

## MARRIAGE AND MUTILATION: VENDETTA IN LATE MEDIEVAL ITALY\*

Italian medieval vendetta is commonly explained, following the outlines of legal and family historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as a product of the family, clan or *consorteria*.<sup>1</sup> Injuries to one member of a family were construed as injuries to all, we are told: they 'belonged' to the clan and would be avenged by the clan. 'All of the family take up offensive weapons, for the injury done to one stains the whole house', wrote one fourteenth-century lawyer.<sup>2</sup> Vendetta was an obligation on kinsmen.<sup>3</sup> That obligation did not die with an injured party: often quoted is Dante's experience in Hell, when an ancestor angrily fled from his presence because his death had not yet been avenged.<sup>4</sup> Vendetta was also fed by a sense of harmonious correspondence due between crime and expiation: an offended family would, 'most often', seek to render the same wound in the same place on the same day of the year.<sup>5</sup> No law denied the legitimacy

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<sup>1</sup> U. Dorini, 'La vendetta privata al tempo di Dante', *Giornale dantesco*, xxix (1926), 57; G. Mauguin, *Moeurs italiennes de la Renaissance: la vengeance* (Paris, 1935), vii; F. Niccolai, 'I consorzi nobiliari ed il comune nell'alta e media Italia', *Rivista della storia del diritto italiano*, xiii (1940), 314-16; J. Heers, *Le Clan familial au moyen âge* (Paris, 1974), 116, 118; O. Raggio, *Faide e parentele: lo stato genovese visto dalla Fontanabuona* (Turin, 1990), esp. 227-54

<sup>2</sup> Niccolai, 'Consorzi nobiliari ed il comune', 316; Heers, *Clan familial au moyen âge*, 118; Mauguin, *Moeurs italiennes de la Renaissance*, 118; I. Del Lungo, 'Una vendetta in Firenze il giorno di San Giovanni del 1295', *Archivio storico italiano*, 4th ser., xviii (1886), 384; A. M. Enriques, 'La vendetta nella vita e nella legislazione fiorentina', *ibid.*, 7th ser., xix (1933) 103-13

<sup>3</sup> J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S. G. C. Middlemore (London, 1955), 265; Niccolai, 'Consorzi nobiliari ed il comune', 316-17; Dorini, 'Vendetta privata al tempo di Dante', 56; Mauguin, *Moeurs italiennes de la Renaissance*, 114-17; Heers, *Clan familial au moyen âge*, 117; R. Verdier, 'Le Système vindicatoire', in R. Verdier (ed.), *La Vengeance: études d'ethnologie, d'histoire et de philosophie* (Paris, 1980), 16; A. Valori, 'Famiglia e memoria: Luca da Panzano dal suo "Libro di ricordi": uno studio sulle relazioni familiari nello specchio della scrittura', *Archivio storico italiano*, dlx (1994), 283; but cf. Enriques, 'La vendetta nella vita e nella legislazione fiorentina', 139-42

<sup>4</sup> *Inferno*, xxix (ed. N. Sapegno, Florence, 1957, 322-3).

<sup>5</sup> Heers, *Clan familial au moyen âge*, 117; Enriques, 'La vendetta nella vita e nella legislazione fiorentina', 94-7.

of vendetta, it is said. The law sought only to limit it, to impose truces or to attempt pacifications. The law stopped at the family threshold, and the state conceded personal injury as a private affair.<sup>6</sup> The inability of the city-states to enforce their laws led them not just to tolerate vendetta, but to recognize and sanction such 'private justice'.<sup>7</sup>

This picture is generally thought to have been transformed during the fifteenth or the sixteenth century. Law began to have an effect in limiting revenge. The concept of individual responsibility spread as the shackles of medieval corporatism fell away, such that the Florentine chronicler, Giovanni Cambi, could say of the year 1494: 'there was no mortal *briga* among citizens, and if some lads wounded one another . . . they themselves fought, and neither father, nor brothers, nor *consorti* got involved'.<sup>8</sup> The state overcame vendetta through its prohibitions and sanctions,<sup>9</sup> and, by the sixteenth century, vendetta was considered to be the opposite of justice.<sup>10</sup>

The nature of this early modern transformation was comprehensively outlined (and also criticized) by Gabriel Mauguin: preventive measures, especially around marriage, reduced the number of avengeable injuries and deprived vendetta of both occasions and means (masks, weapons, brigands); the establishment of stable government brought an end to the factional exploitation of injuries and the use of permanent exile or military service rid the territory of troublemakers; improvements in the judicial system (restriction of pardons, action against bandits) removed its faults; and stronger resistance to vendetta from moralists and churchmen gave their message of peace, pardon and

<sup>6</sup> Burckhardt, *Civilization of the Renaissance*, trans. Middlemore, 265; Niccolai, 'Consorzi nobiliari ed il comune', 316; Enriques, 'La vendetta nella vita e nella legislazione fiorentina', 114, 182–8; Mauguin, *Moeurs italiennes de la Renaissance*, 148.

<sup>7</sup> Dorini, 'Vendetta privata al tempo di Dante', 58; G. Cecchini, 'L'assassino del padre del Poliziano', *Bullettino senese di storia patria*, lx (1953), 207.

<sup>8</sup> Giovanni Cambi, *Istorie*, ed. I. di San Luigi, 4 vols (Florence, 1785), I, 27–8; Niccolai, 'Consorzi nobiliari ed il comune', 317; A. Zorzi, 'The Judicial System in Florence in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', in T. Dean and K. J. P. Lowe (eds.), *Crime, Society and the Law in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, 1994), 52. For individual responsibility, R. R. Davies, 'The Survival of the Bloodfeud in Medieval Wales', *History*, liv (1969), 343.

<sup>9</sup> Heers, *Clan familial au moyen âge*, 134–5, cf. P. Sawyer, 'The Bloodfeud in Fact and Fiction', in K. Hastrup and P. Meulengracht Sørensen (eds.), *Tradition og historieskrivning* [Tradition and the Writing of History] (Aarhus, 1987), 27.

<sup>10</sup> Mauguin, *Moeurs italiennes de la Renaissance*, 276.

charity more chance of success.<sup>11</sup> A similar combination of preaching, royal legislation, preventive and punitive measures, and re-evaluation of lordship, kinship and honour is seen as responsible for driving feuding out of Scotland in the early seventeenth century;<sup>12</sup> whereas, Edward Muir's recent study of feuding in Friuli places most emphasis on sixteenth-century changes in aristocratic values and ideology.<sup>13</sup> Elements of this transformation can also be found earlier, in those who posit the 'decline of the vendetta', seeing violent vendettas in Florence as 'isolated instances' by the fifteenth century, and an increasing trend for forgiveness and reconciliation discernible in moral treatises and family *ricordanze*.<sup>14</sup> It is common to argue for a decline or transformation of vendetta in the Renaissance period, with a change in (Florentine) attitudes coinciding with more general cultural change, and with the development of stronger state structures.<sup>15</sup>

However, this picture of Renaissance progress in taming private dispute is open to criticism in three areas. First, instances of Florentine vendetta continued. The over-quoted passage from Cambi, for example, needs to be put into its context: it occurs in a survey of Florentine history that is deeply coloured by early sixteenth-century puritan nostalgia for the early 1490s, when Florence was the 'city of God' under the sway of Girolamo Savonarola, and its suggestion that there was no vendetta in those years is directly contradicted by Savonarola himself, writing in 1495.<sup>16</sup> Secondly, pacification of vendetta was no novelty in the Renaissance period. Gene Brucker's suggestion that a vendetta in 1295 represented the 'medieval inheritance', while a pacification in 1420 represented the 'decline of vendetta', has been severely criticized by Thomas Kuehn.<sup>17</sup> His presentation of dispute as process, in the settlement of which the state and its rules play only a small part, challenges the notion of a state-led constrict-

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 215–79.

<sup>12</sup> K. M. Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland, 1573–1625* (Edinburgh, 1986), 185–257.

<sup>13</sup> E. Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring: Vendetta and Factions in Friuli during the Renaissance* (Baltimore, 1993), xxix, 247–72.

<sup>14</sup> Zorzi, 'Judicial System in Florence', 52–3.

<sup>15</sup> G. Brucker (ed.), *The Society of Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1971), 119–20, M. Taylor, 'Pace con onore. un esempio del declino della vendetta a Firenze nel primo Quattrocento', *Archivio storico italiano*, dlui (1992).

<sup>16</sup> *Le lettere di Girolamo Savonarola*, ed. R. Ridolfi (Florence, 1933), 97. He writes that the city was full of returned exiles seeking revenge for old injuries.

<sup>17</sup> Brucker (ed.), *Society of Renaissance Florence*, 106–19; T. Kuehn, *Law, Family and Women: Toward a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy* (Chicago, 1991), 292–3.

tion of vendetta in this period.<sup>18</sup> According to processual analysis, peace was part of the process of feud itself.<sup>19</sup> Nor is it difficult to find, in preceding centuries, examples of vendettas that did not happen or that took a peaceful turn: they were not specific to the Renaissance period.<sup>20</sup> Thirdly, there is evidence in all centuries of reluctance to take revenge. The numerous examples in judicial archives of taunting for failure to pursue vendetta (e.g., *non te sei ancora vendicato della morte di Bartolo tuo cugino*) are certainly evidence of incitement to take revenge, but even more of revenge not having been taken.<sup>21</sup> Dante's experience in the *Inferno* can be read two ways: as evidence of inherited family obligation to take revenge, and of that obligation not being fulfilled.<sup>22</sup> Every feuding society had non-participants: to make instances of non-participation in the fifteenth century historically significant is rather short-sighted.

These three points were to some extent perceived by Italian writers of the time. One late fourteenth-century ambassador declared: 'many are those who are injured; a minority of them take revenge'.<sup>23</sup> According to the most celebrated of commentators on Dante's *Divine Comedy*, 'though all men naturally tend to vendetta, the Florentines are especially ardent in this, both publicly and privately'.<sup>24</sup> And Machiavelli concurred: 'in republics there is more life, more hate, more desire for revenge'.<sup>25</sup> Not all injuries were avenged; and Florentine injuries were more likely to lead to vengeance than non-Florentine ones.

These perceptions form the basis of the argument here: the extension of Florentine historiography on vendetta to the rest of

<sup>18</sup> T. Kuehn, *Law, Family and Women*, 75–9, 151; S. Roberts, 'The Study of Dispute: Anthropological Perspectives', in J. Bossy (ed.), *Disputes and Settlements: Law and Human Relations in the West* (Cambridge, 1983), 14, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Kuehn, *Law, Family and Women*, 293; Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 43.

<sup>20</sup> D. Waley, 'A Bloodfeud with a Happy Ending: Siena, 1285–1304', in T. Dean and C. Wickham (eds.), *City and Countryside in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Essays Presented to Philip Jones* (London, 1990), 45–53.

<sup>21</sup> S. Bongi, 'Ingiurie, improperi, contumelie ecc. saggio di lingua parlata del Trecento cavato dai libri criminali di Lucca', *Il propugnatore*, new ser., III, pt 1 (1890), Dorini, 'Vendetta privata al tempo di Dante', 63.

<sup>22</sup> Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*, 70.

<sup>23</sup> Galeazzo and Bartolomeo Gatarì, *Cronaca carrarese*, ed. A. Medin and G. Tolomei (Rerum italicarum scriptores, 2nd edn, xvii, pt 1, Città di Castello and Bologna, 1900–75), 502.

<sup>24</sup> *Benvenuti de Rambaldis de Imola Comentum super Dantis Aldigherni Comoediam*, ed. J. P. Lacaia, 5 vols (Florence, 1887), II, 391.

<sup>25</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, ch. 5 (ed. S. Bertelli, Milan, 1960, 28–9).

Italy needs to be challenged,<sup>26</sup> as does the common view that vendetta was tolerated in the Italian Middle Ages by the code of family honour and clan solidarity, but restricted during the Renaissance. There are two issues to be clarified: did all Italian states conform to the Florentine pattern, in law and chronology; and were the circumstances in which vendetta arose predominantly familial? Instead of assuming that all families always sought to avenge their injuries, we should ask what the conditions were that led to some injuries being avenged, while the majority were not. The procedure adopted here is to confront these issues through two types of source: first of all, through the laws on vendetta in Italian states, which show how untypical Florence was in giving legal tolerance to vendetta for so long; and then, through a group of chronicles, Florentine and non-Florentine, which suggest differences in the nature of vendetta between republican and princely Italy. The chronicles lead, however, to a third issue, which will be addressed in the second half of this article, namely the problem of the vendetta story, with its characteristic details, as a narrative device.

## I LAWS

If we start in Florence, we find laws, simply at first, then with more complexity, attempting to deal with secondary (collateral or transverse) vendetta: that is, the law penalized the taking of revenge against anyone except the original aggressor (the *primus offensor* or *principalis* in the words of the statutes). Laws tried to contain the exchange of injuries to the offender and victim, and to punish the victim or his kin if they took revenge against the aggressor's relatives. In 1325 this was simply expressed, the penalties being beheading and forfeiture of property (to the victim's heirs) in the case of revenge-murder, or a doubling of the ordinary penalty in the case of assault.<sup>27</sup> Enactments during the fourteenth

<sup>26</sup> For example, Enriques, 'La vendetta nella vita e nella legislazione fiorentina', is the only work on vendetta cited in the bibliography of Heers, *Clan familial au moyen âge*. His discussion of vendetta draws heavily on Enriques, and on Florentine examples and laws. See also the Florentine/Tuscan version of vendetta, again citing Enriques, in E. Crouzet-Pavan, 'Un fiore del male: i giovani nelle società urbane italiane (secoli XIV-XV)', in G. Levi and J.-C. Schmitt (eds.), *Storia dei giovani*, 1, *Dall'antichità all'età moderna* (Bari, 1994), 239-40.

<sup>27</sup> *Statuti della repubblica fiorentina*, ed. R. Caggese, 2 vols (Florence, 1910-21), II: *Statuto del podestà dell'anno 1325*, 278.

century amended this by recognizing that the victim and 'any man of his house' had a right of vendetta, and allowing that right to remain even if the offender had been condemned for the crime by official justice. They insisted that revenge had to be proportionate to the offence, set penalties for *consorti* who gave aid to aggressors liable to legitimate vendetta, declared that public justice inhibited vendetta only when a penalty of death or mutilation was carried out, and asserted that no judge should otherwise punish those taking legitimate revenge.<sup>28</sup> These enactments then flowed into the 1415 statutes, which went even further in facilitating the action of avengers, by allowing them to act with a group of outsiders, and by reducing the aggressor to the status of a criminal bandit.<sup>29</sup>

Such frequent changes of law and approach are found nowhere else. Other communes were satisfied with the simple penalization of secondary vendetta. Beheading was the punishment for revenge-killing, but for other injuries there was a doubling of ordinary penalties at Pisa, Pistoia, Lucca and Camerino;<sup>30</sup> a trebling at Siena;<sup>31</sup> a quadrupling at Arezzo, Montepulciano, Perugia and Spoleto;<sup>32</sup> and a tariff of fines, depending upon gravity of injury, at Bologna.<sup>33</sup> Historians usually assume that such statutes were permissive in intent and effect, that in penalizing secondary vendetta they tolerated and sanctioned primary vendetta. In at least two cities this was not the case: the statutes of Camerino and Spoleto explicitly declare that primary vendetta against the

<sup>28</sup> Dorini, 'Vendetta privata al tempo di Dante', 58-61.

<sup>29</sup> *Statuta populi et communis Florentiae anno salutis MCCCCXV*, 3 vols. ('Friburgi', 1778-83), III, 326-8. Cf. W. I. Miller, 'Choosing the Avenger: Some Aspects of the Bloodfeud in Medieval Iceland and England', *Law and Hist. Rev.* 1 (1983), 183.

<sup>30</sup> *Statutum potestatis comunis Pistorii anni MCCLXXXVI*, ed. L. Zdekauer (Milan, 1888), 110; *Statuta Lucensis civitatis* (Lucca, 1490), IV, 143; *Statuti medii della città di Pisa dal XII al XIV secolo*, ed. F. Bonaini, 2 vols. (Florence, 1854-7), I, 462-3; *Statuta comunis et populi civitatis Camerini (1424)*, ed. F. Ciapparoni (Camerino, 1973), 219.

<sup>31</sup> *Il costituito del comune di Siena volgarizzato nel MCCCIX-MCCCX*, 2 vols. (Siena, 1903), II, 362; *L'ultimo statuto della repubblica di Siena (1545)*, ed. M. Ascheri (Siena, 1993), 338.

<sup>32</sup> *Statuto di Arezzo (1327)*, ed. G. Marri Camerani (Florence, 1946), 218, *Statuto del comune di Montepulciano (1387)*, ed. U. Morandi (Florence, 1966), 184, *Statuti di Perugia dell'anno MCCCXLII*, ed. G. Degli Azzi, 2 vols. (Rome, 1913-16), II, 107-8; *Tertium volumen statutorum Auguste Perusie* (Perugia, 1523), 19°, *Statuti di Spoleto del 1296*, ed. G. Antonelli (Florence, 1962), 76.

<sup>33</sup> *Statuti di Bologna dell'anno 1288*, ed. G. Fasoli and P. Sella (Vatican City, 1937), 209.

'principal aggressor' would be punished according to the ordinary penalty for such crime. Moreover, with a few exceptions, such 'permissive' statutes, whether simple or more complex, are not often found outside Tuscany. They are not to be found in the thirteenth-century statutes of Ferrara, Padua, Ravenna, Reggio, Treviso, Verona, Vicenza or Volterra;<sup>34</sup> in the fourteenth-century statutes of Ascoli, Bergamo, Como, Forlì, Imola, Ivrea, Modena, Parma, Piacenza or Turin;<sup>35</sup> or in the fifteenth-century statutes of Brescia, Cesena, Cremona, Genoa, Verona or Vicenza.<sup>36</sup> Florentine legal tolerance of vendetta has usually been thought typical of the whole of northern and central Italy.<sup>37</sup> This is clearly not the case.

The emblematic power of Florence to absorb and represent the rest of north and central Italy historiographically has been unquestioned. When, for example, a recent author asserted that vendetta was tolerated in Udine, his supporting references included the article on Florence by Anne-Marie Enriques, but omitted specific local sources.<sup>38</sup> In fact, the 1425 statutes of Udine contain a law of 1346–7 laying down punishments (including

<sup>34</sup> *Statuta Ferrariae anno MCCLXXXVII*, ed. W. Montorsi (Ferrara, 1955); *Statuti del comune di Padova dal secolo XII all'anno 1285*, ed. A. Gloria (Padua, 1873); *Consuetudini e statuti reggiani del secolo XIII*, ed. A. Cerlini (Reggio, 1933); *Statuti del secolo XIII del comune di Ravenna*, ed. A. Zoli and S. Bernicoli (Ravenna, 1904); *Gli statuti del comune di Treviso (secc. XIII–XIV)*, ed. B. Betto (Rome, 1984); *Gli statuti veronesi del 1276*, ed. G. Sandri, 2 vols. (Venice, 1940–59); *Statuti del comune di Vicenza, MCCLXIV*, ed. F. Lampertico (Venice, 1886); *Statuti di Volterra (1210–1224)*, ed. E. Fiumi (Florence, 1951).

<sup>35</sup> *Statuti di Ascoli Piceno dell'anno MCCCLXXXVII*, ed. L. Zdekauer and P. Sella (Rome, 1910); *Lo statuto di Bergamo del 1331*, ed. C. Storti Storchi (Milan, 1986); *Statuti di Como del 1335 volumen magnum*, ed. G. Manganelli, 2 vols. (Como, 1936–45); *Statuto di Forlì dell'anno MCCCLIX*, ed. E. Rinaldi (Rome, 1913); *Statuti di Imola del secolo XIV*, ed. S. Gaddoni (Milan, 1931); *Statuti del comune di Ivrea*, ed. G. S. Pene Vidari, 3 vols. (Turin, 1968–74); *Statuta civitatis Mutine anno 1327 reformata* (Parma, 1864); *Gli statuti del comune di Torino del 1360*, ed. D. Bizzari (Turin, 1933); *Statuta communis Parmae ab anno MCCCXVI ad MCCCXXV*, ed. A. Ronchini (Parma, 1859–60); *Statuta varia civitatis Placentiae* (Parma, 1860).

<sup>36</sup> *Statuta communis Brixie* (Brescia, 1473); *Statuta civitatis Cesene* (Venice, 1494); *Statuta Cremonae* (Brescia, 1485); *Statuta et decreta communis Genuae* (Genoa, 1498); *Statuta civitatis Mutine* (Modena, 1487); *Statuta civitatis Verone* (Vicenza, 1475); *Statuta communis Vincentiae* (Vicenza, 1490).

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, M. Bellabarba, 'Norme e ordini processuali. osservazioni sul principato di Trento tra XV e XVI secolo', in G. Chittolini, A. Molho and P. Schiera (eds.), *Origini dello stato processi di formazione statale in Italia fra medioevo ed età moderna* (Bologna, 1994), 360–1.

<sup>38</sup> F. Bianco, 'Mih vndictam: Aristocratic Clans and Rural Communities in a Feud in Friuli in the Late Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth Centuries', in Dean and Lowe (ed.), *Crime, Society and the Law in Renaissance Italy*, 270, n. 71.

death) for those taking revenge directly against their attackers.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the revised Veronese statutes of 1475 insisted that, for any killing 'not for money . . . but perhaps for vendetta or enmity', the penalty should be death.<sup>40</sup> No distinction is made here between primary and secondary vendetta. The only northern city to have a law like those of Tuscany would seem to be Parma, where secondary revenge was penalized, but only if 'he [the revenge-taker] first accused him [the offender] before the city judge, and he [the offender] refused to defend himself according to the laws of the city':<sup>41</sup> in other words, official prosecution took precedence; only against the contumacious was revenge by private persons sanctioned. But while Florence was still, in the fourteenth century, giving public approval to private vengeance in this way,<sup>42</sup> Parma apparently was not, for its law was omitted from subsequent statute-books, while another law set down penalties for killings *pro vindicta vel sine vindicta*.<sup>43</sup> Whereas in Florence conviction of an aggressor in a criminal court did not close off the possibility of family revenge, in Cesena it expressly did.<sup>44</sup>

A further set of contrasts is suggested by the different vocabulary of punishment. The codes of law in northern cities did use the word 'vendetta' (*vindicta*), but in the sense of official, 'public' punishment, especially execution (*vindicta sanguinis*).<sup>45</sup> By contrast, Florentine statutes used a different set of words for public executions (*capite puniri*, *publice comburi*), reserving 'vendetta' for private revenge. Only in the fifteenth century did the official judicial apparatus in Florence 'increasingly' assume the role of

<sup>39</sup> *Statuti e ordinamenti del comune di Udine*, ed. V Joppi and A. Wolf (Udine, 1898), 50. Cf. Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*, 307, n. 28.

<sup>40</sup> *Statuta Verone*, III.39.

<sup>41</sup> *Statuta communis Parmae*, ed. A. Ronchini (Parma, 1855-6), 281-2, a law apparently of the 1220s or 1230s, with an addendum of 1238.

<sup>42</sup> Brucker (ed.), *Society of Renaissance Florence*, 113. Cf. the sanctioned vendetta-killing of Antonio Savorgnan. Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*, 217-19.

<sup>43</sup> *Statuta communis Parmae*, 279.

<sup>44</sup> 'following sentence of conviction . . . action cannot be taken privately in revenge, but the road to revenge is understood to be completely closed off by that conviction' (*facta condemnatione de crimine . . . ad vindictam privatim agi non possit, sed per condemnationem ipsam agendi ad vindictam via omnino intelligatur esse praeclusa*): *Statuta Cesene*, III.89.

<sup>45</sup> *Statuta communis Parmae ab anno MCCLXVI ad annum circiter MCCCIV*, ed. A. Ronchini (Parma, 1857-9), 224, 234-5, 280; *Statuta communis Parmae* (Parma, 1855-6), 267, 275, 279-80, 293; *Statuta Ferrarie*, 36, 266, 350; *Statuti veronesi*, 412; *Statuta Mutine reformata*, 461; *Statuta Vincentiae*, 98; *Statuta Cesene*, II.27; *Statuta Genuae*, 7. And see Mauguin, *Moeurs italiennes de la Renaissance*, 148.



'taking vendetta'.<sup>46</sup> In Tuscany, 'private' revenge still had some 'public' sanction; in the north, 'public' power seems to have fully gathered up into its own authority the victim's 'private' desire for revenge. Northern Italian cities, under despotic rule, did not create a special category of vendetta crimes — some tolerated, some penalized more heavily — either because the problem of revenge was not serious for them, or because they were able to deal with it as simple crime, applying the ordinary procedures and penalties for murder or assault. Suggestive here is the matter-of-fact way one northern judge in the late fifteenth century reported on a case: it was vendetta, and the *podestà* was proceeding.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, the reluctant Este commissioner in the Garfagnana, Ludovico Ariosto, included 'vendette' among the peasant crimes and disorders that he had to deal with (*Satire*, iv. 147). The attitude of despots and their governments seems to be summarized in Francesco Sforza's repeated injunction that he did not want people taking justice into their own hands.<sup>48</sup> The contrast between such attitudes and Florentine legislation argues that the law does not justify generalizing from the Florentine experience of vendetta.

## II

### CHRONICLES

The second question to be addressed regards the origins of vendetta. For parts of early modern Liguria, Osvaldo Raggio has constructed a complex social analysis of feuding that explains it in terms of family structures, access to natural resources, trade patterns, factions in local towns, major political conflict in nearby Genoa and the presence of large numbers of bandits.<sup>49</sup> For most of the late medieval period, however, the combination of judicial, notarial and governmental sources on which Raggio drew is not available; what is abundant is narrative material in chronicles. An examination of a small group of chronicles across a broad period reveals how contemporary chroniclers wrote of vendetta and

<sup>46</sup> Zorzi, 'Judicial System in Florence', 53.

<sup>47</sup> Beltramo Cusadro to Ercole d'Este, Modena, 17 May 1490. Archivio di Stato, Modena, Archivio segreto estense, Rettori dello stato, Modena, *busta* 2d

<sup>48</sup> 'We do not want anyone to take the law into his own hands' (Noy non volumo che persona veruna se facia raxone da per se stessa): F. Fossati, 'Nuove spigolature d'archivio', *Archivio storico lombardo*, 8th ser., vii (1957), 374.

<sup>49</sup> Raggio, *Faide e parentele*

helps to explain both its nature and its triggers: for the late thirteenth century, the friar, Salimbene de Adam, who was based in Parma, and the Paduan, Rolandino; for the fourteenth century, the Florentines, Giovanni Villani and Donato Velluti, the Pistoian annals, and the Gattari brothers' chronicle of the Carrarese lordship in Padua; for the fifteenth century, the anonymous Bolognese chronicles, and Jacopo Delayto's Ferrarese annals; and, finally, Cherubino Ghirardacci's history of Bologna, written in the sixteenth century.

In surveying these authors' references to vendetta, a major problem has to be resolved: how to disentangle differences in chronicle type from differences in social mores. For the kinds of historical writing that we find in republican Tuscany — civic and familial — are unlike those of northern, seigneurial Italy, where chronicles came to focus more on the individual prince, his dynasty and their martial *gesta*. A reading of both types of chronicle would, at first glance, suggest merely that family chronicles portray vendetta as a family affair, martial chronicles as a martial affair. However, these differences in chronicle type can be seen themselves as part of the social differences between republican and despotic cities: in the former, families and factions remained major foci around which historical memories were built; in the latter, despotic rule sought to silence factional feuds and their memories of past injuries, allowing vendetta to survive only in the prince's wars.<sup>50</sup>

Reading a small group of late medieval chronicles suggests that there was a range of contexts in which vendetta was used as an explanation of violent action. Authors both religious and secular were led by well-known biblical texts to see misfortune as divine vengeance: 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord' (Rom.

<sup>50</sup> *Cronica fratris Salimbene de Adam ordinis minorum*, ed. G. H. Pertz, et al (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores, 34 vols., Hannover and Leipzig, 1826–1980), xxxiii, *Rolandini patavini cronica in factis et circa facta Marchie Trivixane*, ed. A. Bonardi (Rerum italicarum scriptores, 2nd edn, viii, pt 1, Città di Castello, 1903–7), Giovanni Villani, *Nuova cronica*, ed. G. Porta, 3 vols. (Parma, 1990–1); *La cronica domestica di Messer Donato Velluti*, ed. I. del Lungo and G. Volpi (Florence, 1914); *Storie pistoresi*, ed. S. A. Barbi (Rerum italicarum scriptores, 2nd edn, xi, pt 5, Città di Castello, 1907–27); Gattari, *Cronaca carrarese*, ed. Medin and Tolomei, *Annales estenses Jacobi de Delayto*, ed. L. A. Muratori (Rerum italicarum scriptores, 25 vols., Milan, 1723–51), xviii; Cherubino Ghirardacci, *Della historia di Bologna*, ed. A. Sorbelli (Rerum italicarum scriptores, 2nd edn, xxxiii, pt 1, Città di Castello and Bologna, 1915–32).

12:19);<sup>51</sup> 'For the Lord will vindicate his people' (Deuter. 32:35), and so on.<sup>52</sup> Vendetta thus sits easily in medieval chroniclers' retributive system of causation: sinfulness (especially pride, but also envy and cruelty) leads men to their own ruin or attracts God's judgement.<sup>53</sup>

For all chroniclers, Tuscan and non-Tuscan, the main context for vendetta was warfare. In Salimbene's late thirteenth-century chronicle, most revenge relates to the treatment of war captives, though invasions and defeats inspired desire for revenge, and canny commanders might even inflict injuries on themselves in order to arouse the vindictive spirits of their men.<sup>54</sup> In Rolandino, the capture of castles or raiders sets off attempts at revenge,<sup>55</sup> and warfare itself at times becomes merely a series of revenge attacks, as injuries escalated, climbing the ladder of regional alliances.<sup>56</sup> Most of Villani's references to vendetta also relate to warfare, and to the unjust seizures and ravages that provoked and punctuated the course of wars: the king of Aragon's seizure of Sicily from Charles d'Anjou (viii.72, 75); Pisan destruction of the Genoese quarter in Acre (viii.84); and so on.

Desire for revenge also spurred the defeated on to new battles and campaigns. Thus, the Florentine Guelfs made 'a great killing' of their enemies in 1267, taking no prisoners, 'in revenge for their *parenti* and *amici* killed at Montaperti' (viii.31). When the Pisans attacked the Genoese fleet in its harbour in revenge for Genoese seizure of Pisan ships, Genoa loftily replied that this was not honourable revenge, as it had been achieved in port, rather than in open battle (viii.92). Vendetta was also used to refer to retaliations by military commanders for what might be seen as infractions of the honourable code of warfare: in Ghirardacci's chronicle of Bologna, Astorre Manfredi avenged his ransoming by Niccolò Gambacorta by stealthily coming to Bologna and

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Bianco, '*Mhi vindictam*', who fails to catch this reference.

<sup>52</sup> *Cronica fratris Salimbene*, ed. Pertz *et al.*, 64–5, 335.

<sup>53</sup> See Villani's treatment of the Florentine Guelfs (viii.56), Charles d'Anjou (viii.57, 60, 66), Ugolino Visconti (viii.121) and the duke of Athens (xiii.8, 16). Villani, *Nuova cronica*, ed. Porta. Cf. L. Green, *Chronicle into History: An Essay on the Interpretation of History in Florentine Fourteenth-Century Chronicles* (Cambridge, 1972), 20–1, G. Ortalli, "'Corso di natura" o "giudicio di Dio": a proposito di G. Villani, XI, 1–3', *La cultura*, xvii (1979), 225–6. Cf. J. N. Sutherland, 'The Idea of Revenge in Lombard Society in the Eighth and Tenth Centuries', *Speculum*, l (1975), 400.

<sup>54</sup> *Cronica fratris Salimbene*, ed. Pertz *et al.*, 6, 319, 444, 533, 600.

<sup>55</sup> *Rolandino patavinum cronica*, ed. Bonardi, 79, 141–2.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 30–2, 33, 47.

killing him;<sup>57</sup> and when Gaspare Canetoli was captured by papal forces, the Canetoli in Bologna seized the papal governor and his palace 'as if by vendetta'.<sup>58</sup> The capture, detention and ransoming of military leaders was, in Ghirardacci's eyes, a prime source of vendetta, but this vendetta was one that spread from the direct participants to secondary or collateral targets. In this way, vendetta merged with warfare.<sup>59</sup>

Whereas Salimbene, Rolandino, Villani and Ghirardacci also used vendetta in other senses, as we shall see, chroniclers from northern Italy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries seem to have made very restricted use of the term. One Ferrarese diarist hardly uses the word at all.<sup>60</sup> The Paduan chroniclers, the Gatari, use the term mainly in a military context. Vendetta, for them, may arise from contravention of the laws of war by a captor of noble prisoners (by beheading them, or taking their horses and weapons),<sup>61</sup> from maltreatment in detention,<sup>62</sup> or from detention itself contrary to promises made (thus, Francesco II da Carrara, tricked and held in Milan by Giangaleazzo Visconti, contemplated how to accomplish a revenge killing).<sup>63</sup> But vendetta for the Gatari, as for Salimbene, also played more positive roles in warfare. The avenging of injuries justified the opening of hostilities, so vendetta supported just war.<sup>64</sup> During warfare, losses in battle — of sons, companions or leaders, or of horses or victuals ships — would be specifically avenged,<sup>65</sup> as would physical injuries, inspiring soldiers to more ardent fighting. The rush of anger such revenge released was thus positively channelled into feats of arms.<sup>66</sup> The military context predominates; only once is there

<sup>57</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, ed. Sorbelli, 71. Note that he was prosecuted and sentenced by the *podestà* of Bologna for this killing. Archivio di Stato, Bologna, Comune, Curia del podestà, Inquisizioni, *busta* 348, reg. 1, fo. 9.

<sup>58</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, ed. Sorbelli, 38, 88.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. the war-like raid described in G. Ghinassi, 'Vendetta memorabile dei Naldi contro i Carroli sequiti in val d'Amone nel 1533', *Atti e memorie della deputazione di storia patria per la Romagna*, iv (1866).

<sup>60</sup> *Diario ferrarese dall'anno 1409 sino al 1502*, ed. G. Pardi (*Rerum italicarum scriptores*, 2nd edn, xxiv, pt 7, Bologna, 1928–33), 95.

<sup>61</sup> Gatari, *Cronaca carrarese*, ed. Medin and Tolomei, 74–5, 483.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 257–8. Cf. S. D. White, 'Feuding and Peacemaking in the Touraine around the Year 1100', *Traditio*, xli (1986), 241.

<sup>63</sup> Gatari, *Cronaca carrarese*, ed. Medin and Tolomei, 358–9, 361, 368.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 32, 210, 391, 433, 478–9.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 77, 93, 117, 164, 272, 331, 461.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 473. Cf. White, 'Feuding and Peacemaking', 216–17, 230, 236–7, for deaths in warfare triggering secondary conflicts.

even a hint of any other context for vendetta.<sup>67</sup> Vendetta is therefore found in conflicts between many social groups — individuals, armies, cities — and not just between families. Kinship was only one context. The chronicles make clear that vendetta was seen predominantly as a feature of warfare, as an affair of soldiers, both as individuals and as groups.

It was not only chroniclers who perceived the potential of warfare to generate revenge. The laws of war did not give captors unrestricted rights over their prisoners: they could imprison and ransom them, but not injure them physically or threaten them with death.<sup>68</sup> Inflicting revenge on the war-vanquished was, according to one clerical author, vainglory and malignant exaltation: 'Who rejoices in the ruin of others shall not go unpunished' (Prov. 17), he reminded his readers.<sup>69</sup> Captors' excesses could represent their own revenge for past injuries or could lead to later revenge when the captives were at liberty once more. At least one military manual advised that the defeated be treated magnanimously and be given no cause to fear that vendetta would be taken on them.<sup>70</sup>

This embedding of vendetta in warfare creates difficulties for anthropological analysis of feuding based on clear theoretical definitions of separate categories of dispute (revenge, feud, war).<sup>71</sup> Such clearly defined categories hardly fit the Italian evidence: there was no single word for feud (when feud is meant, *inimicitia*, *odio* or *guerra* are used).<sup>72</sup> War and vendetta, at opposite ends of the definitional range of dispute terms, were intertwined, as war often started in retaliation for some injury or loss, consisted of a series of revenge attacks, and could generate further vendetta after victory through maltreatment of prisoners. On the other hand, vendetta does clearly stand out in all the sources as vengeance for *specific* injury: vendetta is an event or a response to an event, not a state of continuous animosity. Though many

<sup>67</sup> Gatari, *Cronaca carrarese*, ed. Medin and Tolomei, 30–1.

<sup>68</sup> M. H. Keen, *The Laws of War in the Middle Ages* (London, 1965), 156–64.

<sup>69</sup> *Alvari Pelagii de planctu ecclesiae*, II.49 (Lyons, 1517), 159.

<sup>70</sup> R. Walsh, 'Vespasiano da Bisticci, Francesco Bertini and Charles the Bold', *European Studies Rev.*, x (1980), 407. Cf. *Alvari Pelagii de planctu ecclesiae*, II.32, 39, 139, cited in P. Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1984), 276.

<sup>71</sup> E. L. Peters, 'Foreword', in J. Black-Michaud, *Cohesive Force: Feud in the Mediterranean and the Middle East* (Oxford, 1975), xiii–xiv; Black-Michaud, *Cohesive Force*, 27–9.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Sawyer, 'Bloodfeud in Fact and Fiction', 28. Raggio translates *inimicitia* as *faida* and hardly ever uses *vendetta*. Raggio, *Faide e parentele*, 10, 21–2, 179, 185, 252.

historians use feud and vendetta synonymously, this is not reflected in historical usage and tends to restrict the activities within which vengeance occurred. As we shall see later, a useful purpose is served in retaining this contemporary distinction, as it also helps to explain how memory of injury was preserved.

Sometimes warfare is entwined with a second prominent context for vendetta: gender, and the outrage of female sexual honour. This is clear in Rolandino's account of the great wars in north-east Italy in the first half of the thirteenth century. Two notable acts of vendetta open and close this chronicle. The spark that lit the fire of hatred and warfare for two generations lay in a marriage dispute between two of the great families of the region, the da Romano and the Camposampiero. The girl in question was a wealthy heiress from the Paduan countryside, first promised in marriage to Gerardo da Camposampiero, then deviously procured by Ezzelino da Romano as wife for his son. The Camposampiero could not forget this trick of Ezzelino's, and Gerardo, visiting the girl on a trip to her Paduan estates, had his way with her: 'And here is the cause of the war'.<sup>73</sup>

Ezzelino's revenge for this injury inaugurated decades of fighting. We should note, of course, that Rolandino was writing long after this supposed event, after the destruction of the da Romano family by a papal crusade in the 1250s. That destruction too was marked by vendetta, though here the treatment is rather different, with a private revenge being censured by the chronicler, and public, divine vengeance being stressed. Ezzelino was captured on military campaign and, surrounded and disarmed by his captors, he was struck several times across the head by a man who claimed to be avenging his brother, whom Ezzelino had punished by amputating a foot. This avenger, comments Rolandino, deserved no praise but rather disgrace, for it was a crime to attack or wound a captive, whether a nobleman or not.<sup>74</sup> The sight of a defenceless enemy could thus prompt men to take revenge, even at the cost of disgrace. Rolandino, of course, delegitimizes personal revenge in this explicit fashion, so that *vindicta* can be more clearly and properly claimed for God and the church. For him, the destruction of the da Romano was to be considered God's vengeance for their tyranny: the crusaders are presented

<sup>73</sup> *Rolandini patavini cronica*, ed. Bonardi, 15–17.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 164–6.

as specifically taking up the injuries done to Christianity in the region.<sup>75</sup>

In Villani, too, women play important roles in his vendetta narratives. Those roles fall into two types. First comes male aggression in defence of womenfolk. Just as the count of Caserta crucially weakened Neapolitan defences against the invasion of Charles d'Anjou out of a desire for revenge against the king of Naples who had raped his wife (viii.5), so too, later, Angevin treatment of female subjects is placed by Villani at the heart of the Sicilian revolt of 1282, both in the background and at the actual moment of the rising (viii.57).<sup>76</sup> It was, of course, a chivalric commonplace that knights — and by extension kings and nobles — should defend women and orphans. To place outrages against women in the explanatory background to revolts, invasions and conquests was to appeal to the legitimating power of chivalric values. Nevertheless, there was also a practical lesson here: these stories had a didactic purpose (in a tradition stretching back to Aristotle and beyond).<sup>77</sup> Secondly, women directly caused vendetta among males by their sinful actions. In the famous Buondelmonti marriage case of 1215 (allegedly the origin of the Guelph-Ghibelline divisions in Florence), a woman of the Donati family persuaded Buondelmonte Buondelmonti to renege on his marriage promise to the Amidei family (vi.38). In another example, the 'disorderly promiscuity' of the wife of King Andreas of Naples led first to his murder, then to the revenge-invasion by Andreas's brother, the king of Hungary (xiii.51–2, 59, 107, 111–12). This location of the origin of male violence in women's lust or quarrels seems not uncommon.<sup>78</sup>

A third context for the use of vendetta as an explanatory tool

<sup>75</sup> 'vindictam sumere de Christianitate offensa' *ibid.*, 153, 155, and see 117, 120, where there is perhaps evidence of a difference between the crusade's ecclesiastical and secular leaders over the role of revenge. On the crusade, see N. Housley, *The Italian Crusades* (Oxford, 1982), 167–9.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. S. Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers* (Cambridge, 1958), 125–30.

<sup>77</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1311a, 1315a (trans. E. Barker, Oxford, 1948, 279–80, 292), D. Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus* (Toronto, 1989), 139. For Italian versions, see Antonio Minuti, *Vita di Muzio Attendolo Sforza* (ed. G. Porro Lambertenghi, *Miscellanea di storia italiana*, vii, 1869, 225); Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, chs. 17, 19.

<sup>78</sup> *Chronica gestorum ac factorum memorabilium civitatis Bononie edita a fratre Hyeronimo de Bursellis*, ed. A. Sorbelli (*Rerum italicarum scriptores*, 2nd edn, xxiii, pt 2, Città di Castello and Bologna, 1912–29), 102; Gatari, *Cronaca carrarese*, ed. Medin and Tolomei, 30–1. Cf. Kuehn, *Law, Family and Women*, 151; Black-Michaud, *Cohesive Force*, 217–19.

comes with the escalating feud. This is evident, for example, in Ghirardacci's account of occurrences in Bologna in the mid-fifteenth century. Important episodes of political violence and conflict are presented as the outcome of a sequence of events: in one case, a feud started in a petty exchange in the street and resulted, through the lack of firm government, in the expulsion of one family from the city; in another case, it started in minor disputes taken up by patrons and friends, and led to the sort of collateral vengeance that the statutes sought to suppress.<sup>79</sup>

Finally, it should be mentioned that chroniclers also use vendetta in the sense of equal and equivalent retaliation against an attacker, though this tells us little of the context. Vendetta of this sort is presented by Ghirardacci in his accounts of two brothers of the Da Panico family, who avenged the death of their father by killing his murderer; and also of the sons who returned to their father's village twenty years after his death to kill his murderer.<sup>80</sup> The idea of equal retaliation is present in Salimbene's repeated recommendation of moderation. Having taken revenge for the beheading of his father while a captive, Guido da Polenta refused an opportunity to do more: 'We have done enough. What we have done satisfies us'.<sup>81</sup> 'He avenges his injury badly who makes it worse', the countess of Caserta warned Emperor Frederick.<sup>82</sup> Villani too has one notable story of equivalence, as the killer of King Andreas was killed on the same spot and thrown out of the same window (xiii.112).

This survey of four types of vendetta has, of course, blurred the distinction between Florentine and non-Florentine instances, but it is in Tuscany that these types tend to be overlaid by the family dimension of vendetta, because families were at war, not just cities, armies and rulers. The fourteenth-century Pistoian annals, for example, start with three vendetta stories, placed in the undated past, and used to explain the historical division of the city into warring factions. This much it has in common with,

<sup>79</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, ed. Sorbelli, 25-6, 31-2, 100-7. And see other examples in *Cronica fratris Salimbene*, ed. Pertz et al., 608-9; Villani, *Nuova cronica*, vii.2 (ed. Porta, 1, 277-9). Cf. Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 99, 125, Mauguin, *Moeurs italiennes de la Renaissance*, 279.

<sup>80</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, ed. Sorbelli, 61, 202-3.

<sup>81</sup> *Cronica fratris Salimbene*, ed. Pertz et al., 606. Cf. J. Larner, 'Order and Disorder in Romagna, 1450-1500', in L. Martines (ed.), *Violence and Civil Disorder in Italian Cities, 1200-1500* (Berkeley, 1972), 66.

<sup>82</sup> *Cronica fratris Salimbene*, ed. Pertz et al., 303, cf. 534.



for example, Rolandino; but the details of the vendettas are significantly different. In the first of these stories — of young Dore Amadori, injured in a tavern fight, who avenged himself on the brother of his adversary and was surrendered by his family to its enemies<sup>83</sup> — we have the familiar themes of youths initiating cycles of revenge<sup>84</sup> and of the careful observance of equivalence in the injuries repaid. Unfamiliar, however, is the author's shock that members of the same family (though distant enough to have different surnames) should shed each other's blood, as is the more organized role of the family — the father, brothers and *consorti* — in deciding on vendetta. All of these features are present in the other vendetta stories.<sup>85</sup> Vendetta here is presented less as individual response to injury, as in the northern chronicles, and more as clan events — but clans could split and husbands could join their wives' kin.

Another of the texts often referred to in discussions of vendetta — the 'family chronicle' of the Florentine, Donato Velluti — confirms this. This text is often said to be full of vendetta, but this is only a half-truth, as will become apparent. There are six vendetta stories in Velluti, and four of these are familial (one of the others being military).<sup>86</sup> The first of these has been much written about: in 1267, Ghino Velluti was killed by Mannello Mannelli, but 'vendetta was not done until St John's day 1295', when Lippo Mannelli, returning from watching the *palio* race, was assaulted by three members of the Velluti and by Cino Dietisalvi, their rich neighbour and in-law. There are three important aspects of this story that have passed with little or no comment. First, both the original killing in 1267 and the revenge in 1295 were prosecuted by the *podestà* (as secondary vendetta) and punished with fines and/or ban, and, at least in 1295, the Mannelli invited judicial intervention by accusing the Velluti of the crime. This case is not an example of judicial tolerance of vendetta. Secondly, the Velluti who took revenge were a mixed group of close and distant kin, and outsiders. At first this might seem like an expression of family solidarity, with responsibility for revenge spreading outwards from one branch of the family

<sup>83</sup> *Storie pistoresi*, ed Barbi, 4–6.

<sup>84</sup> Crouzet-Pavan, 'Un fiore del male', 240.

<sup>85</sup> *Storie pistoresi*, ed Barbi, 7, 8–12, 14.

<sup>86</sup> *Cronica domestica di Messer Donato Velluti*, ed. Lungo and Volpi, 10–21, 29–30, 62–70, 85–8, 94, 227–9. A seventh possible vendetta story occurs at 76–8.

to another and into the affines.<sup>87</sup> In fact, kin participation did not prevent the family from drifting apart: the author bitterly records his cousins' ingratitude towards his own branch of the family for its assumption of leadership of the vendetta.<sup>88</sup> Thirdly, we must note that it is only the author, Donato, writing in the later fourteenth century, who connects the 1295 killing to that of 1267 as vendetta. Though he claims to record only what he had heard from his father and other family elders, or what he had read in family papers,<sup>89</sup> we should possibly make more note of the fact that this was *remembered* as vendetta, rather than assume that it was indeed vendetta, delayed for twenty-eight years.

Velluti's vendetta stories are matched by a (smaller) number of episodes of vendetta-avoidance.<sup>90</sup> Enriques thought that these were exceptions that proved that families normally took revenge for their injuries,<sup>91</sup> but more process-oriented study would see vendetta-avoidance as being as common as vendetta itself.<sup>92</sup> The first of these episodes arose from a broken marriage promise: Matteo Velluti betrothed his daughter to Giacomo Cacastecchi, who, however, enamoured of another woman, broke the agreement and paid to Matteo the exact sum that he would have received in dowry.<sup>93</sup> The second case exacerbated the existing division between the two branches of the Velluti family. When Velluto Velluti made a deathbed will in favour of his cousins, his immediate male kin reacted by telling him, 'As you treat us while alive, so shall we treat your memory after your death'. Consequently, they refused to attend his funeral, refused to avenge his death, and commanded their sons not to get involved.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Foccaccia Cancellieri: *Storie pistoresi*, ed. Barbi, 8–12, 14.

<sup>88</sup> *Cronica domestica di Messer Donato Velluti*, ed. Lungo and Volpi, 64–5; see 94 for scission among the Frescobaldi.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*, xxvi: 'Renaissance society greatly valued the fight over the flight response; . . . a failure to resist perceived antagonisms guaranteed shame'. But note Frederick II's avoidance of vendetta, as recounted by Salimbene: *Cronica fratris Salimbene*, ed. Pertz et al., 354; see one case of vendetta avoidance in Raggio, *Faide e parentele*, 156–7.

<sup>91</sup> Enriques, 'La vendetta nella vita e nella legislazione fiorentina', 105.

<sup>92</sup> T. Kuehn, 'Dispute Processing in the Renaissance: Some Florentine Examples', in his *Law, Family and Women*, esp. 80–8.

<sup>93</sup> *Cronica domestica di Messer Donato Velluti*, ed. Lungo and Volpi, 48. This case is not considered by Enriques, 'La vendetta nella vita e nella legislazione fiorentina', 105.

<sup>94</sup> *Cronica domestica di Messer Donato Velluti*, ed. Lungo and Volpi, 63–6. However, one son disobeyed the paternal command: cf. the Lanfredini case explored by T. Kuehn, 'Honor and Conflict in a Fifteenth-Century Florentine Family', *Ricerche storiche*, x (1980).

The third example of vendetta-avoidance comes in the fate of Piero Pitti, a drifter and spendthrift, who squandered first his inheritance from his father and then his mother's assets. When he was wounded by the Machiavelli family, 'vendetta was never done' and, when he died, no member of his family attended the funeral.<sup>95</sup>

These three cases clearly show that kin solidarity was not an automatic response in the face of injury or threat.<sup>96</sup> Vendetta had to be deserved. Kin could choose the vendettas they wished to pursue:<sup>97</sup> there was no overriding obligation. Close kin relationships were not always activated and the impulse to vendetta, even when present, did not always overcome an inhibiting sense of the likely costs.<sup>98</sup> A broken marriage promise could be made good by payment of a sum equivalent to the dowry, while solidarity could be denied to kinsmen who seemed to have more affection for remote than close relatives, or who squandered family property. By their actions, both men in the latter instances had acted as if they had no immediate kin, and denial of vendetta, refusal to honour the corpse or assist the soul after death, were in a sense the kin's own revenge for such treatment. The Velluti family was thus pulled apart, not together, by vendettas.<sup>99</sup> Bloodfeud was often fought out within, not between, kin groups,<sup>100</sup> and clan-nishness had to be conjured up in order to pursue vendetta.<sup>101</sup>

So far we have seen that both Tuscan law and Tuscan chronicles paid much more attention to vendetta and to its family context. One simple reason might be advanced to explain this: vendetta and feuds were part of the aristocratic faction-fighting that flourished in republican cities or, at times of government weakness, in cities under seigneurial rule. In strong republican governments

<sup>95</sup> *Cronica domestica di Messer Donato Velluti*, ed. Lungo and Volpi, 137–9.

<sup>96</sup> Kuehn, *Law, Family and Women*, 154; Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*, 85.

<sup>97</sup> Just as individuals could choose which kin relationships to cultivate. Kuehn, 'Honor and Conflict', 302; White, 'Feuding and Peacemaking', 249.

<sup>98</sup> White, 'Feuding and Peacemaking', 252; Kuehn, 'Honor and Conflict', 302.

<sup>99</sup> See also C. M. de la Roncière, 'Une Famille florentine au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle: les Velluti', in G. Duby and J. Le Goff (eds.), *Famille et parenté dans l'occident médiéval* (Rome, 1977), 234–40.

<sup>100</sup> Lerner, 'Order and Disorder in Romagna', 65; cf. Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 76; Sawyer, 'Bloodfeud in Fact and Fiction', 27, 35.

<sup>101</sup> See the case of the Strozzi in Brucker (ed.), *Society of Renaissance Florence*, 111–16, and the comments of Raggio, *Faide e parentele*, 113, 248, on family cohesion as a process of conflict.

(for example, Venice)<sup>102</sup> and despotisms, such factionalism was stifled, and with it, vendetta. Despotic regimes, through both their own imagery and their positive action, strengthened patriarchal power.

Two further vendetta stories show these differences in action. That the great *condottiere*, Braccio da Montone, captured following the failure of his siege of Aquila in 1424, was then killed in vendetta by a surgeon whose hand was jolted by Braccio's enemy, Francesco Sforza, has achieved factual status.<sup>103</sup> Yet this story does not appear in any contemporary or near-contemporary source, either pro-Bracciescho, pro-Sforzescho or non-partisan.<sup>104</sup> It seems first to appear in a late sixteenth-century source,<sup>105</sup> though a sixteenth-century author recalled hearing it as 'opinione universale' from the elders of his city.<sup>106</sup> By the mid-nineteenth century, historians were having their doubts,<sup>107</sup> and

<sup>102</sup> 'In Venice there were few vendettas acting as beacons, mobilizing all the kin' (A Venise, peu de vendetta phares qui mettent en mouvement l'ensemble de la parenté): E. Crouzet-Pavan, 'Sopra le acque salse'. *espaces, pouvoir et société à Venise à la fin du moyen âge* (Rome, 1992), 812. See G. Ruggiero, *Violence in Early Renaissance Venice* (New Brunswick, 1980), 150; G. Cracco, *Società e stato nel medioevo veneziano* (Florence, 1967), 158–73.

<sup>103</sup> See reference to it by F. Cardini, 'Discorso introduttivo', in *Braccio da Montone: le compagnie di ventura nell'Italia del XV secolo* (Narni, 1993), 11, M. E. Mallett, *Mercenaries and their Masters. Warfare in Renaissance Italy* (London, 1974), 198.

<sup>104</sup> *Braccii Perusini vita et gesta auctore Johanne Antonio Campano*, ed. R. Valentini (Rerum italicarum scriptores, 2nd edn, xix, pt 4, Bologna, 1929), 203–4, Minuti, *Vita di Muzio Attendolo Sforza*, ed. Porro Lambertenghi, 305; *Johannis Simonetae rerum gestarum Francisci Sfortiae Mediolanensium ducis commentarii*, ed. G. Soranzo (Rerum italicarum scriptores, 2nd edn, xxi, pt 2, Bologna, 1933), 19, *Matthaei de Griffonibus memoriale historicum de rebus bononiensium*, ed. L. Frati and A. Sorbelli (Rerum italicarum scriptores, 2nd edn, xviii, pt 2, Bologna, 1902), 108; *Cronaca di ser Guerriero da Gubbio*, ed. G. Mazzatinti (Rerum italicarum scriptores, 2nd edn, xxi, pt 4, Città di Castello, 1902), 42, *Cronache senese*, ed. A. Lisini and F. Iacometti (Rerum italicarum scriptores, 2nd edn, xv, pt 6, Bologna, 1933–5), 803; Lorenzo Spirito, *Il libro chiamato altro Marte de la vita & gesti de lo illustrissimo & potente capitano Niccolo Piccinno* (Vicenza, 1489), ch. 29. And see R. Valentini, 'Rivelazioni postume sui rapporti tra Filippo Maria Visconti e Braccio da Montone', *Bullettino della deputazione abruzzese di storia patria*, xv (1924), 81, 84 (*è morto in battaglia, sì nobil morte*).

<sup>105</sup> *Angeli Fonticuli Belli Bracciani Aquilae gesti fidelis et brevis narratio*, in *Thesaurus antiquitatum et historiarum Italiae*, ed. J. G. Graevius, 10 vols (Leiden, 1704–25), ix, pt 3, 39. I have not seen Ciminello, *La guerra di Braccio*, ed. V. Parlagreco (Aquila, 1903).

<sup>106</sup> P. Pellini, *Dell'istoria di Perugia*, 2 vols. (Venice, 1664), ii, 277; quoted in A. Fabretti, *Note e documenti . . . che servono ad illustrare le biografie dei capitani venturieri dell'Umbria* (Montepulciano, 1842), 154–5.

<sup>107</sup> A. Fabretti, *Biografie dei capitani venturieri dell'Umbria*, 4 vols. (Montepulciano, 1842–6), i, 277.

one specifically rejected it,<sup>108</sup> but legends resist historical criticism.

The death of Braccio shows how, in a city marked by unstable factional rule, vendetta could be added to the narration of an event. The death of Ottobuono Terzi shows how, under despotic rule, it could be taken away. Terzi was one of a band of former military captains who took control of Lombard cities following the death of the duke of Milan in 1402. As lord of Parma and Reggio, he was in conflict for some years with Niccolò d'Este, lord of Ferrara and Modena. During this local war he had captured and maltreated Niccolò's captain, Micheletto Sforza. In 1409, a peace meeting was arranged between d'Este and Terzi, at which the latter was, scandalously,<sup>109</sup> thrown from his horse by Micheletto and stabbed to death. The body was then mutilated: the severed head was carried around on a pole by Modenese boys; the torso was chopped into pieces; and the flesh and intestines were cut with knives and teeth, and eaten.<sup>110</sup> However, we need to distinguish between different types of narrative here.<sup>111</sup> The soldierly or chivalric accounts of this event give prominence to the vendetta origin of the killing: for them, the maltreatment of Micheletto alone justified it.<sup>112</sup> Conversely, the official version of the event smothers all suggestion of vendetta by lengthy insistence on Ottobuono's savage tyranny in Reggio and Parma: his crimes were generalized into offences against both God and humanity, and his killers acted, by implication, as instruments of divine, not human, vengeance.<sup>113</sup> They thus achieved 'punishment without vengeance'.<sup>114</sup> It was in this way that despotic power could try to control the memory of private injury.

<sup>108</sup> E. Ricotti, *Storie delle compagnie di ventura in Italia*, 4 vols (Turin, 1844–5), II, 286–7.

<sup>109</sup> Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomineus, *De viris illustribus* (Stuttgart, 1842), 15, Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, III 43 (ed. L. Caretti, Milan and Naples, 1954, 54)

<sup>110</sup> *Annales estenses Jacobi de Delayto*, ed. Muratori, col. 1065; Ricotti, *Storia delle compagnie di ventura*, II, 233–4

<sup>111</sup> G. Ianziti, *Humanistic Historiography under the Sforzas: Politics and Propaganda in Fifteenth-Century Milan* (Oxford, 1988)

<sup>112</sup> Minuti, *Vita di Muzio Attendolo Sforza*, ed. Porro Lambertenghi, 153–4; Biblioteca estense, Modena, Documenti Campori, 591, 'Vita del cavallier Feltrino Boiardo', fos. 21–4.

<sup>113</sup> *Annales estenses Jacobi de Delayto*, ed. Muratori, col. 1064. For this mode of analysis, see G. Ianziti, 'From Flavio Biondo to Lodrisio Crivelli: The Beginnings of Humanistic Historiography in Sforza Milan', *Rinascimento*, XX (1980), 37; Ianziti, *Humanistic Historiography under the Sforzas*.

<sup>114</sup> This is the point of Lope de Vega's drama about Niccolò d'Este: Lope de Vega, *El castigo sin venganza*, ed. A. D. Kossoff (Madrid, 1970).

## III

## FORMULAIC NARRATIVE

Study of the chronicles throws up two problems: one is that different authors, narrating the same events, might not concur in presenting them as vendetta; the second is that some revenge stories were strongly shaped along formulaic narrative lines. Revenge is one of the simplest of narrative techniques for linking events, but some authors omit it altogether, while others endow it with a range of additional, stock details. One of these, recently stressed by Muir in his account of Friulan vendetta, is mutilation and cannibalism. Other instances can easily be added. Ghirardacci has the story of Battista Canetoli's heart being cut out and nailed up outside Annibale Bentivoglio's door 'in sign of vendetta'.<sup>115</sup> Salimbene, too, has an example of the bodily mutilation of the vendetta victim, with the citizens of Messina throwing Conrad of Hohenstaufen's bones into the sea 'in hatred and revenge of his father'.<sup>116</sup> Villani has at least one similar case, a *furiosa vendetta* (uncontrolled crowd revenge) against officials of the duke of Athens, then 'tyrant' in Florence: one was cut to pieces, paraded around the city on the tip of lances or swords, and eaten, *cruda e cotta* (raw and cooked); another was killed, then dragged naked by some boys around the city and finally hanged by his feet in the piazza and butchered 'like a pig' (xiii.17). A similar fate befell the duke of Ferrara's stern Captain of Justice, who was murdered in his bed: the people, 'who had been wronged by him', thronged to his house and cut out bits of his gut 'out of joy and vendetta'.<sup>117</sup>

Despite the fact that such atrocity is really quite rare in revenge stories, much has been made recently of the mutilation, especially by bands of young boys, of the corpses of perceived enemies of the community.<sup>118</sup> Such studies often focus on the 'ritual' process of mutilation: the enemy hunted down like a piece of game; the bloody hunting practices applied to the corpse; the corpse treated as meat, hung up and butchered; the innards thrown to the dogs. Muir, while apparently prepared to discount some of the accusations of cannibalism,<sup>119</sup> sees stories of dogs eating human remains

<sup>115</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, ed. Sorbelli, 105.

<sup>116</sup> *Cronica fratris Salimbene*, ed. Pertz et al. 444, cf. 608.

<sup>117</sup> Bernardino Zambotti, *Diario ferrarese dall'anno 1476 sino al 1504*, ed. G. Pardi, (*Rerum italicarum scriptores*, 2nd edn, xxiv, pt 7, Bologna, 1934-7), 262

<sup>118</sup> D. Balestracci, 'Il gioco dell'esecuzione capitale', in G. Ortalli (ed.), *Gioco e giustizia nell'Italia di commune* (Treviso and Rome, 1993)

<sup>119</sup> Muir, *Mad Blood Sturring*, 236-7.

as real events, though also as projections on to animals of avengers' rabid hunger for killing.<sup>120</sup> It would, of course, still be possible to see these stories as projections (and to accept Muir's exploration of the dog and hunting symbols in some vendettas), while questioning their historical veracity. The difference would be that they would then become the projections of the authors, and not those of the avengers themselves. Muir's focus is the revenge-assassination of Antonio Savorgnan in 1511, at which a dog was said to have come up and eaten his brain. But this is not (as Muir acknowledges) reported in the account closest in time to the event, nor is it found in Savorgnan family accounts.<sup>121</sup> The dog is apparently first mentioned by a writer who was not present at the killing, while a subsequent writer noted: 'There are many people who do not believe this'.<sup>122</sup> Is it possible that this was ritual reportage, not ritual reality — malicious gossip — the sort of thing that could be said, and might be believed, of public enemies? According to Muir, we should avoid the temptation 'to discount or ignore the macabre tales of vendetta violence, to search for a more rational, commonplace explanation for seemingly irrational behavior', and should, instead, try to recapture the 'alien mental world' that they reveal.<sup>123</sup> However, there remains the problem of whether this alien mental world was shared by the actors in revenge stories or merely imputed to them by outside observers. There are obvious methodological problems here and it should be noted that 'accusing one's enemies of being eaters of men seems always to have been a commonplace form of denunciation', one which fulfilled 'the need to dehumanize potentially dangerous "outsiders"'.<sup>124</sup> A further (and final) handful of vendetta stories can show how this worked differently in different political contexts.

Ghirardacci's account of Annibale Bentivoglio's killing of Raffaele Foscarari in Bologna in 1440 explains it by the *odio mortale* created between them when Annibale rejected Raffaele's

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 222–37.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 343, n. 8, see the criticism of O Raggio, 'Politica, cultura e archetipi: il Giovedì Grasso di Udine (1511)', *Quaderni storici*, lxxxviii (1995), 226.

<sup>122</sup> Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*, 220

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 237–8.

<sup>124</sup> A. Pagden, 'The Forbidden Food Francisco de Vitoria and José de Acosta on Cannibalism', *Terrae incognitae*, xiii (1981), 19, 20; repr. in A. Pagden, *The Uncertainties of Empire: Essays in Iberian and Ibero-American Intellectual History* (Aldershot, 1994).

offer of a daughter in marriage. Annibale subsequently excused his killing of Foscarari as 'private enmity'.<sup>125</sup> Ghirardacci's narrative has been accepted by many authorities,<sup>126</sup> but contemporary accounts do not mention Raffaele's offer of a daughter, and it is plain from these and other records that Raffaele's death was a purely political matter, perpetrated to remove an ambitious and powerful rival from the scene. Annibale's plea of 'private enmity' was a convenient invention.<sup>127</sup> Such a blatant political murder had to be given private justification: the most convincing was a dispute over a marriage, which, as a Bolognese statute put it, was a known and potent source of 'serious scandals . . . even enmities and homicides'.<sup>128</sup>

Similar narrative elements can be detected in the killing of Annibale Bentivoglio himself by the Canetoli family in 1445. The reaction against the Canetoli was fierce — death, exile, defamatory paintings, destruction of houses — but also, in Ghirardacci's account, it included two specific moments of vendetta, full of intense symbolism: the aforementioned instance of Battista Canetoli's heart being cut out and nailed up outside Annibale's house 'in sign of vendetta'; and Baldessare Canetoli, who was held captive in the Bentivoglio palace, being confronted by Annibale's widow and forgiven, before being beheaded at the site of the murder and then hanged by the feet on a gallows.<sup>129</sup> Symbolic actions of this sort, Ghirardacci implies, closed the cycle of vendetta.

However, it is important to remember that it is Ghirardacci who presents this as a cycle, patterning his history with sixteenth-century hindsight. His version of these events differs markedly

<sup>125</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, ed. Sorbelli, 60–1.

<sup>126</sup> C. M. Ady, *The Bentivoglio of Bologna A Study in Despotism* (Oxford, 1937), 20; A. Sorbelli, *I Bentivoglio, signori di Bologna* (Bologna, 1969), 45–6; 2nd edn (Bologna, 1987), 56, 58.

<sup>127</sup> M. Longhi, 'Niccolò Piccinino in Bologna, 1438–1443', *Atti e memorie della deputazione di storia patria per la Romagna*, 3rd ser., xxv (1906–7), 123–6. Cf. the political killing of Louis d'Orléans in Paris in 1407, for which suspicion first fell on Aubert de Chauny owing to Louis' abduction of his wife: *La Chronique d'Enguerran de Monstrelet*, ed. L. Douet-d'Arcq, 6 vols (Paris, 1857–62), I, 161. For other examples of 'the revenge motive' introduced in order to justify killings that would otherwise have been *sine causa*, see Sawyer, 'Bloodfeud in Fact and Fiction', 29–31.

<sup>128</sup> Archivio di Stato, Bologna, Comune, Statuti, 16, fo. 45; Raggio, *Faide e parentele*, 120–2.

<sup>129</sup> Ghirardacci, *Historia di Bologna*, ed. Sorbelli, 100–7.



from that of the main contemporary Bolognese chronicle,<sup>130</sup> where there are no clear cycles of revenge, no originating episodes giving rise to *odio*, and no symbolic conclusion. Battista Canetoli's heart was not cut out and nailed to the Bentivoglio palace;<sup>131</sup> Baldessare Canetoli was not confronted by Annibale's widow. For the historian seeking the 'real' history of this episode, there are clear reasons for doubting Ghirardacci's version, but it is more important to note the role of these opening and closing devices in the narrative of the history.

The same process is visible in Villani's story of the killing of Henry of Almain by Guy de Montfort in a Viterbo church in 1271 (viii.39): 'one of the famous crimes in history'.<sup>132</sup> Villani says that it was done by Guy 'with his own hand, with a sword, out of vendetta for his father Simon de Montfort' (killed at the battle of Evesham in 1265):

But Guy, furnished with a company of men at arms, on horse and foot, was not satisfied in having done this killing, for a knight asked him what he had done, and he replied, "I have done my revenge", and the knight said "How can this be? Your father was dragged". Immediately Guy re-entered the church, took Henry by the hair and dragged the corpse *villanamente* out of the church . . . [Lord] Edward was very angry and, scornful at King Charles, left Viterbo . . . and then went to England, and his brother's (*sic*) heart he placed on a column at the head of London bridge over the Thames, as a reminder [*memoria*] to the English of the outrage received.

Two elements of Villani's account stand out: the equivalence of Guy's treatment of Henry's corpse; and the use of the heart as a symbol of unsatisfied injury. Both of these are, in fact, elements that Villani adds to the story. Other chroniclers, Italian, English and French, though they vary in their details, have this much in common: they make no reference either to a knight reminding

<sup>130</sup> *Corpus chronicorum bononiensium*, ed. A. Sorbelli, 4 vols (Rerum italicarum scriptores, 2nd edn, xviii, pt 1, Città di Castello and Bologna, 1906-40), iv, 43-4, 56, 61, 128-9, 161

<sup>131</sup> Nor was it in the account of one of the participants Galeazzo Marescotto, *Cronica come Annibale Bentivoglio fu preso et menato de pregione et poi morto et vendicato*, ed. F. Zambrini (Bologna, 1875), unpaginated. Galeazzo states that his own revenge on his brothers' killers was taken in streetfighting against the Canetoli: Battista was pursued, dragged out of hiding and killed, and the body was then thoroughly burned in the piazza. We should note, however, that according to the 'Cronaca B', someone's heart was cut out, though clearly not Battista's: *Corpus chronicorum bononiensium*, ed. A. Sorbelli, iv, 128-9.

<sup>132</sup> F. M. Powicke, 'Guy de Montfort (1265-71)', *Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc.*, 4th ser., xviii (1935), 15.

Guy of the manner of his father's death, or to Henry's heart.<sup>133</sup> What Villani had in mind here was the Italian practice of 'improperation', the taunting reminder of unavenged death which provoked men to murder.<sup>134</sup> In actuality, it was not dragging that had been memorable in Simon's death, but much worse mutilation,<sup>135</sup> and no chronicler specifically records that similar things were done to Henry's corpse.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, separate burial of the heart was quite common among late medieval royalty and had nothing to do with commemorating unavenged injury.<sup>137</sup> Anyway, Villani's version here is a 'ludicrous' misunderstanding of Dante, as Henry's heart was buried in Westminster Abbey.<sup>138</sup> So Villani, at the distance of several decades, moulds the story to fit some of the Tuscan preconceptions of vendetta killings. 'When he speaks of distant facts, Villani is of limited credibility to the historian, but can offer more lively literary values', indulging his *fantasia* and his taste for the marvellous and the extraordinary, in narratives that have the character of popular *novelle*.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>133</sup> See below, nn 139–40.

<sup>134</sup> *Statuti di Pisa* (1286), i, 381; *Statuta Ferrarie*, 1287, 257; *Statutum Pistorni*, 1296, 117; *Statuti di Treviso*, i, 475, *Costituto di Siena*, ii, 343–4, *Statuta Parmae*, 1316–25, 218; *Statuti di Arezzo*, 1327, 202–3; *Statuta Mutine*, 1327, 378; *Statuti di Torino*, 1360, 100–1; *Statuti di Ascoli*, 1377, 99–100; *Statuta Lucensis civitatis* (1490), iv, 191, *Statuta Cesene* (1494), ii, 33, Bongi, 'Ingiurie, impropri, contumelie', *passim*; Dorini, 'Vendetta privata al tempo di Dante', 63. Cf. Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 58, quoting *Beowulf*.

<sup>135</sup> Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (London, 1988), 51, rather garbles the chronicle accounts, which seem to become more atrocious as they get later. According to the contemporary Wykes, the body was first decapitated, then the arms and legs were cut off, and a crowd of 'furious' foot-soldiers (*furiosi*) cut off his *causam* (*sic*): *Annales monastici*, ed. H. R. Luard, 5 vols (London, 1864–9), iv, 174–5. The slightly later *Metrical Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester*, ed. W. A. Wright, 2 vols. (London, 1887), ii, 764–5, refers less obscurely to the carving off of 'is prive membres'. A later Italian source, *Benvenuti de Rambaldi de Imola Comentum*, ed. Lacaita, i, 414, refers to Edward having the amputated genitals put in Simon's mouth, the ultimate wartime disgrace.

<sup>136</sup> Though note the words *membratim lacerat* in *Chronicon Girardi de Arvernia canonici Claromontensis*, in *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, L. Delisle, 24 vols (Paris, 1869–1904), xxi, 217, and the trial record, which alleged wounds to Henry's thighs and groin (*lumbos*), as well as his face and hand: *Les Registres de Grégoire X* (1272–1276), ed. J. Guiraud (Paris, 1892–1960), 87.

<sup>137</sup> E. A. R. Brown, 'Death and the Human Body in the Later Middle Ages: The Legislation of Boniface VIII on the Division of the Corpse', *Vivator*, xii (1981).

<sup>138</sup> T. F. Tout, 'Henry of Cornwall', *DNB*, ix, 550. This is not the place to enter the controversy over the relationship between Dante and Villani.

<sup>139</sup> M. Aurigemma, 'Il gusto narrativo di Giovanni Villani nella prima parte della *Cronica*', in *Studi di letteratura italiana in memoria di C. Cohetti* (Messina, 1983), 73, 74–5, 81–5.

Vendetta was one of these narrative fantasies, especially, as in this case, when many other chroniclers record the killing as simple homicide<sup>140</sup> and later historians have doubted the revenge motive.<sup>141</sup>

Past injuries could thus be 'remembered' as explanations for killings. The theme of the broken marriage promise was, as we have seen, used by chroniclers to explain the distant origins of major divisions and conflicts of their own times. The same technique is found in accounts of the great (and allegedly unique) Sicilian vendetta, the *famoso caso di Sciacca*. This 'famous case' had two phases: one in the 1450s, the other in the 1520s. Documents for the first phase are few. Some official letters were discovered in the late nineteenth century,<sup>142</sup> but the basic account has remained that of Francesco Savasta, published in the early eighteenth century, and claiming to draw on a now-lost chronicle.<sup>143</sup> That loss, together with some elementary factual errors detected by Raffaele Starraba, has not yet altogether disturbed faith in Savasta's narrative, even though it differs markedly, as will be seen, from the earliest, sixteenth-century account.<sup>144</sup> In the first phase, Pietro Perollo attacked Antonio di Luna, count of Caltabellotta, in an annual religious procession in Sciacca, bringing him to the ground and raining stiletto wounds on his

<sup>140</sup> *Annales Ianue* ed. G. H. Pertz (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores, xviii, Hannover and Leipzig, 1863–1925), 271; *Fragmenta historiae pisanae auctore Gudone de Corvaria*, ed. Muratori (Rerum italicarum scriptores, xxiv, Milan, 1738), col. 679; *Chronique latine de Guillaume de Nangis*, ed. H. Géraud, 2 vols. (Paris, 1843), I, 241; *Flores historiarum*, ed. H. R. Luard, 3 vols. (London, 1890), III, 21; *Chronica Johannis de Oxenedes*, ed. H. Ellis (London, 1859), 239; *Annales monastici*, ed. Luard, IV, 241, 243; *F. Nicolai Triveti . . . Annales*, ed. T. Hog (London, 1845), 277. Though some chronicles do treat the killing as revenge. *Chronicon Girardi ab Arvernia*, 217; *Chronique de Primat*, in *Recueil des historiens des Gaules*, xxii, 86; *Willelmi Rishanger . . . chronica et annales*, ed. H. T. Riley (London, 1865), 67; *Chronicon domini Walteri de Hemmngburgh*, ed. H. C. Hamilton, 2 vols. (London, 1848), I, 330.

<sup>141</sup> G. Ciacci, *Gli Aldobrandeschi nella storia e nella 'Divina Comedia'* (Rome, 1935), 207–10; Powicke, 'Guy de Montfort', 18–19; D. Waley, 'Viterbo nello stato della chiesa nel secolo XIII', in *Atti del convegno di studio: VII centenario del 1° conclave (1268–1271)* (Viterbo, 1975), 4.

<sup>142</sup> R. Starraba, 'Nuovi documenti intorno ai precedenti del Caso di Sciacca', *Archivio storico siciliano*, new ser., II (1877).

<sup>143</sup> F. Savasta, *Il famoso caso di Sciacca* (1726, Palermo, 1843). Savasta lies behind the account in G. E. Di Blasi, *Storia cronologica de' vicere, luogotenenti e presidenti del regno di Sicilia*, 3 vols. (Palermo, 1790–1), I, 196–8.

<sup>144</sup> Though some doubts are expressed in I. Peri, *Restaurazione e pacifico stato in Sicilia, 1377–1501* (Bari, 1988), 208, n. 5; I. La Lumia, *Storie siciliane*, 4 vols. (Palermo, 1881–3), III, 247–8, is notably more cautious than the same author's *Studi di storia siciliana*, 2 vols. (Palermo, 1870), II, ch. 5.

face and body. This attack is presented as delayed revenge for repeated injuries sustained by both Pietro and his father, Giovanni Perollo, at the hands of Antonio and his father, Artale di Luna. The first of these injuries was Artale's marriage in 1400 to an heiress already promised to Giovanni Perollo.<sup>145</sup> Savasta presents these men and their sons as burning with a constant, barely concealed desire for revenge from this moment on.<sup>146</sup> They exchange insults and threats at an anniversary service for a dead king;<sup>147</sup> the sudden death of Artale is ascribed to Perollo poison;<sup>148</sup> and Pietro Perollo is forced, by Antonio di Luna's 'huge fire of litigation', to surrender to him a barony following a judicial sentence in di Luna's favour (1454).<sup>149</sup> Savasta thus sought to show that such an atrocity as Pietro Perollo's was not just a response to a lost lawsuit, but to decades of inherited, hateful division between these two families: noblemen did not kill on impulse, but only under the greatest provocation. Three generations later, 'the memory is still alive of past outrages',<sup>150</sup> and Sigismondo di Luna is reminded of them — 'The walls and streets are still stained with your [family] blood'<sup>151</sup> — by a group of local nobles resentful of Giacomo Perollo's tyrannizing<sup>152</sup> and looking to Sigismondo to remove him. Again, specific (and possibly sufficient) motivation is overlaid, even put aside, by emphasis on the continuing exchange of revenge. When Giacomo was eventually killed (like Ezzelino, a captive magnate struck dead by his lesser enemies against his captor's wishes),<sup>153</sup> his body was subjected to the usual cruelties: some drank his blood; some pulled the flesh off with their teeth.

In contrast to Savasta, however, the sixteenth-century account does not mention an originating marriage dispute,<sup>154</sup> does not connect the two phases as parts of a whole cycle, does not mention the remembrance of old injuries or the mutilation of Giacomo's

<sup>145</sup> Cf Ezzelino, above 16. Savasta, *Il famoso caso di Sciacca*, 141–9.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 149, 152, 158.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 156–7

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 191

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 180–6, 191

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 306–8.

<sup>154</sup> T Fazellus, *Rerum sicularum scriptores* (Frankfurt, 1579), 532, 546–7

body.<sup>155</sup> Though a nineteenth-century historian attributed this to fear and deference on the part of the author, Tommaso Fazello,<sup>156</sup> it is more probable that (as in Scotland) feuds between families in the sixteenth century, with antecedent conflicts in the fourteenth or fifteenth, were 'not directly linked by an unbroken chain of events . . . The participants in such feuds may have liked to connect such events in their minds, but it was more probable that families living next to one another were likely to find a new issue to quarrel over which gives the appearance of long feuds'.<sup>157</sup>

The *famoso caso di Sciacca*, in Savasta's version thus runs through almost the whole lexicon of vendetta themes: the broken marriage promise, the escalating feud, improperation, the maltreatment of a captive, bodily mutilation. It also shares with other stories the fact that the main sources are late, relative to the events themselves, and possibly unreliable. As with Ghirardacci, Rolandino and Villani, we have the creation in hindsight of comprehensible cycles of violence, with a beginning (in marriage) and an end (in mutilation), articulated at key moments by the remembrance of old injuries. The further the writer was from the event, it would seem, the more he was likely to present the origin of vendetta in a dispute over women, and its ending in the bloody mutilation of an offender's body, with the heart used as a symbolic object. However, this moulding also reflects a common practice of arranging events into a story, a 'revenge narrative' that 'often structured the accounts to evoke certain emotions in listeners and readers . . . with a defined beginning, a clear plot . . . and an anticipated end that implied expectations about their roles in life'.<sup>158</sup>

Vendetta stories, it is argued here, were purposeful means of remembering and explaining disputes, not objective descriptions. What has finally to be considered are the purposes the creation of such narratives fulfilled. Vendetta narratives placed in chronicles carried implicit moral lessons, in the fashion of the best

<sup>155</sup> Though the 1529 violence is noted to be motivated by *privatas inimicitias*: *ibid.*, 564.

<sup>156</sup> La Lumia, *Studi di storia siciliana*, II, 248-9.

<sup>157</sup> Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 6. Cf. Raggio, *Faide e parentele*, 252: 'Protagonists and witnesses, neighbours and public report date enmities "from time immemorial" . . . or connect current disputes to events involving ancestors thirty or forty years earlier' (I protagonisti e i testimoni, i vicini e la 'pubblica voce' datano 'ab immemorabili' le inimicizie, . . . o collegano i conflitti in corso a fatti accaduti agli 'avi' trenta-quaranta anni prima).

<sup>158</sup> Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*, xxviii; cf. White, 'Feuding and Peacemaking', 247-50.

medieval history. They served as exemplary tales.<sup>159</sup> They are mostly not explicit exempla,<sup>160</sup> being part of the 'discourse of direct assertion', rather than discontinuous insertions into that discourse;<sup>161</sup> nevertheless, they had both specific and more general moral purposes. Histories of quarrels over trifles or gambling that led to violent slaughter taught men not to covet their neighbour's goods. The more general and simple warning message of all such tales was that boys, servants and women had to be disciplined and kept under firm parental, magisterial or marital control, lest their errors and disorders cause slaughter among menfolk. In the most developed tales, that message was constructed around two inversions — excess and transgression — which marked both the marriage opening and the cannibalistic end. Marriages and meals were, ideally, meant to join their participants in sacramental union. Instead, mishandled marriage brought forth division and death, and human consumed human in a potent symbol of internecine Christian conflict. We should note that such atrocities appeared too in more obviously moralizing contexts: Bernardino da Siena included the cutting out and eating of hearts, and the selling, roasting and eating of human flesh in his warning of the atrocities attendant on faction fighting.<sup>162</sup>

The way in which vendettas were remembered thus had significant Christian and moral connotations. It was also heavily gendered. Many tales place the origin of vendetta outside the secular society of adult males, in fights and injuries among the young, in damage to the value and honour of female kin, or in the behaviour and treatment of monks and nuns.<sup>163</sup> The outrage moved from those who did not fight to those who did, from the non-virile to the virile. It is, of course, now a commonplace that men's honour

<sup>159</sup> Cf. Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*, 90. 'Vendettas were stories'. For a more obvious *exemplum*, see 'Cronaca della città di Perugia dal 1309 al 1491 nota col nome de diario del Graziani', ed. A. Fabiani, *Archivio storico italiano*, xvi (1850), 415; on which, see Burckhardt, *Civilization of the Renaissance*, trans. Middlemore, 265–6; Heers, *Clan familial au moyen âge*, 135 (both of which accept it as fact).

<sup>160</sup> Though note that the story of the soldier unrepentant at his massacre of prisoners appears in one collection of *exempla*: W. Heywood, *The 'Ensamles' of Fra Filippo: A Study of Medieval Siena* (Siena, 1901), 205–6.

<sup>161</sup> J. D. Lyons, *Exemplum: The Rhetoric of Example in Early Modern France and Italy* (Princeton, 1989), 3–4, 28–31.

<sup>162</sup> Quoted in Heywood, *'Ensamles' of Fra Filippo*, 201.

<sup>163</sup> *Chronicon regienae*, ed. L. A. Muratori (*Rerum italicarum scriptores*, xviii, Milan, 1731), cols. 7, 23.

was implicated by the sexual lapses of females in their care<sup>164</sup> and that the young were particularly involved in violence.<sup>165</sup> However, the point to be made here is a broader one: contemporary and later observers believed that quarrels that started among the young, the female or the religious could be transferred into the adult male world as vendetta. If this were the case, what needs to be investigated is why, at some times and places, adult male society was able to stifle such disputes, and why, at other times and places, it allowed them to escalate.<sup>166</sup>

Any answer to this problem will have also to address the way in which injuries were remembered. As we have seen, remembered injury played an important role in vendetta stories, whether in taunting 'improperation' (Guy de Montfort, Sigismondo de Luna), or by sudden, unexpected sight of an old enemy (Ezzelino, Giacomo Perollo), or by use of the heart as a record of revenge achieved (Battista Canetoli) or yet to be won (Henry of Almain). Memory indeed lies at the heart of vendetta, for revenge was always taken for *specific* injuries. Burckhardt distinguished Italian practice of vendetta from that of the rest of Europe precisely on this point: 'other nations, though they found it no easier to forgive, nevertheless forgot more easily'.<sup>167</sup> Certainly the proverbial Tuscan taste for vendetta delayed for thirty years or more would suggest powerful memorial modes.<sup>168</sup> In fact, Italian methods of remembering injuries seem less vivid and less ritualized than those found elsewhere: there is no use of the severed head to incite kinsmen to revenge as in Iceland;<sup>169</sup> there is no preservation or parading of a murdered man's bloody shirt as a stimulus to his children, as in Iceland, Corsica or Albania, or as stimulus to rulers, as in Scotland;<sup>170</sup> there are no provocative,

<sup>164</sup> For example, G. Ruggiero, '“Più che la vita caro”: onore, matrimonio e reputazione femminile nel tardo Rinascimento', *Quaderni storici*, lxxvi (1987).

<sup>165</sup> Cruzet-Pavan, 'Un fiore del male'; Natalie Zemon Davis, 'The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-Century France', *Past and Present*, no. 50 (Feb. 1971).

<sup>166</sup> Roberts, 'Study of Dispute', 9.

<sup>167</sup> Burckhardt, *Civilization of the Renaissance*, trans. Middlemore, 265.

<sup>168</sup> Also noted for Parma *Cronica fratris Salimbene*, ed Pertz et al., 533.

<sup>169</sup> Miller, 'Choosing the Avenger', 175–82.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 182–5; P. P. R. Colonna de Cesari Rocca, *Vengeances corses* (Paris, 1909), 26–8; Black-Michaud, *Cohesive Force*, 80; M. Hasluck, *The Unwritten Law in Albania* (Cambridge, 1954), 231; Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 29. But see the use of the bloody cloak of a murdered bishop to arouse the pope and God to vengeance (in 1235): *Cronica fratris Salimbene*, ed Pertz et al. 88–9, and the dressing of a waxen

female, dirge-singers at funerals (banned by sumptuary law).<sup>171</sup> Reference to a victim 'biting his finger in sign of vendetta' comes late and rarely.<sup>172</sup> Nor is there much evidence in the chronicles of a code, with rules and rites for the opening, suspending and closing of vendetta.<sup>173</sup> Unlike Albania, there was no rule of 'boiling blood' (a period of licence immediately following a killing, in which the range of revenge-targets was enlarged), no dishonour in not telling the victim's kin of his death, or in accepting blood money.<sup>174</sup> Unlike nineteenth-century Corsica or early modern Japan, there was no requirement for hostilities to be preceded by a ritual formula ('Garde-toi') or notification of intent.<sup>175</sup> Unlike Corsica, too, there was no precise code of what was and was not an avengable (blood) offence, no obligations determined down to the fifth cousin. There was no behaviour specific to revenge-targets (travelling in disguise, blockading themselves in their houses for years), and no elaborate rituals of submission and pacification.<sup>176</sup> What ritual we do find seems rather attenuated by comparison: 'killers murdered in public places, usually admitted the deed, normally exempted women and young boys, and maximized the amount of blood shed frequently by dismembering the victim or feeding him to animals'.<sup>177</sup>

What we find more frequently, in common with other Mediterranean societies, is the conceptualization and remembrance of injury as debt, and of vengeance as repayment.<sup>178</sup> When disputes were pacified, the notarial deeds followed the formulas

(n 170 cont.)

effigy of Lorenzo de' Medici in the 'abito' he had worn on the day of the Pazzi Plot G. Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori ed architettori*, ed. G. Milanesi, 9 vols. (Florence, 1878–85), iii, 373–4

<sup>171</sup> For example, *Statuti di Bologna 1288*, I, 245–6. For a general survey, see C. M. Kovesi-Killerby, 'Italian Sumptuary Legislation, 1200–1500' (Univ. of Oxford D.Phil thesis, 1991), 98–104. Cf. Black-Michaud, *Cohesive Force*, 78–9

<sup>172</sup> Bartolomeo Cerretani, *Storia fiorentina*, ed. G. Berti (Florence, 1964), 206. Cf. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, I, 1, 42–51 (ed. B. Gibbons, London, 1980, 84).

<sup>173</sup> Cf. Verdier, 'Système vindicatoire', 16.

<sup>174</sup> Hasluck, *Unwritten Law*, 224–5, 228, 231, 239, 247–8.

<sup>175</sup> Colonna, *Vengeances corses*, 26–35, D. E. Mills, 'Katakū-uchi: The Practice of Blood-Revenge in Pre-Modern Japan', *Mod. Asian Studies*, x (1976). Though note use of *guardarsi* in seventeenth-century Liguria Raggio, *Faide e parentele*, 157

<sup>176</sup> See T. Dean, 'Violence, Vendetta and Peacemaking in Late-Medieval Bologna', *Criminal Justice Hist.* (forthcoming) But see ritual submission in Brucker (ed.), *Society of Renaissance Florence*, 119–20

<sup>177</sup> Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring*, xxiv.

<sup>178</sup> Black-Michaud, *Cohesive Force*, 80–1, A. Mirambel, 'Blood Vengeance (*Mama*) in Southern Greece and among the Slavs', *Byzantion*, xvi (1942–3), 382 'he owes me blood, I have to take vengeance on him'



for quittance of monetary debt. Threats and insults of the type 'I'll pay you for this' (*Io ten pagaro*) were prosecuted in the courts, testimony both to the perception of injury as debt and to court action to stifle such vindictiveness.<sup>179</sup> However, there were differences between cities here: is it not significant that we find reports of vendetta in Florentine *ricordanze*, which are generically dominated by concerns of debt and credit, whereas the Venetians, who kept no diaries, also pursued no vendettas?<sup>180</sup>

The remembering of injury may also be related to a trend in anthropological study of dispute to see feud as interminable and eternal.<sup>181</sup> Though the reasoning behind this view was unsatisfactory, and has been criticized both from common-sense and historical positions,<sup>182</sup> what was actually meant by the eternity of feud is that the *memory* of feud could not be suppressed. Feuds could lie dormant for years and break out again only when desired, or if the parties met by accident.<sup>183</sup> Past wrongs are 'selectively remembered, that is they would be remembered if they reinforced existing hostilities, and forgotten if they cut across existing alliances'.<sup>184</sup> Such views did not command universal acceptance even among anthropologists (Max Gluckman and others believed in the power of cross-cutting ties to inhibit the protraction and escalation of feud).<sup>185</sup> Historians have found the eternity of feud hard to accept,<sup>186</sup> just as they have also criticized the idea of feud as a practice that kept the peace.<sup>187</sup> Historians can, though, do more with the idea of selective memory. Some of the examples considered above clearly confirm it: Guy de Montfort was perhaps allowed to act on the memory of his father's injury because of Charles d'Anjou's hostility to Henry of Almain; Sigismondo di

<sup>179</sup> Bongi, 'Ingiurie, improperi, contumelie'

<sup>180</sup> P. J. Jones, 'Florentine Families and Florentine Diaries in the Fourteenth Century', *Papers of the British School in Rome*, xxiv (1956), 183-6, 190, 192, 196, Crouzet-Pavan, *Sopra le acque salze*, 812

<sup>181</sup> 'A feud goes on for ever': E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer* (Oxford, 1940), 154, Peters, 'Foreword', xxii-iii, Black-Michaud, *Cohesive Force*, 63-85; Raggio, *Faide e parentele*, 252

<sup>182</sup> Black-Michaud, *Cohesive Force*, 67, quoting Paul Stirling, *Turkish Village* (London, 1965); Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 2

<sup>183</sup> Black-Michaud, *Cohesive Force*, 19-20, 68

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, quoting Stirling, 252.

<sup>185</sup> M. Gluckman, 'The Peace in the Feud', *Past and Present*, no. 8 (Nov. 1955), Black-Michaud, *Cohesive Force*, 64-5, and works cited there.

<sup>186</sup> Brown, *Bloodfeud in Scotland*, 2; Muir, *Mad Blood Sturring*, 293, n. 10.

<sup>187</sup> White, 'Feuding and Peacemaking', 258-60; Miller, 'Choosing the Avenger', 163-4, n. 17.

Luna's memory was revived because it chimed in with widespread resentment of Giacomo Perollo's 'tyranny'; and Micheletto Sforza was able to take his revenge on Ottobuono Terzi because his employer, Niccolò d'Este, wanted Terzi removed. In such cases, vendettas were constructed in hindsight when such memories were reactivated. This is not to deny, of course, that many feuds (*inimicizie, guerre*) were waged consciously by their participants, but it stresses that it was conditions of political and territorial competition that allowed past injuries to be remembered and avenged. 'The recovery and manipulation of historical memory', Raggio found in Liguria, 'takes place in a context of strong local conflict, and it is one local faction that appropriates it'.<sup>188</sup> It was for this reason that vendetta, according to Machiavelli, was more intense in republics, because political competition there was more fierce. Republics were lands of competing memories; in despotisms such struggle had long been settled in favour of the prince.

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<sup>188</sup> Raggio, *Faide e parentele*, 62, see also 252–3