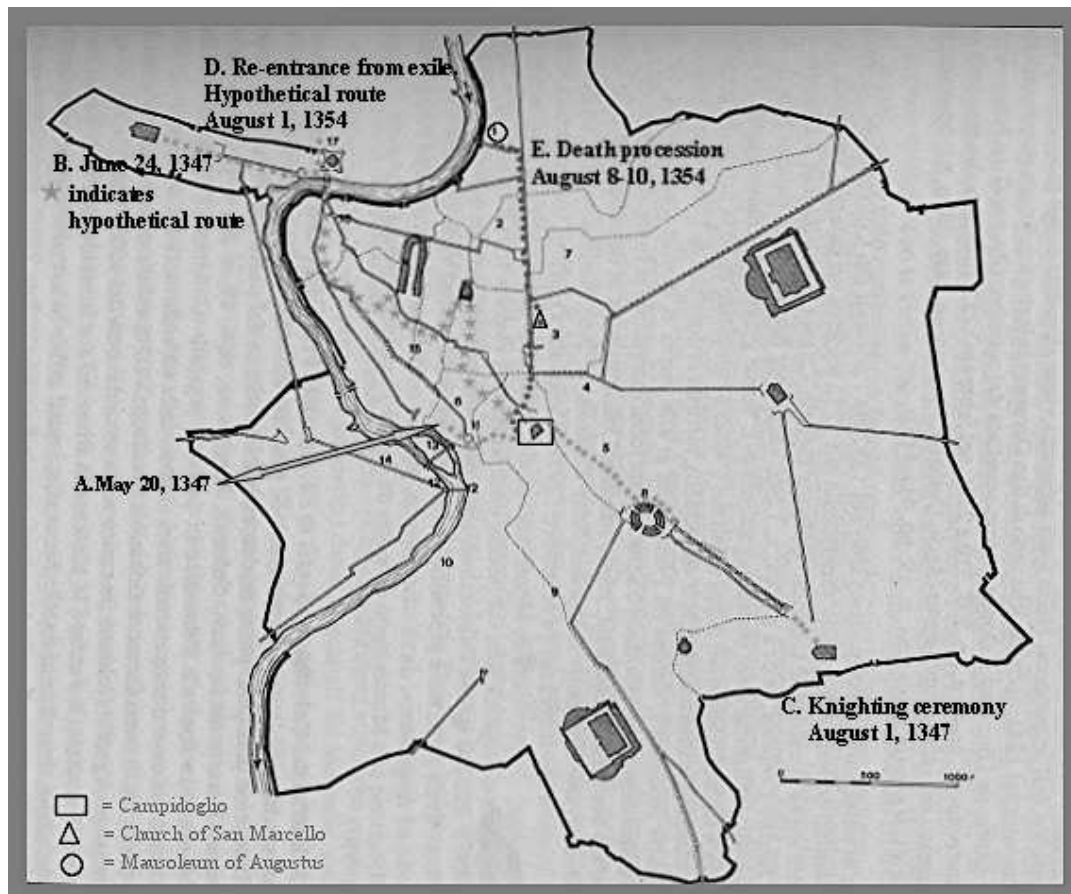


Figure 1. Cola's processional routes

Like the popes, who made occasional stops at relevant monuments or churches along the way, Cola's body paused for two days at the church of San Marcello. This church was located in the neighborhood then called Biberatica, which contained, among other things, a Colonna "house, towers, habitations, a family palace, shops, residences and courtyards."⁴² It was therefore located firmly within Colonna territory,

⁴² A document in the Colonna archives describes Biberatica as having a "...domus, tures, accasamenta, palatia, apothece, statia et platee." Cited from Carocci, "Baroni in città," 170, n.3.

a short distance from a Colonna palace. To get to the Mausoleum of Augustus, the corpse had to pass through Montecitorio, another Colonna-dominated neighborhood.⁴³

Other parallels can be drawn between Cola's death parade and both papal and imperial processions. During papal processions, for example, an important symbolic exchange traditionally took place between the pope and the city's Jews. The pope stopped to acknowledge the Jewish community, while they gathered to pay homage to him and to present him with a scroll of Mosaic Law. According to the twelfth-century *Liber Censuum*, they also owed the new pope three and a half pounds of pepper, and two and a half pounds of cinnamon.⁴⁴ On that fateful autumn day of 1354, the Jews similarly came forward as a group to meet Cola. Instead, however, they were invested with the morbid task of burning his corpse. And finally, a grisly parallel can be drawn between the papal, and also imperial, tradition of scattering coins to the gathered crowd as a sign of generosity and well-wishing towards the Roman citizens. Instead of scattering coins, the Roman chronicler remarks that Cola left behind pieces of skin, and shards of skull. Lengths of intestine dangled out, perhaps like outstretched arms.⁴⁵ The people, he comments, were joking about it, lightheartedly.⁴⁶

There was a bitter irony about the fact that Augustus' tomb was Cola's final destination. In medieval Rome, it was a Colonna fortress that marked the boundary of the Colonna region of the city and functioned as the Colonna response to the Orsini's

⁴³ Montecitorio was targeted for destruction by Pope Boniface VIII during his reprisals against the Colonna in 1297. *Ibid.*, 170, n.2.

⁴⁴ "Judei vero representant domno pape in die coronationis sue legem in via et ei faciunt laudes; et III libras et dimidiam piperis et duas libras et dimidiam cinnamomi afferunt ad cameram." Fabre and Duchesne, *Le liber censuum* v.1, p.306. Benjamin of Tudela, however, claimed that Roman Jews owed no tribute. Signer, Adler, and Asher, eds., *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela* 63.

⁴⁵ "They threw him on the ground, dragging him and peeling his skin off...He had no head. The bones of his skull were left behind on the road where he had been dragged...Masses of guts dangled out..." "Dierolo in terra, strascinavanollo, scortellavanollo...Capo non avea. Erano rimase le cocce per la via donne era strascinato...Le mazza de fòra grasse..." Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, p.197.

⁴⁶ "Onneuno ne sse iocava. *Alla perdonanza* li pareva de stare." Ettore Mazzali speculated that the crowd was lighthearted, as if granted a papal indulgence. Anonimo romano, *Cronica, Vita di Cola di Rienzo* ch.18, p.283, n.175.

Mausoleum of Hadrian (Castel Sant'Angelo) across the river. But it was also a monument to Augustus, the founder of the Roman empire. The *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* refers to it as “the burying place of the emperors.”⁴⁷ Cola had titled himself “august tribune,” on the first of August, 1347 in memory of emperor Augustus’ military triumph celebrated on the same day, and after which the month of August had been named.⁴⁸ In a letter to the archbishop of Prague, Cola explained his identification with the legendary figure. “Augustus,” he explained, was the term granted to Octavian after his triumph over Cleopatra. Since he too was crowned on the first of August, Cola wanted “ob vanitatem,” or of his own vanity, to be called “august.”⁴⁹ There may yet have been another reason for his identifying with the *princeps*: namely, Augustus’ famed adoption by Julius Caesar, according to Cola, the “first emperor.” For Cola claimed to be the bastard son of Henry VII, who, during his 1312 stay in Rome, had purportedly seduced the lovely washerwoman Maddalena, Cola’s mother.⁵⁰ Paradoxically, the humiliating final stage (as if the rest of it weren’t) of Cola’s death, his burning at the pyre, was the type of funeral given to medieval counterfeiters, heretics, and sodomites.⁵¹ With the Jewish kindling, a bad funeral it was. From an ancient Roman perspective, however, it was the rite granted to heroes. Thus, Cola and

⁴⁷ Nichols, ed., *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* 36.

⁴⁸ Cola’s new title was “Candidatus Spiritus Sancti miles, Nicolaus Severus et Clemens, liberator Urbis, zelator Italiae, amator urbis et Tribunus Augustus.” Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur, “Cola di Rienzo,” *Dizionario bibliografico degli italiani* 26 (1960-): 668.

⁴⁹ “Nam debetis scire, quod ille qui triumphavit de Cleopatra, regina Egipti, fuit Octavianus Augustus, nepos Caesaris, qui reversus Romam cum triumpho, impositum est sibi nomen Augusti. Nam Cesar primus imperator non est vocatus Augustus; et sic iste fuit primus Augustus. Et quia prima die mensis Augusti triumphavit, ideo mensem Augusti a seipso denominavit...Et sic ob vanitatem meam ego coronatus mense Augusti volui dici Augustus.” Burdach and Piur, eds., *Briefwechsel des Cola di Rienzo* III, doc.57, pp.271-72.

⁵⁰ The timing worked out well: Cola was said to have been born several months after Henry left Rome. In a letter to Charles IV of July 1350, Cola wrote: “...even if I am unworthy of such a lord, nonetheless nature itself, which composes everything, had me born, I believe, of the emperor Henry of glorious memory, your grandfather and my everlasting lord, by a woman who was his host and servant.” “... ego licet fuerim tanto domino prorsus indignus, tamen ipsa natura, construens omnia, me natum esse fecit ut credo gloriose memorie quondam imperatoris Heinrici, avi vestri et mei domini sempeterni, ex muliere videlicet eius hospita et ancilla.” Ibid. 3.50, p.201.

⁵¹ Tommaso Di Carpegna Falconieri, *Cola di Rienzo* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2002) 208.

Augustus shared a title, a victory day, and the status as adoptive sons of emperors. Ultimately, they would also share, at least momentarily, a grave.

For these reasons, it seems hardly incidental that Cola's body was dragged through the city and burned on a pyre in front of the Mausoleum of Augustus. As the burying place of emperors, and a memorial to Augustus, to whom Cola felt twinges of sympathy, the location would have been meaningful to contemporary Romans. By burning him there, the Colonna achieved three objectives. First, they demonstrated their control of the large swath of urban land between the Campidoglio and the Mausoleum of Augustus. After all, the entire ritual had taken place in quarters dominated by them. Second, they declared their continued power in city politics and their unwillingness to concede to political exclusion. Furthermore, they showed they could organize and manipulate a network of clients cutting across social boundaries. And finally, they made a mockery of Cola and de-legitimized his political ambitions. The visual juxtaposition of the grand mausoleum, symbol of Augustus' power and the eternal memory of him, beside Cola's mutilated, charred ashes destined for the river could only have made the tribune pitiable and ludicrous by comparison. The humiliating nature of the killing was intended to ridicule and scorn Cola, to draw a farcical parallel between his political ideals and those of the illustrious empire, to rebuke him for his arrogance, and to destroy any memory of him as a legitimate political actor.

Cola's ritualized murder in 1354 reveals the Colonna's attempt to de-legitimize the association Cola had tried to construct between himself and the Roman imperial past. Perhaps Cola's claims had so irked the Colonna since they too had attempted, on various occasions, to appropriate the memory of empire and to use it to advance their own political interests. If anything, they were less successful, and Sciarra too had met an ignominious end. In the following years, as we shall see, the imperial ideal

disappeared almost entirely from the Roman political arena, replaced by political pragmatism and the militarization of the Roman *popolo*. Cola's brutal execution at the hands of the people and the grisly procession of his body across the city signaled the final death-knell of long-lived claims to imperial authority in Rome.

The coronation of Charles IV

The striking ease with which Charles IV, the king of Bohemia, was crowned emperor in Rome in 1355 reveals a significant shift in the Roman outlook towards the imperial ideal. Like his predecessor Louis of Bavaria, and his grandfather, Henry VII, Charles came to receive the imperial crown. Unlike his predecessors' arrivals, however, his occasioned no outbreak of violence. The city did not become a battleground for opposing factions, and the Roman populace did not divide amongst itself. Instead, Charles was greeted cordially and the coronation ceremony proceeded without interruption. According to Matteo Villani:

The Roman *popolo*, in solemn procession, and arranged in order of region, along with their leaders and all of the clergy, paraded out of the city, and found [Charles] all ready to go. And having delivered the appropriate salutation and reverence, they led him and the Empress forward toward the city of Rome, with utmost gladness and festivity, and with a great multitude of Roman knights and villagers and foreigners, in addition to his cavalry, and led him to the basilica of St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles...⁵²

E 'l popolo di Roma per ordine di loro rioni, co' suoi principi e con tutto il chericato con solenne processione li uscirono incontro fuori della città, e trovarollo aparecchiato; e fattoli la debita salutatione e reverenzia, con somma allegrezza e festa, e con grande moltitudine di cavalieri romani e paesani e strani, oltre alla sua cavalleria, condussono lui inanzi e la 'mperadrice appresso nella città di Roma, e menarollo alla bassilica del principe delli apostoli Santo Piero...

⁵² Villani, *Cronica* IV.92, p. 606. The translation is mine.

Three days passed without incident, and on Sunday, April 5, Charles was received in St. Peter's Basilica by the cardinal of Ostia.⁵³ Such a crowd of people had gathered that "no one could move towards the altar, or see the consecration, except the prelates and those in the emperor's cohort" ("niuno potea valicare verso l'altare, o vedere la sua consagrazione, salvo i prelati e coloro ch'erano in compagnia collo eletto").⁵⁴ Villani claims that 5,000 German noblemen and cavalry were present, and more than 10,000 Italians on horseback.⁵⁵ After the coronation, the emperor, his cohort, and many Roman noblemen traversed the city, finally arriving at the Lateran for a celebratory meal. At the suggestion of the cardinal legate, the emperor spent the night outside the city, at San Lorenzo tra le Vigne,⁵⁶ from which they departed peaceably the following day.

The coronation only seems unusual when laid against other fourteenth-century imperial coronations. Henry VII, arriving in April 1312 in Rome, had relied on his Colonna allies to get him through the fiercely hostile crowds, and his arrival occasioned a civil war. In the city for weeks, he managed only to hack his way, amidst great bloodshed, to the Campidoglio, and never reached St. Peter's. Fifteen years later, the impending arrival of Louis of Bavaria had resulted in chaos, as Roman society split between imperial and papal loyalties. Contributing to the bitter struggle were competing opinions about the traditional right of the Roman *popolo* to appoint

⁵³ Matteo Villani tells us that three cardinals were ordinarily sent for a coronation, two at papal expense, while the cardinal of Ostia traditionally paid his own way, presumably because the distance was so short. In 1355, however, the papacy denied the funds to the two paid cardinals, who thenceforth decided not to attend the ceremony. "Era consuetudine di santa Chiesa di mandare tre cardinali alla coronazione dell'imperadori: quello d'Ostia, ch'ha l'ufficio, dee andare a coronare lo 'mperadore alle sue spese e alla sua provisione; li altri due debbono andare alle spese di santa Chiesa...ma a questa volta essendone fatto gran procaccio in corte...il papa e li altri cardinali non acconsentirono che lla Chiesa facesse loro le spese, dicendo, se voliono andare, ch'avieno la benedizione, ma altro nonn astettassono." Ibid. IV.71, p.575.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 5.2, p.609.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 5.2, p.610.

⁵⁶ Probably San Lorenzo fuori le Mura.

emperors. The street fighting around the Colonna and Orsini and their networks continued for months, until the Colonna, under Sciarra's leadership, temporarily prevailed. Giovanni Villani reported that when Louis of Bavaria arrived in Rome in early January 1328, he "was received graciously by the Romans" ("da' Romani fue ricevuto graziosamente").⁵⁷ Shortly, however, "already provoking discord on account of their lack of funds, and badly regarded by the Romans" ("la sua gente già per difetti venuta in discordia e da' Romani male veduti"), the emperor and his cohort began to wear on Roman patience.⁵⁸ Louis' imposition of yet another tax provoked a massive riot, as German graves were dug up and dumped into the Tiber, and the imperial cohort was chased out of the city.

Comparing these two earlier examples of imperial coronations with that of Charles IV in 1355, one notes not only the startling violence triggered by the earlier ones, but also the great expectations surrounding their arrivals. Although the Anonimo romano was a small boy when Louis the Bavarian came to Rome, he described the event in florid detail more than two decades later. The event deeply impressed many Romans. The 1355 coronation, by contrast, was attended by an orderly, almost sedate, Roman populace, that no longer harbored great expectations about its role in imperial affairs. The *lex de imperio* appears not to have been mentioned at all, and no one contested the cardinal of Ostia's prerogative to perform the coronation.

The issue of the elective rights of the Roman *popolo*, though seemingly already dismissed by Romans, was put to rest in 1356 with the publication of the Golden Bull. In this document, Charles IV established the German electors who from then on had the responsibility and right to elect the "king of the Romans." One historian has recently hypothesized that Cola's attempts to revive the *lex de imperio* impelled

⁵⁷ Villani, *Nuova cronica* XI.55, p.583.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 11.95, p.638.

Charles to draft the bull, though no such causal link can be proven.⁵⁹ While the decline of the imperial ideal as a driving force in Roman politics cannot be attributed to the Golden Bull, its publication probably played a role in cementing Romans' resignation to the final loss of their ancient privilege.

A New Military Pragmatism: La Felice Società dei Balestrieri e Pavesati

As the imperial ideal was declining, a new commitment to communal politics was rising in Rome. The years 1358 to 1377 were characterized, not by intangible and erudite ideals from Rome's distant past, but rather by a pragmatic agenda to develop commercial activity, toughen laws, and combat social disorder. For nearly twenty years, Rome was governed by an ideologically-charged popular government. A sign of the pragmatic outlook of the new government was its developing of a communal military power that effectively challenged the power of Roman elites. Although the objectives of this regime reflect an interest in the popular rights and rule of law that Cola had pursued, they also evince a curious tendency to forget, and move on from, the city's recent past. Along with the imperial ideal, Cola appears largely erased from Rome's political memory. The efficient pragmatism of Roman government was, I believe, a reaction against Cola's fanciful and grandiose agenda.

The changes of the late 1350's demonstrate the many ways that Romans began to model themselves on other Italian communes. The movement began with the provisional appointment of the *Sette Riformatori* (Seven Reformers) in March 1358 as the supreme magistrates of the commune.⁶⁰ The *Sette* were elected by the general council, comprised of the consuls of the guilds, and the *caporioni* (neighborhood

⁵⁹ "Il progetto di Cola, di 'restituire' a Roma e alle città italiane il diritto di scegliere l'imperatore, possibilmente preferendo la sua persona, fu dunque annullato da una disposizione che...dovette essere concepita anche come reazione a questo suo tentativo." Di Carpegna Falconieri, *Cola di Rienzo* 210.

⁶⁰ Alternatively, they were occasionally called the *Sette Rettori*, or *Sette Governatori*.

leaders).⁶¹ In a move that likened the Roman senator to other communes' *podestà*, the senatorship was made into a single position, by necessity a foreigner from at least forty miles away.⁶² The first of a long string of foreign senators was the Sienese knight Raimondo Tolomei.⁶³ The appointment of foreign senators without any close kinship ties to magnates, and usually originating from Tuscany, Umbria, or the Marches, deprived Roman elites of a primary outlet for influencing communal affairs.⁶⁴ Not just ousting barons from the senatorship, however, the 1363 Statutes demanded that they be excluded almost entirely from municipal government.⁶⁵ The municipal statutes of 1305 had similarly listed magnate families, though there is little indication the ordinance was enforced.⁶⁶ This provision reflects the legislative influence of Tuscan communes, many of which had drawn up punitive magnate lists in the late thirteenth century.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Maire Vigueur, "Il comune romano," 153. In addition to the guilds of merchants and *bovattieri*, a confirmation charter of December 1360 affirms the existence of a wool-workers guild in Rome, while one of 1363 attests to a guild of *merciai*, or spicers. Salimei, *Senatori e statuti* 129,32.

⁶² "In alma urbe et eius regimine sit et esse debeat unus Senator forensis...Non possit...aliquis esse Senator urbis de aliqua terra que sit urbi propinqua per quadraginta miliaria..." Re, ed., *Statuti* 2.208, p.195.

⁶³ The senate was filled by foreigners through the end of the century. There seems to have been a slight preference for senators from Tuscany and Umbria. The numbers of senatorships per city (or country) between 1358 and 1377 were: Aquila (1); Ariano (1); Belviso (1); Camerino (1); Cyprus (1); Florence (3); France (1); Naples (1); Narni (1); Orvieto (2); Perugia (2); Pisa (1); Pistoia (2); Prato (1); Recanati (1); Rimini (1). See Salimei, *Senatori e statuti*.

⁶⁴ "Nullus possit eligi ad officium Senatoris qui alicui de magnatibus Urbis usque ad tertium gradum consanguinitatis et affinitatis quomodolibet actinuerit." Re, ed., *Statuti* 2.209, p.195.

⁶⁵ The families named in the provision were the Orsini, Colonna, Annibaldi, Sant'Eustachii, Petri de Genazzano (a branch of the Colonna), Albertini, Romani, Savelli, Conti, Capocci, and Caetani. The designation of magnate was extended to everyone in the household, including those in its pay. Ibid. 2.201, p.193.

⁶⁶ Rota, "Il codice degli 'Statuta Urbis' del 1305."

⁶⁷ The Roman list was short: it listed only eleven families, whereas the Florentine Ordinances of Justice named first 38, then shortly after, 73 elite families. The Roman legislation of 1363 also follows Florentine anti-magnate legislation in the stipulation of progressive fines. One type of anti-magnate legislation seen in Florence but not, it seems, in Rome was the payment of a bond as a surety against crime and violence. The Roman Statutes make no mention of this practice at all. A background to anti-magnate legislation is provided by: G. Fasoli, "Ricerche sulla legislazione antimagnatizia in Italia," *Rivista di storia del diritto italiano* 12 (1939).

To protect the commune from noncompliant nobles, a military force was created in late 1358 or early 1359 made up of 3,000 Roman citizens. It was divided into two groups, each captained by one *bandaiese*, or flag-bearer.⁶⁸ The first group was trained with crossbows (*balestre*), and the other with a sword and a large shield (*pavis*).⁶⁹ This militia did not replace the communal army, which continued to be deployed outside Rome. The *bandaiesi* were responsible for some financial administration, but their primary duties were policing both in Rome and the *distretto*. Matteo Villani reports that they were responsible for punishing Roman elites who committed crimes, who opposed the commune, or who offered shelter to any criminal.⁷⁰ Since the senator, being a foreigner, was in a relatively weak position, the *Sette* and the *bandaiesi* soon assumed full executive powers under the name *La Felice Società dei Balestrieri e Pavesati*.⁷¹ By 1359, the two *bandaiesi* and the four *anteposti* (counselors) joined the city council, where they became so influential that the *Felice Società* soon became synonymous with the commune itself.⁷²

A. Natale offered several hypotheses about the term “felice,” positing that perhaps it echoed the earlier medieval “*felicissimus exercitus romanus*,” or, maybe, indicated the optimism Roman *popolani* felt at relief from the hitherto constant threats of noble feuds and roving mercenary companies.⁷³ Maire-Vigueur has instead

⁶⁸ According to Matteo Villani, “...each of the *bandaiesi* has a following of 1,500 *popolani*, well-armed and ready to follow him to any place; such that there are about 3,000 men that answer to the *bandaiesi*.” “...e ciascuno de’ *bandaiesi* ha il séguito di millecinquacento popolari bene armati e in punto a seguirli a ogni loro posta; e così sono circa III^M li ubidienti a’ *bandaiesi*.” Villani, *Cronica* IX.87, p.411.

⁶⁹ So called because it was thought to have originated in the city of Pavia.

⁷⁰ “[I *bandaiesi*] hanno a ffare la secuzione della giustizia di fuori contra li possenti e grandi cittadini che male facessono, o ffossono inobidienti a reggimento di Roma, o dessonno alcuno ricetto ai malifattori i lloro fortezze o tenute.” Villani, *Cronica* IX.87.

⁷¹ For a basic history of the *Felice Società*, A. Natale’s 1939 study is still definitive, though flawed. Natale, “La felice società dei balestrieri e pavesati a Roma e il governo dei *bandaiesi* dal 1358 al 1408,” 7. See also Dupré Theseider, *Roma dal comune di popolo* 661ff. and Maire Vigueur, “Il comune romano,” 151ff.

⁷² Maire Vigueur, “Il comune romano,” 154.

⁷³ Natale, “La felice società dei balestrieri e pavesati a Roma e il governo dei *bandaiesi* dal 1358 al 1408,” 13.

attributed the term, somewhat mysteriously, to the “moral aspirations” of the militia.⁷⁴ Contemporaries such as Matteo Villani did not comment on the curious title, but often noted, and with no lack of pride, that the *Felice Società* looked to Florence for political guidance: the *Sette*, he said, modeled themselves on the Florentine priors, and the *bandaresi*, on the *gonfalonieri*.⁷⁵

The *Felice Società* emphasized the military organization of all tiers of Roman society. For Rome, this was rather unusual. For although Rome had had a small militia for much of the Middle Ages, it was never sufficiently powerful for large-scale military operations. The trend towards a more developed militia had begun under Cola, who reorganized it as a conglomeration of regional (by urban *rione*) regiments.⁷⁶ Although attempts at military reform had been made in the past, for example by Sciarra Colonna in 1327, only under Cola did the militia acquire substantial funding and organization. Cola initiated several changes clearly incorporated by the *Felice Società*. The Anonimo romano reports:

Then the Tribune established the militia of the Knights of Rome as follows: for each region of Rome he organized thirty infantrymen and cavalymen, and paid them; each cavalryman had a war horse and a pack horse, equipment for his horses, and new, ornamented armor. They really looked like barons. Then he organized the infantrymen, also

⁷⁴ Maire Vigueur, "Il comune romano," 154. "Il nome stesso di Felice Società dei Balestrieri e Pavesati, del resto, la dice lunga sulle aspirazioni morali di questa milizia..."

⁷⁵ Natale, "La felice società dei balestrieri e pavesati a Roma e il governo dei bandaresi dal 1358 al 1408," 8. His judgment might derive from Matteo Villani, who noted the similarity of the new Roman government to that of his native Florence. "Recently from the form and customs of the popular regimes of Tuscany that live in liberty, and especially of the Florentines, whom they call sons, [the Romans] have taken the model, and they have made their citizens into something like priors and with similar powers...and for their council they have regional heads, and much like the *gonfalonieri* of the Florentine companies, they have created *bandaresi*, endowed with great power and authority..." "All'ultimo dalla forma e costumi de' reggimenti de' popoli della Toscana che vivono i llibertà, e massimamente de' Fiorentini cui essi appellano figliuoli, hanno preso il modo, e fatti hanno loro cittadini in similitudine di priori e co simigliante balia...e per loro Consiglio hanno i capi de' rioni, e a similitudine de' gonfalonieri delle compagnie di Firenze fatti hanno bandaresi con grande podestà e balia..." Villani, *Cronica* IX.87, p.411.

⁷⁶ This was part of the original constitution (or, "ordinamenti dello buono stato") that Cola outlined in his speech of May 20, 1347. Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, pp.113-14.

equipping them, and giving them standards, distributing the flags according to the symbols of their neighborhoods, and paid them...

Allora ordinao la milizia delli cavalieri de Roma per questo ordine. Per ciasche rione de Roma ordinao pedoni e cavalieri trenta, e deoli suollo. Ciasche cavalieri avea destrieri e ronzino, cavalli copertati, arme adornate nove. Bene pargo baroni. Anco ordinao li pedoni puro adorni, e deoli li confalloni, e divise li confalloni secunno li segnali delli rioni, e deoli suollo.⁷⁷

This suggests that Cola provided some of the building blocks for what became a complex military structure under the *Felice Società*.

The Roman militia after 1358 grew to roughly twice its former size. A major change initiated by the *Felice Società*, however, was the disbanding of its noble command structure. Even under Cola, the militia had been led by Roman nobles employed for their traditional military expertise.⁷⁸ The Anonimo reports that Cola initially had baronial military supporters, among whom were Giordano Orsini, messer Rainaldo Orsini, Cola Orsini, lord of Castel Sant' Angelo, count Vertuollo, Orso Orsini, "and many other great barons of Rome" ("e moiti atri delli granni baroni de Roma").⁷⁹

The 1363 Statutes reflect the division of Roman society according to the military function of its tiers. Rather than the more common division in Italian communes between elite and *popolo*, the Roman Statutes divided society into three tiers: *pedites*, *milites et cavallerotti*, and *barones seu magnates*. These terms, or at least the first two, reflect their respective military functions. The first group, the

⁷⁷ Ibid. ch.18, p.123.

⁷⁸ Franca Allegrezza's study of the Orsini family has revealed how the baronial families were at first divided in their response to Cola. She posits that they only achieved a unified resistance after Cola's infamous "bad joke" of mid-September 1347, wherein he captured and jailed Stefano Colonna and other members of the city's most elite families, told them he was going to execute them, then set them free after a day. In addition to definitively turning many noble families against him, his hoax, or vacillation, apparently lost him many other supporters as well. Allegrezza, *Organizzazione del potere e dinamiche familiari: gli Orsini dal Duecento agli inizi del Quattrocento* 198ff.

⁷⁹ Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, pp.139-40.

pedites or *populares*, was roughly analogous to the *popolo minuto* of other Italian communes. The second group, the *milites et cavallerotti*, were those whose progenitor or kin was knighted, who served in the cavalry, who played in the public games at Testaccio or Piazza Navona, or who had assets worth more than 2,000 *lire*.⁸⁰ Included in this category were some older Roman families whose fortunes had waned or never quite taken off, but it also included, on the basis of wealth, “new men” such as merchants and *bovattieri* who did not enjoy prestigious lineage, but a healthy income instead. Finally, there were the *magnates seu barones* – those who owed the *sequimentum* (the oath of loyalty to the commune) or who had assets worth more than 30,000 *lire*.⁸¹

This tripartite division of society was not invented by the *Felice Società*. As early as 1263, Urban IV had issued a property law in the Campagna and Marittima, for which the penalties for infraction were 200-300 *lire* for *pedites*, 500 for *milites* and 1,000 for *barones*. Although this law applied to Anagni rather than Rome, it shows the regional precedent for this social configuration.⁸² The Anonimo romano evidences colloquial usage of these terms, frequently employing *cavallerotti* and *barones*, and on a few occasions, *magnates*, although he also uses others not appearing the Statutes. The middling group of *milites et cavallerotti*, for example, he often calls *discreti uomini*, or even *buoni uomini*, while *milites* he uses only very rarely, and then to

⁸⁰ “Duplicentur pene in milite et filio militis et cavallarocto: ubicumque autem in hoc statutorum volumine fit mentio de milite, sive tractatur de electione sive de penarum impositione sive augmentatione, intelligatur de illo qui est filius militis sive de genere militis, et idem intelligatur de illo cuius bona valent duo milia librarum provisinorum et ab inde supra, de quo valore sufficiat probatio per tres vel quattuor testes ydoneos de publica fama probantes; et illi habeantur et intelligantur pro cavallaroctis in quolibet casu in hoc volumine statutorum comprehenso qui actenus habuerunt officium ut cavallarocti in Urbe vel eius districtu, vel qui luderunt in ludis Testatie et Agonis.” Re, ed., *Statuti* 2.47, p.108.

⁸¹ The sequimentum was the oath of fidelity to the commune. It included an oath not to receive criminals or banned persons in their homes or fortresses. Ibid. 2.201, p.191-92. The monetary limitation is stated in several statutes concerning violent crimes: Re, ed., *Statuti* 1.110, pp. 72-73, 2.12, p.92, 2.50, pp.09-10.

⁸² Carocci, “Una nobiltà bipartita,” 82. The government of the *Felice Società* did little to alter these divisions, and even maintained the proportions of the money fines (1:2:4) seen in Urban IV’s law.

indicate soldiers. Other terms he uses for the nobility are *potienti*, *mannifichi*, and *nuobili*, while the rest of Roman society he invariably refers to as the *puopolo*, or simply, *romani*.

The success and longevity of the *Felice Società* cannot be attributed entirely to its military power. Papal support was also important in ensuring the early stability of the regime. Initially, an expanded and professionalized Roman force was convenient for the pope, among whose primary concerns in the 1350's and '60's were the aggressive and violent mercenary companies ravaging the Italian countryside.⁸³ Conflict, of course, would eventually ensue over the commune's newly aggressive tactics in the *distretto*, historically a source of friction between city government and papacy.⁸⁴ Thus, when in 1367 Urban V briefly returned the curia to Rome, one of his first acts was to try to dismantle the military arm of the commune.⁸⁵

In the years following the establishment of the *Felice Società*, the commune achieved, for the first time, a real sense of physical security from its traditional nemeses. Matteo Villani commented on Rome's remarkable peace and stability, as compared with its earlier notoriety for disorder and crime. "The Romans...were for a very long time without order or strength of popular rule, because of which one could have said that their *contado* and *distretto* was a den of thieves, and of people disposed to misdeeds."⁸⁶ Matteo furthermore declared that it was because Rome had turned to Florence, learning how to manage a commune, that their lot improved: "...wanting to

⁸³ Michael Mallet discusses the chaotic military situation in the Papal States in this period in Michael Mallett, *Mercenaries and their Masters: Warfare in Renaissance Italy* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1974) esp. 57.

⁸⁴ There is no mention of the *Felice Società* after 1377. The *bandaresi*, however, survived as an armed group in service to the commune until 1398 when it was definitively dismantled by Boniface IX. See Esch, "La fine del libero comune di Roma."

⁸⁵ The *Sette* were replaced in 1369 by the "Tre Conservatori della Camera Capitolina." Their function remained essentially unchanged, but their number was reduced to three. At the same time, the title of *bandaresi* was changed to "Esecutori di Giustizia." Maire Vigueur, "Il comune romano," 154.

⁸⁶ "I romani...erano stati gran tempo senza ordine o forza di stato popolare, onde loro contado e distretto si potea dire una spilonca di ladroni, e gente disposta a mal fare." Villani, *Cronica* IX.51, pp.358-59.

rule themselves, and to improve their situation, and looking toward the government of Florence, their popolani citizens created some rectors with certain powers and authority similar to our priors...and created regional heads under the title of bandaresi...”⁸⁷ According to Matteo, however, among the militia’s first acts was to prosecute criminals in the *distretto* (“...uscivano fuori della città bene armati a ffare l’ecuzione della giustizia contro a’ mafattori”), and it was because of this, their hard-nosed military discipline, that “the city of Rome is today rather free and safe for all manner of persons.”⁸⁸

Thus, the *Felice Società* appears to have accomplished what no other Roman government of the fourteenth century could do, namely, to bring an end to the deplorable condition of political instability and violence that had earned Rome among contemporaries such notoriety. This entailed an overtly pragmatic position towards the sources of political instability, both within the city and without, first among which were noble families. But the search for stability also entailed leaving behind the fantastical ideas of empire that many had cultivated and utilized for political ends. The experience under Cola, as well as the tumultuous imperial visits, had demonstrated both the deep resonance of these ideas for many Romans, and simultaneously, the great havoc they could inflict. So, instead of looking backwards, as Cola had done, to legitimate the present, the *Felice Società* discarded many elements of the old political value system, exchanging them instead for the contemporary, communal model that would bring Rome into line with much of the rest of Italy.

⁸⁷ “...volendosi regolare, e recarsi a migliore disposizione, avendo rispetto a reggimento de’ Fiorentini, feciono loro cittadini popolari alquanti rettori con certa podestà e balìa assimiglianti a’ nostri priori...e feciono capo i rioni sotto il titolo di bandaresi...” Ibid. IX.51, p.359.

⁸⁸ “Il perché da queste e da altre assecuzione fatte contro a’ paesani e’ cittadini che ricettavano i malfattori, onde oggi il paese di Roma è assai libero e sicuro a ogni maniera di gente.” Ibid.

Cultural decline

As the rhetoric of empire disappeared from Roman politics, one notices a striking, concomitant decline in Roman cultural output. This decline, moreover, has gone all but unnoted in the scholarship. Few have devoted attention to it, perhaps perceiving that Romans' cultural achievements of the early fourteenth century were paltry to begin with. But given what we have seen of the social and political relevance of history in those years, that is, the struggle over controlling how Romans remembered their past, the acute dissimilarity between the pre- and post-Cola periods becomes all the more startling. I would contend that these two phenomena—the disappearance of the imperial ideal, and the decline in cultural production—were connected, resulting from the profound socio-political changes of post-Cola Rome.

Although a considerable quantity of documents survives from the late fourteenth century, they differ substantially in character from the documentation of the first half of the century. First, history as a genre seems to have all but disappeared. The Anonimo romano's chronicle ends with Cola's death, for example, and no Roman chronicle survives from the late Trecento. Nor, as far as we can tell, was anyone writing the kind of universal history that Giovanni Cavallini had aspired to in the *Polistoria*, or Giovanni Colonna in the *Mare Historiarum*. And yet, the politics were more stable, the city's economy had picked up, and one might have expected a cultural flowering. Despite this, however, no major work of history, or poetry, or philosophy was produced in Rome in the twenty years after 1360.

One wonders whether the texts' survival is really the problem, and not a major shift in cultural outlook. That is, is it possible that Romans were producing chronicles and histories as before, but the materials simply did not survive, thereby making it appear that the period was less culturally fecund? My hypothesis in this case is no, since in fact a far greater net amount of material survives from the second half of the

century than from the first. But the types of documents change significantly. This is particularly true from 1354 to 1377, the period with which we are primarily concerned, since the papal return in 1377 induced myriad other subsequent changes. The collection of Roman material remaining from the post-Cola period is remarkable above all else for its highly pragmatic character. Notarial protocols, for example, constitute a new type of material, since those pre-dating 1348 have all been lost or destroyed. These protocols probably constitute the largest category of documentation for late Trecento Rome, and many of them still await study.⁸⁹ Then there are the communal Statutes of 1363, which survive in full, and a handful of documents pertaining to city administration including diplomatic letters, and senate and council records.⁹⁰ It is indicative that Andreas Rehberg, when writing of Rome's cultural developments in the medieval period, skips directly from the *Anonimo romano* to Rome's humanist period beginning in 1417 with the end of the Great Schism and the election of Martin V.⁹¹

The absence of cultural output can be partially explained by altered socio-political circumstances. As I argued in the last chapter, the works produced up to about the middle of the century—Giovanni Cavallini's *Polistoria*, Giovanni Colonna's *Mare Historiarum*, the *Cronica* of the *Anonimo romano*, and even the political ideals of Cola as they were delineated in his speeches, public murals, and letters—all aspired

⁸⁹ Several scholars are currently concentrating specifically on this material. Very helpful introductions to the Roman notarial protocols of this period are provided by: Anna Maria Corbo, "Relazione descrittiva degli archivi notarili romani dei secoli XIV-XV nell'Archivio di Stato e nell'Archivio Capitolino," in *Sources of History: Private Acts in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Egmont Lee, and Paolo Brezzi (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984); Gennaro, "Mercanti e bovattieri," 157ff., esp. n.1; Isa Lori Sanfilippo, "I protocolli notarili romani del Trecento," *Archivio della società romana di storia patria* 110 (1987). An increasing number of the protocols have been transcribed and published. These include: Lori Sanfilippo, ed., *Il protocollo notarile di Lorenzo Staglia (1372)*, Renzo Mosti, ed., *Il protocollo notarile di Anthonius Gaioli Petri Scopte (1365)* (Rome: Viella, 1991).

⁹⁰ The communal and diplomatic material is more dispersed. The appendix attached to A. Natale's "La felice società" contains extracts of many relevant documents, although a significant proportion is of non-Roman origin.

⁹¹ Rehberg, "Rome," 986.

to mold Romans' view of their history. They challenged the elite monopoly on cultural capital, whether in the form of schooling, the use of spolia in their architecture, or access to books and active cultural spheres such as southern France. But when the old nobility entered into severe crisis in the 1350's, and many newly wealthy *popolo* found other ways of channeling their power, the need to challenge elite domination through the appropriation and revision of the Roman past was eliminated.

The political shifts occurring after the mid-fourteenth century were attended by profound sociological changes. These were felt nowhere more deeply than among the city's elite families. Between 1360 and 1390, many of the traditional holdings of these families—great estates, *castra*, and pastures in the countryside surrounding Rome—were abandoned, sold, or passed over to new administrators.⁹² At the same time, numerous households, and sometimes even entire family lines dissipated and vanished, such as happened to the Normanni, one of Rome's oldest elite families.⁹³ But, just as happened earlier, the crisis hit the second-tier elites with the greatest severity. The most eminent families—the Colonna, Orsini, and to a lesser extent the Savelli, Anguillara, and Conti—appear to have had the financial reserves to ride out the difficult decades.⁹⁴

Although there has been no definitive study tracing the fortunes of the Roman elite families in the late fourteenth century, it appears that there were several conditions conspiring against them that ultimately seriously hobbled or even destroyed them. The first among these was increasingly restricted access to the papacy. As noted earlier, the Colonna went from 1348 until 1378 unrepresented in the college of

⁹² See Gennaro, "Mercanti e bovattieri," 167 ff. A list of the baronial rural estates passing into the possession of Roman *bovattieri* in this period can be found in Maire Vigueur, "Les grands domaines" 98-110. See also the appendix attached to Gennaro, "Mercanti e bovattieri."

⁹³ Carocci, *Baroni di Roma* 64.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 66.

cardinals, and families such as the Caetani and Stefaneschi had lost their last cardinal much earlier.⁹⁵ The Orsini were slightly more fortunate, experiencing only eight years, from 1342 to 1350, without a family cardinal. Nonetheless, the much reduced access to the papal court, and the favors that went along with it, deprived many of the Roman elite families of the privileges, payments, and outlets for power to which they had grown accustomed over the previous century and a half.

Other determining factors were probably the deleterious effects of the Black Death on the price of land, the increased cost of wages, and the impact of local and regional wars. It is also thought that the policies initiated by Albornoz in the region around Rome, which resulted in increased papal power, might have limited the ability of Roman nobles to manage their estates and the people who lived on them, with the degree of freedom they hitherto possessed.⁹⁶

Finally, the restrictions that the *Felice Società* imposed on the Roman elites, and that were promulgated in the 1363 Statutes, called for their near-exclusion from communal politics. They lost the senatorship, were forbidden to approach the Campidoglio during judicial proceedings, or to give refuge to thieves or dissidents.⁹⁷ They had to swear the *sequimentum* to the commune, and were threatened with steep penalties for crimes. The only office reserved for them was marshal, or head police officer, but even that was reserved for *cavallerotti*, or the knights usually belonging to lower tier elites.⁹⁸ Though it is uncertain to what extent the Statutes were enforced,

⁹⁵ The Caetani in 1317, and the Stefaneschi in 1341. Ibid. 60-61.

⁹⁶ In the absence of any study on the effects of Albornoz's policies on Roman elite families, our understanding of these processes is necessarily limited.

⁹⁷ The relevant rubrics in Re's edition of the Statutes are: 2.208, p.195: "De unico Urbis senatore"; 2.209, p.195: "De non assumendis ad senatum"; 3.36, pp.222-223: "Quod nullus bastardus vel spurius alicuius baronis possit eligi ad aliquod officium"; 2.110, pp.72-73: "De baronibus causantibus non intransibus Capitolium"; 2.201, pp.191-192: "De baronibus iurare debentibus sequimenta senatoris et romani populi."

⁹⁸ The commune seemingly intended to capitalize on these individuals' military expertise. Re, ed., *Statuti* 3.35, p.220.

political exclusion and financially punitive policies were probably factors in the demise of some, especially lower, elite families.

The considerable political and sociological shifts occurring soon after Cola's death—the installation of a stable and ideologically driven communal government, and the deterioration of many traditionally elite families—resulted in an environment in many ways radically changed in a very brief space of time. In addition, the gruesome way that Cola was executed and humiliated *post mortem* suggests a deep disillusionment with his ideals and political program among a wide swath of Roman society. Since we have been examining up until now the relevance of the past on a society's concept of its present, it will be useful to determine what relationship post-Cola Roman society established with its own past, either recent or distant, to legitimize or condemn the tidal changes it had undergone. Did the experience under Cola, the founding of the *Felice Società*, and the growth of a new economically vibrant sector of society at the expense of the elites alter the way Romans approached, understood, and utilized their past?

Social Forgetting

Memory forgets, sometimes quite willingly. It is a process whereby individuals, groups, and entire societies conserve and record, but also filter, repress, and configure past experience to shape and accommodate their identities for presentation to self and others.⁹⁹

A recent biographer of Cola has noted that, within a very short time of his death, Romans had forgotten him. Paradoxically, the Colonna were one of the few exceptions, planting a pine tree in the garden of their palazzo to commemorate their

⁹⁹ David S. Peterson, "The War of the Eight Saints in Florentine Memory and Oblivion," in *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence*, ed. William J. Connell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 173.

great enemy.¹⁰⁰ Their small tribute was perhaps the last that Cola would receive until his memory was evoked anew by Machiavelli in the *History of Florence* almost a century and a half later.¹⁰¹ And with Cola's memory, it appears, went Rome's dreams of a revived empire. In this section, I argue that, just as remembering had assumed special importance in the first half of the fourteenth century, after Cola's death forgetting acquired an equally important role.

While in recent decades scholars in many fields have produced a plentiful body of works on memory, fewer have been those on forgetting. Among historians, the study of the mental enslavement of peoples under totalitarian regimes, or forced forgetting, has been one burgeoning area of study. Since this type of forgetting generally requires a powerful state apparatus, it has been largely pursued by modernists, and its applications to medieval history are understandably few.¹⁰² As discussed in the previous chapter, medieval studies of memory have tended to focus on the *ars memoriae*, or art of memory, and have not, in general, ventured into the realm of oblivion. An exception is Patrick Geary, who developed the idea of "creative forgetting" in his book *Phantoms of Remembrance*, in which he analyzed the ways in which eleventh-century society recast its relationship to the past through a process of transmission, adaptation, and suppression.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Di Carpegna Falconieri, *Cola di Rienzo* 211.

¹⁰¹ Of Cola, Machiavelli wrote: "...a certain Niccolò di Lorenzo...made himself head of the Roman republic, with the title of Tribune, and brought her back to her ancient form, with such fame for justice and vigor that not merely the neighboring cities but all Italy sent him ambassadors." Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Chief Works and Others*, trans. Allan Gilbert, 3 vols. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989) 1071.

¹⁰² Paul Connerton notes that Czech history provides two examples of "organized oblivion," the first after 1618 and again after 1948. Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 14-15. The philosopher Paul Ricoeur has meditated on the role of forgetting in the production of history: Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000) esp.3.3: "L'oubli".

¹⁰³ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*. See also: Patrick Geary, "Oblivion Between Orality and Textuality in the Tenth Century," in *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, ed. Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried, and Patrick Geary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Forgetting has received less attention than remembering since it is often perceived as a negative, passive phenomenon—as in, forgetting is what happens when we *fail* to remember.¹⁰⁴ Literal forgetting, that is, cannot be willed. In a playfully serious article based in semiotic theory, Umberto Eco postulated that an *ars oblivionalis*, or art of forgetting, was a logical impossibility since all signs (the symbols by which we remember things) produce presences, or memories, and that no sign can produce an absence (or forgetting).¹⁰⁵ On a certain level, we simply cannot make ourselves forget in the same way that we can make ourselves remember.¹⁰⁶ Eco, however, was not the first adventurer into the art of oblivion, but was long preceded in his quest by two Greeks, the poet Simonides and the famed politician Themistocles. As reported by Cicero, Simonides offered to teach Themistocles some mnemonic tricks, but was turned down by the politician, who told him he was much more interested in learning to forget the many things he unwittingly remembered. Suffering from an overactive memory, Themistocles complained that “what I don’t want to remember, I remember; what I want to forget, I cannot forget” (“*Nam nemini etiam quae nolo, oblivisci non possum quae volo*”).¹⁰⁷ Though Themistocles was burdened by his active memory, he was like everyone else in his inability to forget.

Cola’s contemporaries could not possibly have forgotten him, in the literal sense, in the few years after his death, no matter how much they desired to. They could, however, simply have chosen not to remember him. By neglecting to perpetuate

¹⁰⁴ For example, Mary Carruthers’ *The Book of Memory* allots only one paragraph to willed forgetting. In the remainder of her study, forgetting is treated as a malfunction of memory. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* 77.

¹⁰⁵ Eco, Umberto, and Marilyn Migiel, trans. “An *Ars Oblivionalis*? Forget it!” *Publications of the Modern Language Society* 103, no. 3 (1988): 254-61. It is indicative that English contains no noun denoting “a thing forgotten.” In other words, “memory” has no antonym.

¹⁰⁶ Eco’s only solution to the conundrum was a sort of system overload theory: he suggested a multiplication of signs, whereby the rememberer becomes so confused that she ultimately forgets.

¹⁰⁷ The anecdote is found in Cicero’s *De Oratore*, 1.34.157 and 2.74.299. The citation comes from: Harald Weinrich, *Lethé: The Art and Critique of Forgetting*, trans. Steven Rendall (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004) 11-12.

his memory through such common vehicles as history writing, commemorations, or public monuments, Cola's successors would have allowed public memory of him to die out. As I will show in the rest of this chapter, this is precisely what happened.

The question remains why Romans desired to forget Cola. The Egyptologist and cultural studies scholar Jan Assmann has ruminated on why some societies do not preserve their history. Assmann has posited that collective forgetting occurs when a society undergoes a significant change of context, such as a profound transformation of living and social conditions. Of this he writes:

Memories are retained because they are placed into the context of certain thought processes. This context has the status of a fiction. To remember means to give experience meaning; to forget means to change this context, causing certain memories to be decontextualized and thus forgotten and others to be reordered into new contextual models and thus recalled.¹⁰⁸

According to this theory, the change in context is what causes the forgetting. Remembered experiences from the past, when they are removed from a meaningful context, lose their meaning, and are subsequently forgotten. On a societal level, forgetting would therefore occur when there is a rupture between the present and the past sufficient to de-contextualize that past, deprive it of meaning, and ultimately to render it irrelevant.

In late Trecento Rome, the values and mores of the recent and distant past were suddenly of far less use to the present. The idea of reviving antiquity had thrived in the earlier Avignon period, when the Romans felt their society suddenly stripped of power and relevance. Roman elites, especially, had tried to use the imperial ideal to garner popular support for their endeavors. During the 1350's, however, political, economic,

¹⁰⁸ Jan Assmann, "Die Katastrophe des Vergessens. Das Deuteronomium als Paradigma kultureller Mnemotechnik," in *Mnemosyne: Formen und Funktionen der kultureller Erinnerung*, ed. Aleida Assmann and Dietrich Harth (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1991), 338. Translation obtained from website: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/screeningthepast/firstrelease/fr1201/rcfr13b.htm>

and social shifts displaced that traditional elite, allowing a new group of merchants and agricultural *bovattieri* to take over. They were less interested in the prestige associated with empire than they were in vibrant commercial enterprise. The empire did not offer the economic incentives that a shift to commerce-based communalism, or even the return of the papacy, seemed to extend. And finally, the return of economic growth revived Romans' belief in the relevance of their city, which in turn diminished the need to resort to external sources of validation. In addition to the disappearance of the imperial ideal, history writing also became less important as the sociological impetuses that had often motivated it were gradually eliminated. In these ways, the concept of de-contextualization is a useful one for understanding, at least in part, the shift after 1354 in the Romans' relationship to their past.

The de-contextualization theory cannot entirely explain Rome's change, though, if only because it does not incorporate the emotional attachments that societies have to their memories. These emotions may be positive, as with nostalgia, or negative, as with trauma, or anywhere in between. To take these into account, we need to consider another kind of forgetting, one deriving from Freudian psychoanalysis. This is the act of motivated forgetting, or repressing—as in, we forget because it pains us to remember. This has been another blossoming theme for historians, again especially modernists, who have applied the concept of trauma to historical analysis to elucidate its long-term effects on society and culture.¹⁰⁹

While there are obvious difficulties in evaluating to what extent Romans in the 1360's and '70's willfully suppressed memories of the Cola years, the gruesome nature of Cola's murder indicates the depth of feeling among some Romans against the former tribune. And as will be shown below, the 1363 Statutes offer some

¹⁰⁹ In Chapter 1 of *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Dominick LaCapra provides an overview of trauma from the perspective of history as a discipline.

indication that the communal government wanted little to do with Cola's memory. Romans had endured years of tumultuous urban politics, and even some embarrassment in the pan-Italian political sphere, as Cola promoted his grandiose claims to empire that even many Romans considered exaggerated. Many elite families, and first among them the Colonna, had lost numerous relatives in the civil war of autumn 1347. Even though the surviving sources are not particularly suited to evaluating whether Romans avoided or repressed Cola's memory, it is nonetheless a question worth asking.

The 1363 Statutes and the culture of forgetting

The 1363 Statutes reveal a society that, in the span of eight years, had undergone systemic and fundamental changes. The picture, or rather sketch, that they offer is striking for the depth and reach of change portrayed therein. Seemingly permanent fixtures in Roman life—the noble, papally appointed senators, the presence of the king of Naples and the emperor as political participants, the interminable petty wars of the noble families, effervescent popular regimes hardly ever enduring more than six months—appeared to dissipate and vanish. In their place, the Statutes tell of a complex communal structure, a hierarchically organized society privileging its middle and lower tiers, and a citizen body actively looking beyond its walls for commercial, agricultural, and political opportunities.

Partially responsible for this image is the nature of the source itself. As legislation, of course, the Statutes are fundamentally prescriptive, describing with greater accuracy the society that their founders were aiming to achieve, rather than what in reality existed. There is also the persistent problem of evaluating to what degree the Statutes were enforced. Yet at the same time, the Statutes clearly illuminate

the values and preoccupations of the group that promulgated them.¹¹⁰ While they reveal some elements of continuity with the past, I believe that they speak far more to the break that Romans had made with the political, social, and cultural traditions of their recent past.

In making this assessment, I disagree with those scholars who have argued that the social hierarchy delineated in the Statutes was essentially a re-elaboration of preexisting norms dating back to the thirteenth century.¹¹¹ It is true, however, that the Statutes show some continuity with the values and priorities of earlier fourteenth-century Roman society. Some had even been taken directly from Cola's agenda: open roads, safe neighborhoods, regulated commerce, and a restrained nobility had been among Cola's primary objectives, and continued to be prioritized in the Statutes. This is certainly because those issues were of primary importance to merchants, bankers, and anyone whose livelihood depended on the safe passage of goods and the reliability of contracts. The emphasis on popular prerogatives thus reflects an element of continuity with Rome's immediate past. Another element of continuity concerned the commune's historical interest in imposing its authority over the villages and towns of the *distretto*. The foundation of the commune in 1143, for example, had been attended by extensive struggles with Viterbo, Velletri, Tivoli, and other towns hesitant to relinquish municipal independence. Territorial expansion had also been an objective of Cola's regime, though he was often too bogged down in municipal affairs to devote

¹¹⁰ One detects the presence of both lower elite families and the rising entrepreneurs in the demographic composition of the committee drawing up the Statutes. This committee included seventeen persons: three doctors of law, four members of the old aristocracy (a Tebaldeschi and an Ilperini), four unknown *popolani*, and six notaries, among whom was Cecco di Rosano, the friend of Coluccio Salutati. Despite the disparity among their fortunes, all shared a common interest in limiting the powers of the upper nobility.

¹¹¹ Carocci, "Una nobiltà bipartita," 92-95. Here Carocci argues against Camillo Re's interpretation that the 1305 Statutes were the first statutes ever created for the Roman commune, and instead posits that there was an earlier list of magnates compiled in 1284 or 1285.

many resources to it. Continuity, therefore was not entirely anathema to the creators of the 1363 Statutes.

Though the elements of continuity need to be acknowledged, they should not obscure the degree of change that had to occur for such legislation to be produced. While earlier magnate lists might indeed have existed, that no members of noble families were elected to the senate after 1358 indicates that only in the post-Cola period was the political exclusion of magnates enforced with any consistency.¹¹² In addition, the many provisions directed towards the organization, responsibilities, and payment of the civic militia reveal a military force available to implement the popular government's decrees, especially against a noncompliant nobility.

A notable aspect of the Statutes is that they make no mention of the papacy. They open, however, with an invocation of the Trinity, a standard notarial practice, followed by a statute ordering the punishment of heretics.¹¹³ While the remainder of the legislation has little to say on spiritual matters, notable is the commune's eagerness to show its devotion and orthodoxy by prosecuting heresy. These clauses declare communal independence, not from papal authority, but as a potent and self-reliant administrative and judicial organ that could hold its own in the maintenance of spiritual well-being in the absence of the papacy.

Similarly, neither the emperor nor the empire receives any mention in the text. The idea of Rome as an imperial city seems to have had little purchase among the writers of the Statutes. The one allusion to empire appears, not surprisingly, in conjunction with Cola di Rienzo. The only statute to mention Cola refers to him merely as a chronological marker, to specify that pardons made "in the time of the tribunate of messer Cola di Rienzo" ("tempore tribunatus domini Nicolai Laurentii...")

¹¹² The last noble senator was Giovanni Conti in 1358. Salimei, *Senatori e statuti*.

¹¹³ Re, ed., *Statuti* 1.1, 1.2, pp.2-3.

were still valid. However, in the margin of one manuscript, someone wrote, “Cola di Rienzo, tribune in Aracoeli, in the year of the Lord” (“Cola rentius tribunus in araceli anno domini”), and sketched above it a crown.¹¹⁴ Aside from this single reference, the Statutes do not anywhere acknowledge the former tribune.

One other clause raises the question of whether the *Felice Società*, or the compilers of the Statutes, were trying to erase Cola’s memory from the public consciousness. This fascinating provision attempted to make May 20 into a civic holiday. Although May 20 was the anniversary of the day Cola had staged his 1347 coup and launched his new government, the clause makes no reference to Cola. Instead, it declares that “out of commemoration of the current peaceable state of the people,” a mass to the Holy Spirit was to be celebrated in the church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli.¹¹⁵ Was it pure coincidence that the new government proposed a holiday on the anniversary of Cola’s accession to power, in the very church that had served as the site for many of his most important speeches, processions, and political acts?

Atop the Campidoglio, the church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli had been a focal point for Cola’s speeches and processions. As noted in chapter 3, the church was thought to have been built on the ruins of Augustus’ palace. For much of the Middle Ages, it was a Benedictine church but in the late thirteenth century was rebuilt by Franciscans.¹¹⁶ Flanking the Campidoglio, it occupied a prominent location linking it both to the city’s ancient spiritual past as well as its political present. After the bloody battle of November 20, 1347, in which Cola’s troops killed numerous Roman barons,

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 2.202, pp. 193, n. 1. BAV, Codice Ottoboniano n.741, one of five main redactions of the Statutes, is characterized by the extensive drawings in its margins. Re describes the manuscript on pp. xxi-xxv.

¹¹⁵ “Item statuimus et ordinamus quod anno quolibet in die xx^o mensis maii ob memoriam et rememorationem presentis pacifici status popularis celebretur sollempniter missa Spiritus Sancti in Ecclesia sancte Marie de Araceli...” Ibid. 3.149, p.283.

¹¹⁶ According to the art historian Serena Romano, Santa Maria in Aracoeli was the only Franciscan church in all of Duecento Italy to be located, not in the urban peripheries, but rather in the city center. Romano, "Arte del medioevo romano: la continuità e il cambiamento," 276-77.

three of whom were Colonna, Cola “returned triumphant with the *popolo*” to Santa Maria in Aracoeli where he offered his crown (made of silver and plants) and scepter to the Virgin.¹¹⁷ The bodies of the three slain Colonna— Janni, Stefano, and Pietro di Agapito—were brought into the Colonna chapel. When Colonna women arrived, “hair torn” in mourning, Cola “had them driven away,” saying, “If they provoke me any further I shall have these three cursed corpses thrown into the pit of the hanged men, since they are perjurers and are not worthy of being buried.”¹¹⁸ Seven years later, on August 29, 1354, Cola laid to rest there the decapitated body of Montréal d’Albarno, better known as Fra Morreale.¹¹⁹

Evidently the church of Santa Maria in Aracoeli had a politically-charged recent history. It is difficult to determine whether Romans, five or ten years later, would still have associated the church with Cola. But Cola had left physical traces of his presence there, such as the enormous marble stairway leading up to it. It seems hardly likely that many Romans could have failed to note this. One is left with the

¹¹⁷ “[Cola] tornaio con tutto lo puopolo triomfante a Santa Maria dell’Arucielo e là rassenao la verga dello acciaio e lla corona della oliva alla Vergine Maria.” Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, 150. Amanda Collins connects Cola’s symbolic offering of his crown of olives and steel scepter to the ancient “mos triumphalis.” Collins, *Greater than Emperor* 56.

¹¹⁸ “Quelle tre corpora fuoro portate in Santa Maria delli frati, copierti de palii de aoro, nella cappella de Colonnese. Vennero le contesse con moitudine de donne scapigliate per ululare de sopra li muorti, cioè copre le corpora de Stefano, Ianni, e Pietro de Agabito. Lo tribuno le fece cacciare e non voize che lli fussi fatto onore né esequio e disse: ‘Se me faco poco de ira quelle tre corpora maladette, facciole iettare nello catafosso delli appesi, ca soco periuri, non soco degni de essere sepelliti.’” Anonimo romano, *Cronica* ch.18, p.150.

¹¹⁹ Cola had accused the famed mercenary commander of plotting against him. Perhaps he believed the charges, perhaps he was using them for cynical purposes. What is certain is that Cola had been in financial straits before Morreal’s arrest, and citizens and soldiers alike were grumbling at new taxes and lack of pay. Confiscating Morreal’s assets allowed Cola to pay his troops, ingratiate himself with the Orsini, and continue the war against the Colonna. Di Carpegna Falconieri, *Cola di Rienzo* 195-96. Matteo Villani, although praising Cola’s execution of the “malvagio friere,” condemned the tribune for misguided motives: financial greed, he thought, rather than a respect for clean justice, was behind Cola’s decision. “...per la quale cosa al tribuno s’agiugnerebbe memoria degna di grandi lode se per movimento di chiara giustizia l’avesse fatto, ma però ch’elli prese i fratelli, e’ beni di fra Moreale e’ loro e plubicolli a ssé, parve che d’ingratitude di servigi ricevuti e d’avarizia maculasse la sua fama.” Villani, *Cronica* IV.23, p.505-07. Michael Mallett refers to the event, revealing Cola’s modern reputation: “...in Rome power had temporarily fallen into the hands of that strange republican demagogue, Cola di Rienzo, who seized the opportunity both to make himself popular and to straighten up his accounts by arresting and executing Moriale.” Mallett, *Mercenaries and their Masters* 34-35.

suspicion that the new government was attempting to suppress the public memory of Cola. There are some tantalizing possibilities here: were some Romans commemorating Cola on the Campidoglio? If so, creating a holiday on that day would have been an effective method of curtailing a commemoration. By substituting Cola's memory with the commemoration of the reigning state of peace, the city government would have substituted a problematic and emotionally fraught memory of communal identity with a vision of communal peace more in accordance with its vision for the future.

A major issue faced by late Trecento Roman society was how to remember Cola. Given the instability and factional divisions he had often provoked, the *Felice Società*, with its political pragmatism and emphasis on stability, appears to have preferred the simplicity of forgetting over the complexity of remembering. But to discard the recent memory of Cola meant to discard, as well, the ancient memories of empire with which he was so closely associated. Ultimately, this shift would have profound consequences for Rome, as the political stability that the *Felice Società* managed to ensure eventually facilitated a papal return. In addition, the sometimes fierce hostility to the papacy began to wane as greater numbers of Romans saw in it the possibility for enhanced economic growth. For these reasons, one effect of Cola's death and the disappearance of the imperial ideal was that many Romans were gradually reconciled to the idea of a papal return. 1377 would therefore mark the end of Rome's experimental period of civic autonomy, and from then on would become the city of the popes.

CONCLUSION

I have aimed in this study to shed light on a crucial, and relatively uncharted, period of Rome's medieval past. With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that the political decisions Trecento Romans made had lasting repercussions, as the papacy's 1377 return, which many welcomed, ultimately transformed Rome into the thriving capital of the powerful Renaissance papacy. Paradoxically, the papacy's return was facilitated by the stabilizing effects of the century's most successful popular government, the *Felice Società*.

The question initially inspiring this study—what is Rome without the papacy?—remains, amidst the myriad complexities of the Trecento political experience, difficult to answer. One objective of this dissertation was to trace the fitful development in Rome of popular government, from its earliest beginnings in the mid-twelfth century to the papacy's return near the end of the fourteenth. I pursued this inquiry because the popular rebellions of the early Trecento had not been systematically evaluated in recent scholarship, and many conclusions of the older scholarship remained unchallenged. What I found was this: I essentially agree with most that popular government rarely attained a high degree of success in Rome. Despite frequent popular revolts, Rome attained stable popular government only briefly. However, this does not mean it was irrelevant. Quite the contrary. Its potent appeal as an idea, and consequently as a political tool, is revealed by the striking frequency of popular revolts, especially during the early fourteenth century when the city was released from direct papal control. On most occasions, such as under Brancaleone, Giovanni da Ignano, Iacopo Arlotti, Cola di Rienzo, and the *Felice Società*, communal institutions were used to advance the political and economic

interests of non-nobles. Yet at least once, notably during the captaincy of Sciarra Colonna, they were used by elites to further private causes.

The evidence points, over all, to a Roman *popolo* favoring popular rule and participating, to a certain extent, in the circuit of communal magistrates. The *popolo*, for example, brought in jurists such as Brancaleone degli Andalò and, fifty years later, Giovanni da Ignano to develop communal government. Romans' veneration of Brancaleone after his death attests to the popularity of his anti-magnate policies. Like a thread in a complex weave, anti-magnate legislation continually reappeared, suggesting that there was a continuing perception among some that the power of noble families needed to be curbed. Romans, especially in the thirteenth century, participated in communal governments around Italy, serving as *podestà* and *capitani del popolo*. And they sent a commission to Florence in 1338 to acquire a copy of the Ordinances of Justice, revealing their desire to emulate other communes.

Yet there was also, in the fourteenth-century Roman political imagination, an entrenched belief in Rome's exceptionalism. Thus, while they pursued popular government, even overtly emulating other communes, their political vision diverged significantly from communal models. Their most significant divergence was that, in the early fourteenth century, Romans inculcated dreams of empire into their vision of popular government. But different social groups emphasized different aspects of the imperial ideal. The *popolo*, for example, tended to emphasize the *lex de imperio*, which, in Cola's analysis, substantiated its claim to have a say in approving, or later, choosing, who ruled Rome. Pro-imperial elites, however, generally used the ideal to play up connections to the German empire, and emphasized that Rome ought to be home to emperors.

In the early commune, the imperial ideal had served different functions. Restoring ancient institutions such as the senate and fostering connections to kings

proffered legitimacy to the newly founded commune. Romans additionally found they could manipulate kings and popes by appealing to their desire to rule Rome. By the fourteenth century, Roman *popolani* held onto memories of empire, not just because they lent the city much needed prestige, but because they made them legitimate political actors. Elites, in addition to perceiving the benefits of a resident emperor for their own political prospects, and aware that the idea resonated among the *popolo*, knew they could earn popular support by using rhetoric of empire. For this reason, popular rule and the imperial ideal became almost inextricably linked, so that rarely was there a popular movement without appeals to ancient claims to empire. Elites were consequently able, on occasion, to garner widespread support for initiatives not necessarily in the popular interest, simply by invoking ancient memories. I contend, therefore, that the imperial myth, while early on a tool alternately in the hands of Roman *popolo* and elites, was used in the early 1300's to the increased advantage of the latter.

In addition to tracing the development of Roman popular government and the imperial ideal, my dissertation adds fresh perspective to the field by investigating how myths about and memories of the past played a role in Trecento political struggles. By incorporating sociological, anthropological, and psychological perspectives, I have investigated how social groups create, store, and use the memory of their pasts. In particular, I wanted to identify how groups in Rome used memories of the ancient past either to legitimize the status quo or to institute reforms. I found that history writing and memory of empire became primary loci in the mid-fourteenth-century struggle for power. Elites engaged in history writing to justify and reinforce their authority, while emerging social groups used it to challenge elite dominance. In this way, I contend that battles essentially political and social in nature were waged through the milieu of culture. I attribute the cultural shifts of the Trecento to educated Roman *popolo*

challenging noble families by co-opting their traditional control over the ways Romans remembered their past. There was, in Trecento Rome, a distinct element of social conflict in the production of historical memory.

My analysis supports the contention of some historians that early humanism, or the renewed interest in ancient Roman history and letters, often articulated the *popolo's* challenge to elites. This was reflected in the construction of republican political theories, often based on Aristotle, defending communal liberty against tyranny.¹ My argument similarly underscores the deep familiarity with ancient Roman history that some fourteenth-century Romans attained. In the eventual, broader study that will emerge from this dissertation, I hope to trace these fourteenth-century developments backward, linking them to the, in many ways, richer cultural world of the thirteenth.

In my last chapter, I analyzed chronicles, documents, and public rituals to show how Romans, in the period after Cola, moved away from memory as a driving force behind civic politics, instead embracing the comforts and stabilizing effects of oblivion. Forgetting, unlike remembrance, has only infrequently been applied to studies of medieval history, and never, as far as I know, to Trecento Rome. Yet my analysis suggests that forgetting was an essential characteristic of post-Cola politics. I explored how, without literally forgetting Cola, Romans constructed a government that limited, or even eliminated, the primary destabilizing elements of Roman civic life: the nobility and the papacy, but also, dreams of empire, and the memory of Cola, that had so factionalized the Roman populace. The *Felice Societa's* strategy of

¹ Two notable early humanists crafting works defending communal liberty are Brunetto Latini and Albertino Mussato. Brunetto Latini, *Li livres dou tresor*, ed. Spurgeon Baldwin and Paul Barrette (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003). On Mussato's *Ecerinis*, which defended Paduan communal liberty, see Ronald Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Leiden: Brill, 2000). See also Witt, "The *De tyranno* and Coluccio Salutati's View of Politics and Roman History," *Nuova rivista storica* 53 (1969).

forgetting was so successful that Cola di Rienzo dropped out of public memory until resuscitated by Machiavelli a century and a half later. This theory helps to explain the apparent, and striking, if compared to the early century, calm that prevailed in post-Cola Rome.

The theme of oblivion is fitting for Trecento Rome, as it is, to be sure, a forgotten century. Without the papacy to lend political weight, the city has gone simply unnoticed by many historians of medieval Italy. Some scholars have looked on Rome in this period, not entirely without justification, as a “cultural backwater,” a “nearly moribund city” “long abandoned” during the Avignon years, then “further neglected” during the Great Schism.² I hope I have shown, however, that even if the Trecento did not leave much to be remembered by in Rome, it was a decisive period in which Romans were faced with the necessity, or opportunity, of redefining their city.

That the *Felice Società*, moreover, encouraged a culture of forgetting seems vaguely prescient of times to come. Boniface IX, at the end of the century, struck the final blow to the Roman commune, and the Colonna pope Martin V, in 1420, re-established Rome as the capital of a papacy emerged victorious from schism. These events put a final end to Roman hopes for, and memory of, communal government. Lacking extensive documentation, and without cultural heirs or political vestiges by which to be remembered, the Roman Trecento would soon pass into a centuries-long slumber of public oblivion.

² Charles Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998) 1, 5.

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