

Medici Women:
The Making of a Dynasty
in Grand Ducal Tuscany

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BETWEEN DYNASTIC STRATEGIES AND CIVIC MYTH: ANNA MARIA LUISA DE' MEDICI AND FLORENCE AS THE NEW ATHENS

MARCELLO VERGA

In recent years, the traditional image of "crisis" and "decline" in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Tuscany, of a political ineptitude that condemned the last Medici grand dukes to an irreversible end that culminated in the dynasty's inability to produce an heir, has been increasingly challenged. According to the decline thesis, the end of the Medici dynasty signalled a shift in the history of Tuscany from political, economic, social, cultural, and even biological decay under the last of the Medici to a fresh dynamism in all areas of public and dynastic life brought about by the new Lorraine-Habsburg dynasty installed as rulers of the grand duchy.¹ More recently, however, a number of scholars of Medici political and institutional history have begun to revise this narrative by approaching the history of early modern Tuscany and the Medici dynasty from new perspectives and by making use of different methodological approaches.² A particularly fruitful avenue has emerged by taking a fresh look at the role of the Medici princesses in the development of the state and the court. This recent historiography has generated new interest in the life of the last Medici princess, the Electress Palatine Anna Maria Luisa (Fig. 9), and transformed the harsh judgments about her that have endured since the end of the eighteenth century.³

¹ The books on the Medici grand duchy and on the Lorraine regency by Furio Diaz, persist in this historiographical interpretation. See his *Il Granducato di Toscana and I Lorena in Toscana*.

² See for example Waquet, *Toscane sous les derniers Médicis* and the essays in Angiolini et al., *La Toscana di Cosimo III*, especially that of Fasano Guarini's "Lo Stato di Cosimo III."

³ In addition to the previously mentioned essays in Angiolini, see Bellinazzi and Coni, eds., *La corte di Toscana*; Bertelli and Pasta, *Vivere a Pitti*, and Calvi and Spinelli, eds., *La corte di Toscana*. The latter two volumes are part of the series "Il ritorno delle donne," whose last section

Perceptions about Anna Maria Luisa have long been influenced by the opinions of Riguccio Galluzzi, the official historian of Peter Leopold of Lorraine. In the conclusion of his *History of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany under the Rule of the House of Medici*, written in the 1770s and early 1780s, Galluzzi pronounced: "[The Palatine princess] after having experienced an infinite number of misfortunes in her marriage negotiations, not having had children with the Elector, humiliated by other [European] Powers, more neglected than pitied, this 'last gasp' of the family found herself ultimately deprived of the succession to the ducal title by her superiors."⁴ This sentiment and even some of its words are echoed by other historians and find their way into their works as late as the mid-twentieth century. In the 1958 edition of *The Last Medici*, for example, Harold Acton writes of Anna Maria Luisa that she was "the pathetic last descendant of the Medici family," "a ghost on sufferance," who "had been forced to drink deep of every dishonour, but the bitter cup had left her with a passion for punctilio."⁵

In contrast to Galluzzi and to most historians until recently, Ludovico Antonio Muratori, writing around the time of the electress' last years, offered an assessment that gave wide recognition to her contributions. In his *Annali d'Italia*, he remembered her as a "princess of great humanity and wisdom."⁶ These qualities, he observed, led the new grand duke, Francis Stephen of Lorraine, "to recognize her considerable ability in governmental matters after the death of Gian Gastone, pressing him to keep this princess as a friend."⁷

⁴ "[La principessa palatina] dopo aver provato infinite disavventure nei suoi trattati matrimoniali, senza aver figli dall'Elettore, mortificata nell'orgoglio data tutte le Potenze, più negletta che compianta, ridotta l'ultimo fiato della Famiglia si trovò finalmente priva della successione dei suoi maggiori." Galluzzi, *Istoria del Granducato*, book 9, ch. 10: 194-195. On the antimedicean "prejudice" that colors Galluzzi's *Istoria*, see Gori Pasta, "Riguccio Galluzzi, Jacopo" and Pult Quaglia, "Riguccio Galluzzi."

⁵ Acton, *The Last Medici*, 23-24, 309.

⁶ "Principessa di gran Pietà e Saviezza." Muratori, *Annali*, 12: 305.

⁷ "Alla vedova elettrice fu esibito molto di autorità nel governo, premendo al novello gran duca [Francesco Stefano di Lorena] di tenersi amica questa principessa, donna tanto ricca e di mirabil talento e savezza." Muratori, *Annali*, 12: 233. A rather different and dismissive account is rendered by Acton, who noted that Anna Maria Luisa "was offered the position of Regent [by the new Lorraine dynasty], and although she haughtily declined it, was left in undisturbed occupation of her apartments at the Pitti. The founders of the new dynasty had nothing to fear from her." Acton, *The Last Medici*, 308.

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Muratori's more balanced appraisal of the electress compared to Galluzzi's gains significance if viewed in the context of the political and cultural conjunctures of the eighteenth century. In the first years of the Lorraine's control of Florence, which were full of conflicts and tensions, the changing vagaries affecting the life of the electress send us back to the tangle of diplomatic negotiations, agreements signed and then abruptly cancelled, and numerous historical and juridical claims that comprised the history of the Medici succession. Worth studying is the role that Anna Maria Luisa knew to perform from 1717 on at the Florentine court, and in the difficult relationships first with Don Carlos of Bourbon, and then with Francis Stephen of Lorraine — the two princes chosen for the Medici succession, the first in 1731 and the second in 1737.⁸

In particular, this essay will examine the opinions about the electress and the Medici dynasty that developed in Florence during the early years of Lorraine domination, and prior to the princess's death on 18 February 1743. It will not concentrate greatly on the unkind judgments expressed by Lorraine ministers, who were obviously defending the interests of their master, the new Lorraine grand duke, against the claims of the electress and her family. Rather, it will focus on some of the views about the electress and the Medici dynasty that emerged in Florence in the first four decades of the eighteenth century as well as on the context of the political and cultural strands that came together to produce these views. This essay, however, will consider above all the actions and expectations of Anna Maria Luisa, the electress palatine, in developing a strategy for the survival of the Medici name and its artistic legacy, as well as its reputation in historical memory. To do this, one

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little interest in his wife.⁹ The prospect of the extinction of the Medici line and the succession question attracted the attention of the European powers, in particular the Habsburgs and the Bourbons. Within the inner circle of the grand duchy and its government as well, there was discussion about the political and institutional prospects of the Medici principality. At the start of the eighteenth century, the Florentine patriciate, through some of its most eminent spokesmen — Carlo Rinuccini, Neri Corsini, and Federico de' Ricci — had taken a position in favour of the restoration of the Florentine republican oligarchy by reworking into a philo-aristocratic perspective the story of the affirmation of the Medici principality, originally written in the sixteenth century. A goodly portion of the governing circles and of cultivated opinion believed that the origin and institutional legitimacy of the principality resided in its acceptance and consensus about it by the “*paese*,” the country, and principally by those families from the Florentine oligarchy that had accepted the Medici principality without renouncing their own institutional, social and political rights.¹⁰ But this narrative was now read and used from a different perspective, one heavily influenced by a contractual vision of the sovereign power and an anti-despotic, republican spirit. This perspective permeated the politics and ideals of large parts of the Florentine government throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. Moreover, because the question of the Medici succession became intertwined with the ongoing discussions between the Bourbons and the Habsburgs, the spread of these political views reinforced all the more a fierce sense of autonomy and institutional independence on the part of the Florentine patriciate against any possible interference by the European powers.¹¹

⁹ For recent reassessments of Gian Gastone, see Paoli, “Gian Gastone I de’ Medici”; also see Giovan Battista de’ Medici, “Due matrimoni sbagliati,” 18; Urbani, “Il Principe nelle reti,” 100–114; Bruschi, *Giuliano Dami*; Bietti, ed., Gian Gastone. While noting Gian Gastone’s weaknesses, including his illnesses, lack of energy, and susceptibility to certain favorites, these works also point out that much of the negative historiography about him began during the Lorraine dynasty and continued through the risorgimento, when negative anti-Medicean rumors were taken as facts and Gian Gastone’s initiatives to lower oppressive taxes, implement more liberal policies towards the Jews, reduce clerical privileges and influence, prohibit public executions, and maintain a modicum of independence for Tuscany, albeit under a different dynasty, were downplayed.

¹⁰ Diaz, “L’idea di una nuova elite.”

¹¹ See Verga, *Da “cittadini” a “nobili.”* 19–21; Rosa, *Dispotismo e libertà*; Diaz, “L’idea repubblicana nel settecento”; Venturi, *Settecento riformatore*.

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At the same time, the Habsburgs asserted their claim to absorb the Medici states into their empire. Already settled on the peninsula and in possession of the Milanese territories, the kingdom of Naples, and Sardinia, they now tried to delegitimize Medici claims to the grand duchy of Tuscany and to advance their own by arguing that the installation of Alessandro, the first Medici duke, had been the work of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. In 1712, as these pressures were increasing, Cosimo III, who earlier had shown an interest in re-establishing an oligarchic/republican regime,¹² aligned himself in favour of the succession of his daughter, the Electress Palatine Anna Maria Luisa. The grand duke's choice was not viewed as provocative by the governing circles of Florence, but was viewed instead as necessary to defend the political and institutional autonomy of the Tuscan state.¹³ By supporting Princess Anna Maria Luisa's claim, the Florentine patriciate acknowledged that the legitimacy of such a decision resided both in the Grand Duke Cosimo III and in the explicit and public approval of the Florentine Senate. In a letter to the Senate in 1713, Cosimo III himself asked the senators to ratify his decision and jointly approve an act that annulled "all of the laws and constitutions" that opposed female succession. Thus, the grand duke acknowledged the senate's power as well as the self-appointed role of the Florentine oligarchy as the jealous interpreter of constitutional legitimacy. By now the oligarchy was ready to accept the succession of the princess palatine in exchange for guarantees of the grand duchy's autonomy and independence, as well as the continuity of its political and institutional organization.¹⁴

In October 1717, Anna Maria Luisa, herself without heirs, returned to Florence from Düsseldorf after the death of her husband, the Elector Palatine, the year before. Confident in the role her father assigned to her in

court with some of the most important members of the grand ducal government. She "chose as her chamberlain monsignor Bartolomeo Corsini, for her chief gentleman, monsignor Neri Guadagni, for her cup-bearer, the count Francesco Maria dei Bardi, for her salaried gentleman of the chamber, signor Andrea Franceschi, for mistress of the chamber the lady Della Gherardesca Gerini; she chose for mistress of the ladies (matrona delle dame) the lady Giulia Martelli, and signor Carlo Rinuccini was assigned the responsibility he always had to preside over her office (segreteria)."¹⁶ In addition, "she held court, received the court ladies twice a week and established all according to Palatinate etiquette. She distributed alms to the monasteries and needy families, and organised missions to improve Catholic instruction."¹⁷

But the death of Grand Duke Cosimo III in 1723 brought an end to the electress's role at the Tuscan court. The new grand duke, Cosimo's son, Gian Gastone, had little affection for his sister. Then, in 1731, overriding Cosimo's wishes, the great powers of Europe, long aware that Gian Gastone would not have a successor, agreed among themselves that Don Carlos, the Infante of Spain, would succeed the Medici dynasty as grand duke of Tuscany.

Despite this setback, the electress obtained from Don Carlos a significant number of privileges and prerogatives based on a "family pact" signed in Florence in July 1731, which essentially upheld the existing political and institutional order. This pact established that Don Carlos would assume the title of grand duke, but also, at the insistence of Gian Gastone, included clauses that the Bourbons would make every effort to respect "the constitution of Tuscany in economic, civil and jurisdictional matters," and to maintain "all

correspondents for the years 1717-1720. Caterina dell'Anno's "L'ultima Medici" offers a preliminary analysis of this correspondence. See also Verga, "Pitti e l'estinzione."

¹⁶ "L'Elettrice Palatina scelse come suo maestro di camera monsignor Bartolomeo Corsini, per suo primo gentiluomo monsignor Neri Guadagni, per suo coppiere il conte Francesco Maria dei Bardi, per gentiluomo di camera stipendiato il signor Andrea Franceschi, per maestra di camera la signora Della Gherardesca Gerini; scelse per matrona delle dame la signora Giulia Martelli e al signor Carlo Rinuccini fu consegnata la cura che sempre esercitò di presenziare alla sua segreteria." ASF, MdP 2713, *Memorie della Serenissima Anna Maria Luisa Principessa di Toscana Elettrice Palatina del Reno*, ins. 2.

¹⁷ "dava udienze, riceveva due volte alla settimana le dame e stabilì tutte le etichette della famiglia palatina. Faceva diverse elemosine ai monasteri, alle famiglie bisognose e dispose alcune missioni per migliorare l'istruzione dei cattolici." In ASF, MdP 2713, *Memorie*, ins. 2.

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rights, privileges and prerogatives due to the city of Florence."¹⁸ The pact also added "that she [the electress] would assume and retain the title of grand duchess during her lifetime, with all the honours and prerogatives that the other grand duchesses have had and enjoyed, and especially that of being maintained decorously, along with her court, at public expense"; that "to avoid all confusion and the public turbulence that one fears might occur" in the interim between the grand duke's death and the arrival of Don Carlos in Tuscany, if "Her Electoral Highness survives [the grand duke] she could and should immediately take and assume with the title of Regent and in the name of his Most Serene Infante, by then grand duke, the absolute administration of government and retain it until his arrival in the above named states." The pact also asserted that if Gian Gastone died before Don Carlos had reached the age of eighteen, the electress "should have the title of regent and tutor," and similarly, she should have the title on all those occasions when the prince, even if above the age of eighteen, were to be absent from Tuscany.¹⁹

Because Gian Gastone thought that "it would not seem opportune that she [the electress] be left with the status of a private person with her only honour being the title of grand duchess" and that "neither would it be conducive to the good of the state that a youthful and foreign sovereign, not well informed about our constitution, our customs, and even less about the merits and shortcomings of his subjects, should not have someone to assist and advise him so that the people might be governed with equity and justice,"²⁰

¹⁸ "sarà mantenuta la costituzione del Governo della Toscana nell'economico, civile e giurisdizionale, conservato ogni diritto, privilegio, e prerogativa alla città di Firenze." ASF, MdP 2713, *Memorie*, ins. 2.

¹⁹ "che debba ella assumere e ritenere sua vita durante il titolo di granduchessa, con tutti gli onori e prerogative che anno avuto e goduto le altre granduchesse, e specialmente quella di essere decorosamente mantenuta colla sua corte a pubbliche spese [...] per

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the pact of 1731 stipulated that "in addition to intervening in all councils of State, of Mercy, and of Justice she should also have the power to bestow in the name of the serene Infante, having become Grand Duke, all civil and economic posts, all ecclesiastical benefices of the house of the Medici and of the state, and should also have supervision of all charitable institutions and of the studio of Pisa."²¹

The agreement between the grand duke and the great powers also provided for Anna Maria Luisa's ability to maintain a level of material comfort and control over her properties that would be in keeping with her status:

After the death of the current ruler the Most Serene Grand Duke [Gian Gastone], there should not at any time and for any reason be the least impediment to the Most Serene Electress' ability to administer by herself and enjoy both the interest and non interest-bearing income of the entire patrimony of her lineage (Casa) [...] and that no contestations or impediments be put on the natural right to which she is entitled, to be able to dispose in life and in death of all the rich furnishings, silver, gold, and jewels that are her property, and of refined and precious movable goods, such as statues, paintings, medallions, and other rare objects and of jewels, gold, and silver that may be found in the galleries, guardaroba, and grand ducal palaces at the time of His Serene Highness's death.²²

²¹ "oltre a dover intervenire in tutti i consigli di Stato, di Grazia e Giustizia, abbia pure il potere di conferire in nome del serenissimo Infante, divenuto Gran Duca, tutti gli impieghi civili et economici, tutti i benefici ecclesiastici di ius patronato della Casa e dello Stato ed abbia pure la soprintendenza dei luoghi pii e dello studio pisano. ASF, MdP 2713, *Memorie*, ins. 2.

²² "Che dopo la morte del Ser.mo Gran Duca regnante non sia mai in alcun tempo né per qualunque causa dato il minimo impedimento alla Ser.ma Elettrice di amministrare da se stessa e godere tutto lo stabile fruttifero e non fruttifero dell'intero patrimonio della sua Casa [...] e che non gli sia impugnata né impedita a facoltà naturale che gli compete di poter disporre in vita e in morte di tutte le ricche suppellettili, degli argenti, ori e gioie di sua proprietà, come ancora del mobile erudito e prezioso di statue, pitture, medaglie e altre rarità e delle gioie, ori e argenti che alla morte di S.A.R. si troveranno nelle gallerie, guardaroba e palazzi del granduca." ASF, MdP 2713, *Memorie*, ins. 2. These stipulations were ratified in the pact.

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With this pact, Gian Gastone assured the Electress of "her interests, her dignity and her decorum." In return, having ceded "her sovereignty rights, which were her due over this state," the electress made every effort to place all of her rights and possessions at the disposal of the new grand duke.²³

All of these privileges and protections, however, were upended when in 1735, when Don Carlos was crowned King of Naples and Sicily, which he had conquered the previous year, while Duke Francis Stephen of Lorraine, in compensation for the loss of his own duchy to the king of France, was designated the successor to Grand Duke Gian Gastone.²⁴ Having arrived in Florence a few months after the latter's death in 1737, Francis Stephen, by now married to Maria Theresa of Austria, soon provided ample proof of the "padrone" from Lorraine's determination to pay no heed to the complex equilibrium over which the Medici principality had governed for nearly two centuries.

The agreements made in 1737 between the electress and the new Lorraine ruler were therefore considerably different than the earlier ones, above all after the arrival in Florence of Count Emmanuel Nay de Richecourt. Already in January 1737, when Gian Gastone was still alive, the arrival of an imperial army and of Marc de Beauvau, prince of Craon, who had been sent by Francis Stephen of Lorraine, hardly augured well for the electress and the Florentine patriciate. In fact, Francis Stephen hastened to assert his "indubitable and incontestable [...] right to all and each of the states and fiefdoms along with their belongings and secondary holdings [...] of the Most Serene Grand Duke of Tuscany Giovanni Gastone."²⁵ The attitude of Count Emmanuel de Richecourt, a close ally of the new grand duke, clearly demonstrated the change. His evaluation of the condition of government in Tuscany, formulated in a dispatch of 10 September 1737, called for drastic measures:

²¹ "oltre a dover intervenire in tutti i consigli di Stato, di Grazia e Giustizia, abbia pure il potere di conferire in nome del serenissimo Infante di Lorena, Granduca di Toscana, tutti i posti di

them clearly. Each type of revenue is administered by three or four different tribunals, all of which profit from this; the expenses are all paid in the same way: there is no one here who has a clearly defined set of tasks. [...] The only way to loosen this knot, which one can call Gordian, is to cut it and create a new system: but this can only be done with time, work and patience.²⁶

This assessment not only reveals the impatience and even prejudice with which the Lorraine rulers viewed the political and institutional structures of the Medici principality, but also, above all, the desire to move towards a substantial dismantling of the structure of the grand duchy.

The arrival of Richecourt in Florence also coincided with an unexpected shift in attitude regarding the rights and prerogatives of the electress. The letters from the prince of Craon to the new grand duke between July and August of 1737 discuss the acts of deference shown to the electress and the care with which he cultivated a good relationship with her; but in a dispatch of 3 September, just after the arrival in Florence of the hard-driving count of Richecourt, he reported that in his relationship with the electress, it might be necessary to resort to a bit more "autorité."²⁷ A few weeks later, Craon delivered to the electress a letter in which the grand duke offered her the regency of Tuscany but which placed precise and considerable limits on any real governing authority she might have. Despite this harsh turn of events,

²⁶ "Le gouvernement de ce pays est un cahos presque impossible à débrouiller, c'est un mélange d'aristocratie, de démocratie et de monarchie. Il semble que l'on a pris plaisir à entremesler les affaires de façon qu'on ne puisse jamais les voir au clair. Chaque sorte de revenu est régi par trois ou quatre tribunaux, qui y participent, les dépenses se payent de la même façon, il n'y en a aucune qui ait une assignation simple ny égale à la dépense [...] Le seul expédient pour désmeler ce noeud qu'on peut appeler gordien, sera de le couper et de prendre un nouveau système; mais cela ne peut se faire qu'avec du temps, du travail et de la patience." ASF, Reggenza 12, fols. 7-22, dispatch of Richecourt to the grand duke, 10 September 1737, now published in its entirety in Clercq, *François Etienne de Lorraine*, 161-163. For a discussion of the Lorraine dynasty's efforts to reform the government and laws of Tuscany in subsequent decades and the obstacles encountered, see Verga, "La Reggenza Lorenese."

²⁷ The letters sent by Craon to the grand duke in July and August of 1737 in which he insists on the importance of having good relations with the Electress can be found in ASF, *Miscellanea Medicea* (henceforth MM) 602.

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them clearly. Each type of revenue is administered by three or four different tribunals, all of which profit from this; the expenses are all paid in the same way: there is no one here who has a clearly defined set of tasks. [...] The only way to loosen this knot, which one can call Gordian, is to cut it and create a new system: but this can only be done with time, work and patience.²⁶

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the princess, bowing to the inevitable, accepted the terms, and according to a letter from Craon to the grand duke, "gave no sign of being upset."²⁸

The above transfer of authority was supplemented on 31 October with what has come to be known as the Family Pact of 1737. On the face of it, this pact was nothing more than an agreement between the Electress Palatine Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici and the new grand duke, Francis Stephen of Lorraine, regarding the transfer of patrimony from one dynastic family to another. Yet, the conditions set by the electress and accepted by the new grand duke would have important and long-lasting repercussions for Florence as well as for the image of the Medici, and Anna Maria Luisa in particular, in historical memory. As noted in the previous essay, the pact specified that the electress transferred ownership of the Medici grand duke's artistic patrimony, furniture, and rare objects to the Lorraine grand duke and his successors on condition that they would preserve them "for the ornament of the State, and for the utility of the Public, and to attract the curiosity of Foreigners, [and] that nothing from these be transported or removed from the Capital or the State of the Grand Duchy."²⁹

In her will of 1739, the princess again reiterated these conditions when she extended them to parts of her jewelry collection:

Apart from the jewelry left in legacies, those found in her inheritance [...] shall be inventoried and added to the jewelry belonging to her family and those belonging to the State, so that they may

²⁸ The Electress "gave no sign of being upset," ("ne donna aucune marque d'alteration"). Letter from the prince of Craon to Grand Duke Francis Stephen, ASE, MM 602, 19 September 1737. In the same letter Craon seems to agree with the assertion that Richecourt

²⁹ "Le gouvernement de ce pays est un cahos presque impossible à débrouiller, c'est un mélange d'aristocratie, de démocratie et de monarchie. Il semble que l'on a tout essayé

adorn the Most Serene Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses of Tuscany, and these must be kept in this city of Florence along with the statues, paintings, medals and many other singular rarities found among the inheritance of the Electress Palatine's ruling family.³⁰

The family pact did not bind the Medici possessions to the state, but rather obligated the Lorraine grand duke and his dynastic successors to pay off the Medici debt, to "maintain the credit of the public funds" and "to preserve for always within Florence and the state the most precious furnishings collected by past sovereigns so that they will continue to adorn it and attract the curiosity of foreigners."³¹

This act, which played a central role in making Florence the city of the Uffizi and of the Palatine Gallery, marks the end of the public life of the Princess Anna Maria Luisa. It is also marks the beginning of the "myth" of the Electress Palatine, which became part of the rhetorical construction of Florence as a city of art and of museums.³²

For an understanding of how and when these notions developed, it behooves us to begin by turning to a book of memoirs about Anna Maria Luisa, princess of Tuscany and electress palatine, composed by an anonymous author in the summer of 1743, just months after her death. The book offers a careful reconstruction of the complicated events surrounding the ducal succession and the role of the electress in the rocky shoals of the negotiations with Francis Stephen.³³ As the author well recalled, the princess was supposed to renounce all rights of succession to the wealth of the Medici upon her marriage to the Elector Palatine. Soon thereafter, the Holy Roman Emperor denied her the right to govern the Medici state after the death of the last male representative of the Medici dynasty — a right that had been recognized in

³⁰ "le gioie che si troveranno nella di lei eredità, detratte quelle lasciate per legato [...], se ne faccia inventario e si uniscano alle gioie provenienti dalla sua famiglia e che si chiameranno dello Stato, ad effetto che l'uso di esse deva servire per ornamento dei Serenissimi Granduchi e Granduchesse regnanti in Toscana, per dovere tutte e sempre e in perpetuo conservarsi in questa città di Firenze, insieme con tutte le statue, pitture, medaglie e tante altre rarità singolari, ritrovate nell'eredità della famiglia regnante dell'Elettrice Palatina." ASE, Trattati Internazionali 62, ins. 1, Testament of 5 April 1739, fols. 30–31.

³¹ ASE, Trattati internazionali 56, ins. 6, Article IV.

³² See Verga, "Retoriche cittadine e storie della città."

³³ ASE, MdP 2713, *Memorie*, ins. 2.

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1713 by an act of Grand Duke Cosimo III and by the Florentine Senate.³⁴ Upon her return to Florence the princess, by now the Widow Palatine, had to accept a minor role at the Florentine court, not to say anything about her relations with and conditions under the new Lorraine dynasty. In his reconstruction of events, the author of the *Memorie* emphasized succinctly the reasons for this rapid reversal of the princess's destiny:

No family pact or treaty having been made [...] because given how the current situation turned out, this sovereign saw no possibility of being able to conclude one [...] resembling the model of the earlier agreement with Spain, as our princes desired, the Electress found herself [...] in the unhappy situation of needing to accommodate and organize matters in a manner greatly disadvantageous to herself.³⁵

The book emphasized the value of sacrifice imposed upon the princess and the subjects of the grand duchy by the balance-of-power politics of the great states of the time. In the *Memorie*'s narrative reconstruction of her life, the princess' sacrifice of her interests and her hereditary rights "for the good of the Peace," assumed a central role: "In this situation, the Electress insisted on little for herself and, generously accepting the sparse conditions offered to her, she concerned herself only with the future good of Tuscany, renouncing the private wealth due to her and all of the precious family possessions/furnishings."³⁶

³⁴ *Raggiungimento del negozio fatto dal Senato Fiorentino per l'ammasciamento della Ser.*

In the years immediately following her death, the Florentine celebrations in honour of the electress and her virtues emphasised the *sacrificio dei suoi interessi*, a theme that took on the value of Christian virtue, as well as an appreciation of her feminine resignation to a personal destiny that was beyond her control in the face of political changes that her dynasty and her country could only observe but not change. The memory of the Electress Palatine seems to have attached itself to that feminine, Christian image of self-sacrifice and acceptance of a destiny that relegated her to the margins of the political scene. The princess seemed to reinforce this image with her voluntary retirement to the convent of the Quiete.

On reading these accounts it seems that the young and brilliant princess who during her years of residence at Düsseldorf had corresponded with her uncle, the cardinal Francesco, sending him letters that were rich in acute political reflections and witty and worldly observations, later assumed the role of a princess witnessing the collapse of the House of Medici with Christian humility.³⁷ The electress palatine who knew how to shine at the elector's court; the haughty princess who had imposed severe ceremony and a rigid etiquette upon her return to the Florentine court and who had managed, to her own benefit, her relations with the other widow of the Pitti Palace, the Princess Violante of Bavaria; the avid collector of jewels, who was at the same time, a woman of great and sincere religious devotion,³⁸ became in her final years a witness to the end of her dynasty and of its system of government, an impotent guardian of its traditions and customs, alone in the defense of its rights and in the construction of the family mausoleum. Truth be told, this was a double mausoleum: a real one, the Medici chapel, made of stone, and another, ideal one, made up of the collections of art and family jewels that the princess bequeathed to the duke of Lorraine in the pact of 1737, on condition that these should never leave Florence.

sacrifizio che ella doveva fare con tante cessioni del ricco privato patrimonio e di tutte le inestimabili suppellettili della sua famiglia. ASE, MdP 2713, *Memorie*, ins. 2.

³⁷ Of great interest, for example, are the Electress' letters of 1701, in which her concerns about the tense international situation at the start of the War of the Spanish Succession appear alongside references to common interests in flowers, vegetables, and gossip about court life. ASE, MdP 5853. On the Electress' letters from Düsseldorf, see Kühn Steinhausen, "Der Briefwechsel" and her brief profile of the Electress, *Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici*.

³⁸ ASE, MM 1, ins. 3 contains dozens of printed and manuscript prayers, sermons, and holy pictures reproduced on cards, which were collected by Anna Maria Luisa.

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That this second mausoleum became the true monument to Medicean Florence and the spur for the city's current glorification of the princess and, more generally, of the Medici dynasty could not have been foreseen. Due to cultural and social processes that transcend the story of Florence itself, in subsequent centuries this cultural and civic monument has taken on a life of its own, beyond the plans and desires of the electress.

One social element in the civic construction of the myth is the princess's unending effort to protect the art collections and more generally the artistic patrimony of her dynasty and the grand duchy. In an undated letter, probably written in September 1737, the electress urged the Marquis Carlo Rinuccini, a member of the new Lorraine government, to make sure that the Count of Richécourt did not hang paintings from the collections of the dukes of Lorraine and Bar over the frescoes in the halls of the Palazzo Vecchio.³⁹ The Electress knew well that "there was little hope for courtesy from these culturally starved people."⁴⁰ With aristocratic sharpness, she wrote to Rinuccini towards the end of 1737, "the Lorrainians are not capable of preserving what they brought, and will ruin what they have found."⁴¹ This conviction undoubtedly raised her concerns about the safety of the Medici art collections as well as the Medici jewels and precious objects. In another letter she wrote: "I spoke with Richécourt about the painted rooms, which are inappropriate for the people who are assigned to reside in them. I said everything that decency and propriety would allow. Let's see if I managed to crack that [thick] skull."⁴² The electress was not only concerned about safeguarding her art collections and above all the jewels and other precious objects, but also about the intricate issues surrounding the management of the Medici dynasty's large landed patrimony.⁴³

³⁹ On the transfer to Florence of part of the artistic and scientific collections of the

These concerns were exacerbated because the electress showed little faith in the Lorraine ministers during the negotiations over the family accord, which was supposed to be signed in Vienna at the end September 1737. Writing to Rinuccini shortly before then, she noted, "I hear that Richecourt is always doing battle."⁴⁴ Speaking of a personal encounter with him, she remarked sarcastically, "Richecourt came to see me; as usual, he spoke a great deal and is always right."⁴⁵

As already mentioned, with the Family Pact signed in Vienna on 31 October 1737 and with her will of April 1739, the electress would impose the obligation that the Medici dynasty's art collections and jewels not be removed from Florence and other parts of the state.⁴⁶ The key words of these documents are clear, and it is upon them, though slowly and with some difficulty, that the city gradually built the civic myth of the princess to whom Florence owes the preservation of the vast artistic patrimony of the Medici for use of the public in the modern sense of the term.⁴⁷ Indeed, the establishment of a museum open to the public, on the model that Grand Duke Peter Leopold would build three decades after the death of Anna Maria Luisa, was not a concept she harboured, nor was it an element present in the culture of her time. Quite the contrary, it is clear from clauses in her 1739 will, in which she created a trust to benefit a future blood relative of the Medici grand ducal family, that the electress was deeply attached to the values of dynastic continuity⁴⁸ as well as to safeguarding the works of art, jewels, and relics that made

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⁴⁴ "sento che il Richecourt è sempre in battaglia." Undated letter but probably from the summer of 1737. ASE, MdP 6346.

⁴⁵ "Fu da me Richecourt, che al solito parlò molto et à sempre ragione lui." ASE, MdP 6346, fol. 144. This tart observation undermines the idea advanced by some later historians that "the founders of the new dynasty [...] created a good impression by their tactful obsequiousness" towards the electress. See Acton, *The Last Medici*, 308.

⁴⁶ The text of the pact and the will have been published many times. The Italian translation of the pact can be found in ASE, Trattati internazionali 56/6 and the electress' will is in ASE, Trattati internazionali 62/1.

⁴⁷ On the slowness that characterised the project to build a monument to Anna Maria Luisa from 1946 to the present, see Alberto Bruschi's introduction to Cascin, *Anna Maria Luisa de' Medici*.

⁴⁸ The 1739 will created a trust (*fideicommissum primogeniale*) consisting of 300 shares in the government's salt fund (*Monte del Sale*) in favor of a secular male agnate

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up the Medici patrimony and that linked Florence and other Tuscan cities to the memory of the family's dynasty.⁴⁹

To read Anna Maria Luisa's legacies in her will is to appreciate the sheer number of Florentine patricians who crowded around her at court⁵⁰ and the many cash gifts she made to her staff. Also notable are the numerous charitable bequests she made to the poor of all of the state's dioceses, as well as donations to churches and other charitable institutions. These bequests, as Alessandra Contini has noted,⁵¹ accomplished a sort of symbolic redistribution of the family wealth among the institutions and subjects of the state. Operating on another level, however, were the minute dispositions with which the princess expressed her testamentary will to complete the construction of the Medici chapels and to safeguard the preservation of her family's jewels, relics, and artistic patrimony in Florence. These reveal her intent to contribute to the consolidation of the myth of the independence and autonomy of the Tuscan government — of *libertas Florentinae* — that was already being constructed in the 1720s around the collections of Florentine art and the city's history.⁵²

The issue of the defense of Florentine "liberty," which had been a political trope of Medici diplomacy against the ambitions of larger European powers to dispose of the Medici state at their pleasure, was transformed in the first

who the chief magistracy, the Magistrato Supremo, would declare to be the closest relative to the grand ducal line of the Medici family. Anna Maria Luisa's will then asked the grand duke to grant this presumed heir "a priorate by the duke's grace or a commenda in the Military Order of Santo Stefano, with a decent income and a respectable position in his court or in some public ministry. [...] and in sum, to grant him in all respects those courtesies that could most contribute to benefit and distinguish him in his person and family." ASF, Trattati internazionali 62/1.

⁴⁹ The jewels were sold after Anna Maria Luisa's death. In a letter of 2 May 1750 to the grand duke Francis Stephen, Richecourt gave an account of the difficulties he had in following the order he had received "to sell without being very noticed (*de vantage sans*

half of the eighteenth century into a reflection on the origins and constitution of a political society disposed to find in the celebration of its Etruscan past, in the linguistic primacy of the Tuscan language, and even in the history of the passage from republic to principality strong motives to support the autonomy of the state. It was in this context that Florentines understood many of the significant cultural events of the first part of the century. The publication in 1723–1724, a century after its author's death, of Thomas Dempster's *De Etruria regali*, which was the first detailed study of Etruscan civilization;⁵³ the launching of Etruscan studies at Cortona with the founding of the *Accademia Etrusca* in 1727;⁵⁴ the publication of the fourth edition of the *Accademia della Crusca's Vocabolario*;⁵⁵ the first printing, in 1721, of Benedetto Varchi's sixteenth-century *Storia fiorentina*;⁵⁶ and the writing in mid-eighteenth century of the *Saggio di storia letteraria fiorentina* by the Florentine patrician Giovan Battista Nelli⁵⁷ — all represent the careful selection and use on the part of the grand duchy's ruling class of certain motifs of Florentine history and culture for deployment in the contemporary historical and juridical debates that accompanied the difficult vicissitudes of the Medici succession.⁵⁸

It was, however, with the reconstruction of artistic traditions and the formation of rich collections of *objets d'art* that we see the emergence of one of the most effective motives for celebrating the good governance of the Medici and the allegedly historical alliance between the dynasty and the Florentine patriciate. In this way the collections of art and precious objects, and more generally the attention paid to art, came to represent the most important bond between the Medici and the patriciate: this was an instrumental celebration on the part of the patriciate of fealty to the Medici — an assertion, however, that served, above all, to reclaim their role in government against the contentions of the new Lorraine dynasty. The Medici collections and those of the Florentine noble families represented more than simply the testimony

⁵³ See Leighton and Castelino, "Thomas Dempster and Ancient Etruria."

⁵⁴ Barocchi and Gallo, eds., *L'Accademia Etrusca*.

⁵⁵ On the fourth edition of the *Vocabolario*, see Vitale, "La IV edizione del Vocabolario della Crusca" and Parodi, *Quattro secoli di Crusca*. For an account of these events by the vicesecretary of the Crusca, see Alamanni, "Notizie storiche della quarta edizione."

⁵⁶ Varchi's *Storia Fiorentina*, commissioned by Cosimo I in the sixteenth century, was first published in a printed edition in 1721.

⁵⁷ Nelli, *Saggio di storia letteraria fiorentina*.

⁵⁸ For a more detailed discussion, see Verga, "La Cultura del Settecento," 125–152.

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half of the eighteenth century into a reflection on the origins and constitution of a political society disposed to find in the celebration of its Etruscan past, in the linguistic primacy of the Tuscan language, and even in the history of the passage from republic to principality strong motives to support the autonomy of the state. It was in this context that Florentines understood many of the significant cultural events of the first part of the century. The publication in 1723–1724, a century after its author's death, of Thomas Dempster's *De Etruria regali*, which was the first detailed study of Etruscan civilization,⁵³ the launching of Etruscan studies at Cortona with the founding of the Accademia Etrusca in 1727,⁵⁴ the publication of the fourth edition of the Accademia della Crusca's *Vocabolario*,⁵⁵ the first printing, in 1721, of Benedetto Varchi's sixteenth-century *Storia fiorentina*,⁵⁶ and the writing in mid-eighteenth century of the *Saggio di storia letteraria fiorentina* by the Florentine patrician Giovan Battista Nelli,⁵⁷ — all represent the careful selection and use on the part of the grand duchy's ruling class of certain motifs of Florentine history and culture for deployment in the contemporary historical and juridical debates that accompanied the difficult vicissitudes of the Medici succession.⁵⁸

It was, however, with the reconstruction of artistic traditions and the formation of rich collections of *objets d'art* that we see the emergence of one of the most effective motives for celebrating the good governance of the Medici and the allegedly historical alliance between the dynasty and the Florentine patriciate. In this way the collections of art and precious objects, and more generally the attention paid to art, came to represent the most important bond between the Medici and the patriciate: this was an instrumental celebration on the part of the patriciate of fealty to the Medici — an assertion, however, that served, above all, to reclaim their role in government against the contentions of the new Lorraine dynasty. The Medici collections and those of the Florentine noble families represented more than simply the testimony

of a shared taste and common cultural models. The collections took on a greater, clearly understood value that was cultural, political and institutional. Perhaps the most explicit evidence of this is Neri and Bartolomeo Corsini's creation, in 1728, of the Società dell'opera del Museo Fiorentino to promote the publication of *Il Museo Fiorentino* under the direction of Senator Filippo Buonarroti.⁵⁹ According to the ducal functionary and later director of the Uffizi Gallery, Giuseppe Pelli Bencivenni, the goal of the *Museo* was to document iconographically "how many precious and ancient things are held in the richest museums of their homeland, and especially in the Royal Gallery."⁶⁰ It is not surprising, then, that in the first volume, which focused on gems, amply illustrated the grand ducal collection as well as those of the Strozzi, the Niccolini, the Della Gherardesca, the Cerretani, the Buonarroti and the Ginori, all patrician families, while the second volume, also about gems, focused on the collections of additional patricians — the Gaddi, the Guadagni and the Vettori. These volumes anointed the idea, which in those years aimed to be an easily decoded political signal, that the Medici dynasty's and the patriciate's similar tastes and artistic and antiquarian interests were evidence of their deeper shared values. These volumes also extolled the wealth and cultural interests of a patriciate that through itself and its possessions wished to magnify the glory of its "homeland."⁶¹

What seems evident is that the commitment imposed by the electress palatine on the new Lorraine dynasty strengthened this sort of "museumification" of the Medici inheritance and that at the same time it forged a seemingly unbreakable bond between the Medici collections and the Florentine "public." There was almost a conscious realization that the Pact meant, not so much the extinction of a dynasty — one of the many "national" Italian dynasties that disappeared in the first decades of the eighteenth century — as much as the birth and celebration of the Medici myth.

53. Pelli, *Vocabolario*, 1:111.

54. Pelli, *Vocabolario*, 1:111. See also the records of ACE Monte di Pietà del Birallo 738.

Not surprisingly, in 1741 when the first history of the Medici dynasty was published, it was dedicated to the "Grand Princess of Tuscany," the electress palatine, who was still alive. Written by Giuseppe Maria Bianchini of Prato, and titled *Historical Discourses about the Grand Dukes of Tuscany from the Royal House of the Medici, Protectors of Letters and Fine Arts*,⁶² the book told the story of the dynasty from Cosimo I to Gian Gastone by celebrating the family's historic commitment to the protection and collection of literature and the arts rather than their political accomplishments, which were the focus of more traditional histories. "Let others," remarked the author, "write about the wars, the political manoeuvres, and kinship ties forged by this Great House with the most powerful monarchies, by means of which this house played a central role in the major affairs of Europe for two centuries; for me, it is enough to describe what I have already proposed for the Glory of these Royal Princes, who were once our sovereigns; and because it will be clear from this that they have employed their generosity in these things [the arts and letters] to whose protection those whom God the Almighty has called to power and to govern the people will always be obligated; because on them [the arts and letters] depend in gran part the well-being and the happiness of the selfsame people."⁶³ To underscore this theme, the frontispiece of the book contains a lovely engraving celebrating Florence as a "new Athens."

The reasons cited in the Family Pact of 1737 and in Anna Maria Luisa's will of 1739 for keeping the Medici cultural patrimony in Florence were to preserve it for the adornment of the state, the utility of the public, and the attraction of the curiosity of foreigners. Yet to understand these reasons fully and the motivations behind them, we must place them within the political and cultural context described above. In this framework, her commitment to the preservation of an artistic patrimony that, because of its permanent connection to the city of Florence, would benefit the city and its visitors was not

⁶² Bianchini, *Ragionamenti Istorici dei Gran Duchi di Toscana della Reale Casa de' Medici protettori delle lettere, e delle belle arti*.

⁶³ "Scrivano pure altri di questa Gran Casa le guerre, i politici Maneggi, e le Parentele, fatte eziando co' maggiori Monarchi, per le quali cose ella ha avuto per due secoli tanta parte ne' maggiori affari dell'Europa; ed a me basterà solo l'andare descrivendo quanto ho già proposto, per Gloria di questi Reali Principi, già nostri Sovrani; e perché da ciò ne risulti chiaramente, che eglino hanno impiegato la loro generosità in quelle cose, a proteggere le quali saranno sempre obbligati coloro, che da Dio, Ottimo, Massimo chiamati sono alla Signoria, ed al governo de' Popoli; poiché da esse il bene, e la felicità de' medesimi in gran parte dipende." Bianchini, *Dei Gran Duchi di Toscana*, xxiii-xxiv.

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only a magnificent and generous gesture, but was also a shrewd act that would forever unite and glorify the Florence of the Medici and the "New Athens."

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TRANSLATED BY MONICA CHOINACKA

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