

Articles

Death of a Renaissance Record-Keeper: The Murder of Tomasso da Tortona in Ferrara, 1385

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RÉSUMÉ S'ouvrant sur le récit du meurtre d'un chancelier italien aux mains d'une foule en colère à la fin du *xiv^e* siècle, cet essai explore les fondements historiques de la destruction officielle de documents à la Renaissance en allant au delà de son objet comme aboutissement logique d'un processus bureaucratique de nature purement administrative et juridique. À l'aide de l'exemple de la chancellerie de Ferrare à l'époque des princes d'Este (*circa* 1350-1500), l'article présente d'abord un régime de gestion de documents susceptible de recourir à diverses formes de corruption et d'intrigue politique donnant lieu à la création, à la falsification et à la destruction de documents officiels pour toute raison exceptée celle reliée au maintien de la « vérité publique » sur la base de principes et de procédures bien établis. D'autre part, l'essai replace la destruction des documents dans un contexte socioculturel comme partie intégrante des festivités annuelles d'un *cérémonial urbain* qui donnera lieu à la création éventuelle de trois rites publics particuliers de destruction des documents associés à d'importantes commémorations religieuses. En dressant ce vaste arrière-plan socioculturel et politique de la gestion et de l'élimination des documents, on remet en question certaines interprétations relatives à l'histoire des archives à l'époque médiévale et au début de l'ère moderne tout en cherchant à mesurer leur pertinence pour la théorie et la pratique archivistique contemporaine.

ABSTRACT Beginning with a description of the murder of an Italian record-keeper at the hands of an angry mob in the late fourteenth century, this essay explores the historical background of official records destruction during the Renaissance, looking beyond its fundamental purpose as the logical outcome of a bureaucratic process purely of administrative-judicial ethos. Using the example of the chancellery of Ferrara under the Este princes *circa* 1350-1500, it first exposes a record-keeping regime which was susceptible to all manner of bribery, corruption, and political intrigue, leading to the creation, falsification, and destruction of official documents for many reasons other than the preservation of the "public truth" following established principles and procedures. From another perspective, the essay also places records destruction in a socio-cultural context as an integral part of the annual festivities of the *ceremonial city*, which eventually witnessed the invention of three special public rituals of records destruction associated with significant religious commemorations. By establishing this broader socio-cultural and political background for record-keeping and records destruction, some recent archival interpretations of the medieval and early modern historical past are challenged, and questions are posed about their relevance to the theory and practice of contemporary archivy.

The role of the Renaissance record-keeper was occasionally a more “exciting” vocation than is normally associated with the clerical drudgery of drafting, copying, and organizing administrative papers in the dusty recesses of castle and cloister, and not without some elements of risk. Recently, while revising a dissertation I wrote a number of years ago, I came upon a reference to an event that occurred in the north Italian principality of Ferrara in the year 1385.¹ A middle power in the south central Po Valley approximately sixty miles southwest of Venice, with aspirations to a much grander regional and peninsular political profile, Ferrara was at this time ruled by the *Marchese* Niccolò II d’Este.² Like many of his fellow *signori* (lords), Prince Niccolò regarded the “state” largely as an administrative appendage to the *cameral* (household) management of his patrimony of land-holdings and feudal revenues. In effect, despite the existence of a rudimentary *de jure* separation between state and signorial household administrations, in practical terms the treasury of the *comune* (civil government of Ferrara) provided an important source of regular income for the prince. As a matter of course, the *Marchese* constantly dipped his hand into the civic till, draining off the proceeds of *comunale* taxes, levies, fees, dues, and fines for his own personal use.³

Against the background of the lamentable social conditions produced by this particular indulgence during a period of extreme economic hardship, thousands of the *popolo* (people) stormed the *Palazzo della Ragione* – the prince’s palace and Hall of Justice – late into the evening of 3 May 1385 (as recollected in the anonymous *Chronicon Estense*), shouting “long live the *Marchese* and death to Secretary Tomasso.”⁴ The unfortunate object of the mob’s murderous attention was one Tomasso da Tortona, appointed by Niccolò as the first principal secretary of Ferrara’s new *cancellaria* (state chancellery) in 1363, whose duties broadly included responsibility for maintaining the registers of the deeds, leases, rents, and feudal service obligations, the notarial scriptures of the signorial household, and the records of the *comunale* income tax (*colta*) and judicial condemnations.⁵ In the event, it was Tortona’s status as keeper of Ferrara’s income-tax records which led to his horrible and ignominious end.

The factors instigating this riot are clear. Twenty years of grinding poverty aggravated by a series of natural disasters – floods in 1362, 1369, 1385, famine in 1369, 1370, 1374, and 1375, the plague in 1382 – had reduced the population of Ferrara by approximately one-third: the survivors suffered enormously under a fiscal policy calculated to increase Niccolò’s personal wealth and support his growing appetite for luxurious courtly living and military adventures.⁶ When it was announced that there would be yet another rise in the income tax, this hard on the heels of a terrible spring flood which had left most of the surrounding countryside under water, and most of the population surviving on *pane di mistura* (bread made with a small portion of flour combined with other sorts of “digestibles” like millet and barley), the citizens of Ferrara gravitated to the *piazza della Comune* (the city square), assembled themselves

into a nasty mob, moved *en masse* the short distance from the *piazza* into the courtyard of the *Palazzo della Ragione*, and stormed the stairs leading up to the Hall of Justice. While Prince Niccolò cowered behind his personal bodyguard in his sleeping-chamber, Tortona was “removed” from his bed and dragged into the *piazza* where he was “torn to pieces.” His head was skewered onto a pike and placed at the main city gate for public viewing, and in an act of perfectly ruthless irony, his other body parts were burnt on a pyre composed of financial documents looted from the *cancelleria*.⁷ Evidently, the Ferrarese had their own views on the retention periods required for tax records and the means of their disposal.

While rereading the chronicle entry describing Secretary Tortona’s fate, I was reminded that this was not an isolated incident – though the especially gruesome outcome was somewhat unusual – and I wondered whether there were any potential points of interest here for archivists generally in reference to the history of records and record-keeping, and more particularly in relation to current conceptions of modern archival practice partly based on or significantly linked to interpretations of archival history. Initially, the “Tortona riot” started me thinking about its broader implications within an archival context in view of the observations recently offered by American archivist James O’Toole on the long history of practical and symbolic hostility towards records, resulting in their destruction by revolutionaries, the disenfranchised, and political groups across many different cultures and times, as well as his insightful conclusions concerning the need for archivists to understand the multi-form context of sources and stimuli which have contributed to the preservation and/or *reading* of the documentary past and together constitute the whole *remembering complex* of archival culture, i.e., its purposive, historic, philosophic, and social coherences, in addition to its administrative and juridical origins.⁸ I believe O’Toole’s socio-cultural nuance of mainstream professional archival discourse, which presently tends to concentrate on the legal, administrative, and business connotations of institutional record-keeping in relation to the purposes and objectives of modern archivy, merits closer scrutiny by archivists. More immediately in this essay, however, prompted by the circumstances of Tortona’s “mob-rule” demise and in reflection upon other contemporary official and quasi-official destructions of records either organized or permitted by constituted authorities of medieval and Renaissance place and time, I wish to discuss some of the elements of institutional record-keeping during this period.

Almost inevitably in any such endeavour, one is bound to acknowledge the historical roots ostensibly established for modern archivy in the writings of Luciana Duranti – notably in her references to the history of record-keeping in the High Middle Ages and Renaissance – which articulate a positive and exclusive link between the evolution of archival theory and practice as a corpus of *scientific* principles and a purely administrative-juridical ethos for the processes of making and preserving records.⁹ For some time, however, both as

a government records archivist presently working in a large national archive and as an erstwhile student of Italian medieval and Renaissance culture, I have been wondering whether Duranti's influential rendering of archival history (which simultaneously furnishes both logical arguments and historical precedents for conferring an exclusive and transcendent status on certain current archival claims, principles, and methodologies), if generally accurate from a highly circumscribed intellectual position superimposed on the historical past, does not ultimately represent an overly narrow view of the origins and purposes of record-keeping and the preservation of documentary memory, and in some instances, more than slightly distorts or stretches reasonable historical interpretation. For several reasons which I hope to illuminate towards the end of this essay, I am more comfortable with the perspectives on and interpretations of the medieval/early modern socio-cultural landscape bearing on the history of record-keeping and archivy – including the historiography and utilities of diplomatics – as well as some of the synthetic conclusions concerning the history of the “context of texts” recently offered by Armando Petrucci in his stimulating collection of monographs *Writers and Readers in Medieval Italy: Studies in the History of Written Culture*, especially in his “The Illusion of Authentic History: Documentary Evidence.”¹⁰ My main objective, however, focusing on particular attributes and features of signorial rulership in the “dominions” of Ferrara under the control of the Este princes during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, is to introduce some additional context for medieval and early modern record-keeping in order to suggest value and utility in a broader interpretation of the archival remembering complex, i.e., in an archival perspective on the meaning and interpretation of the document (and documentary memory writ large) beyond its essential constitution as “written evidence of a deed of juridical nature, compiled observing certain specific forms which were intended to establish its trustworthiness and status as legal proof.”¹¹ Hopefully, this will help to inform both historical and archiviological views of the past, and begin to place modern archival theory within the legacy of an evident – I will argue – socio-cultural and ideological background in supplement of its well-established administrative-juridical roots.

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During the period immediately preceding Tomasso da Tortona's death (the 1340s and after), the republican city-states and principalities of north and north-central Italy generally began to reorganize and expand the administration of government. Slowly at first, but gathering greater impetus towards the end of the century, the rationalization of government administration into nascent “state” bureaucracies had a profound effect on the administrative production of records and the operation of institutional record-keeping. It was not that government bureaucracy and record-keeping were entirely new phenomena.

On the contrary, many urban centres had for years – certainly from the mid-twelfth century – elected legislative ruling councils, popular assemblies, and executive magistracies. Coincidentally, they had also developed relatively sophisticated forms of civil government (*comune*), which increasingly assigned the growing complexity of managing the public fisc, regulating commerce, and administering justice to the ranks of a swelling officialdom which necessarily produced and kept records of its activities and decisions. But these governments were also heavily faction-ridden and frequently unstable, alternately dominated by noble castellans, wealthy trade guildsmen, warring family clans, popular societies, intercity alliances, and political interests of larger (imperial and papal) external power. When historians summarize the age of *comunal* government (c.1100-1340) in medieval Italy, they invariably turn and return to the themes of violence, disorder, and crisis.¹² This was a period of protracted warfare, constant civil unrest, and flagrant disregard for law and order. To characterize the *comune* in a single overarching statement, they fairly “bristled with weapons.”¹³

Assailed by relentless conflict among political, occupational, class, and kinship organizations, institutional stability – with very few exceptions – largely remained fractured and episodic. Amidst the general turmoil of the time, many official records were also deliberately or inadvertantly destroyed, or else simply disappeared from want of long-term administrative utility or proper custodial care. With the gradual concentration of political power in the hands of a few noble “strong-men” and republican oligarchies about the mid-fourteenth century, however, elements of a new governmental order begin to surface with the gutting and reintegration of existing *comunal* offices, the creation of new agencies, and the redeployment of institutional record-keeping in the broader service of new territorial (land-based) urban states. Weary of the intolerable strains placed on *comunal* institutions and the disruption of daily life caused by incessant warfare, economic woes, implacable party and class rivalry, and the aspirations of the landed nobility, to name but the major reasons, many cities opted for or accepted pacification in the form of dictatorial rulership. Historians have long searched for but failed to articulate a comprehensive explanation to account for the transformative political and social processes which swept the *comune* aside in dozens of localities approximately at the same time, and placed in their stead the iron rule of oligarchy or *signore*. To put it simply, within the limits of their typical characteristics, the concrete occasions that triggered changes in individual communities “are complex enough to confound the most sophisticated social science,” and indicate many differing and frequently unique sets of circumstances which resulted in the demise of local *comune*.¹⁴

Alternatively, the aftermath of these changes has been susceptible to some important general conclusions. Chief among these is the observation that the new regimes – signory or oligarchy – emphasized the lawful face of their

governmental affairs, even if this was mere sham. In particular, the dubious constitutional status of the new *signori* caused them to employ every possible legal ruse and device, including the calling of popular elections and the formal recognition of indigeneous government institutions, while ruthlessly suppressing the principal players in former *comunale* administrations, notably the merchant trade guilds and urban aristocracy.¹⁵ Significantly, in eliminating all potential sources of political opposition with vestiges of *comunale* affiliation, the *signori* did not eliminate the formal shell of the former institutions of *comunale* administration, such as the offices of “captain of the people,” “captain of justice,” or *podestà* (chief magistrate or high executive consul). Instead, they turned the existing administrative structure to their own purposes and advantage by following legal procedures of public affirmation for themselves and their supporters, and initiating cleverly calculated schemes of reinvention, assimilation, and expansion. However *signori* came to power, it was the erstwhile institutions of the *comune* which provided them with the “constitutional” authority – a decidedly urban authority – that they conscientiously exploited to consolidate their immediate position as civic rulers and to expand subsequently their sphere of influence into surrounding rural territories by assuming overlordship of adjacent landed feudal estates. Invariably, this would have a significant impact upon the nature and objectives of institutional record creation and record-keeping.

If the new political powers deliberately absorbed the extant institutional offices of the *comune* to provide themselves with *de facto* and sometimes *de jure* legal foundation and legitimacy, it is also clear that the nascent concept of the state gradually being articulated during the general transition from city-state to principate – *dal comune al principato* – in the writings of contemporary jurists,¹⁶ is practically anticipated in and may be partly attributed to the rationalization and keeping of financial, cadastral, and judicial records under the central administrative control of reconstituted or new government agencies. This conclusion, I believe, is beyond any serious academic debate. Regardless of how power was initially secured by rulers – whether by outright military conquest, by the acquisition and/or annexation of land and contingent schemes of refeudalization, by the assimilation of offices, or simply by the manipulation of political factions and commercial interests supported by rigged elections – and regardless of the subsequent entitlements claimed by rulers to support their governorship – which were either based on customary feudal law traditions in combination with legitimations obtained from the Emperor or the Pope for the new principalities, or in the case of city-state republics such as Florence and Venice, based on constitutional reference points and juridical foundations – it would not have been possible for any regime to stabilize its power without a rational system of record-keeping. The very capacity to rule the “state” successfully – to control land investiture, levy and collect taxes, regulate commerce, and administer justice – depended heavily upon the creation of records and the success of their organization and preservation.

In Ferrara, this is marked by the foundation of the state chancellery, and the appointment of secretaries (*ergo* Tomasso da Tortona) and chancellors to draft and keep the documents detailing the titles, surveys, duties, and privileges associated with the feudal estates of local land-owners. Shortly thereafter (by the 1380s), the *cancelleria* begins to expand its record-keeping activities into areas more properly associated with “state” rather than “neo-feudal” or “refeudal” administration. In contrast to the highly personal and *ad hoc* nature of the relationships previously established between the Este lords and their vassals, which required a minimum of documentation to seal their legal bonds and service obligations (oaths, decrees, charters, investitures), here we are speaking of the writing and keeping of records for a new and increasingly centralized administrative form of despotic government, in control of subjects and territorial dominions, plainly aspiring to impose its power with greater authority and conviction, and interested necessarily in the inventory of its assets (land, people, goods, and other resources), collecting taxes, and maintaining law and order: in other words, a centralized documentation (eventually a documentary registry) of government operations. What we find in evidence at the end of the fourteenth century in Ferrara are the initial stages of what would become by the mid-fifteenth century a virtual “explosion” of record creating under the management and control of professional bureaucrats variously in the employ of the *cancelleria* or the prince’s personal household (*camera*). By this time, as in other major *signorie* (e.g., Milan and Mantua), the administration of Ferrarese government has begun to assume almost bewildering complexity – notably in the areas of public finance, commerce, and justice – supported by a seemingly endless stream of new and highly intricate rules, regulations, orders, and laws. Coincidentally, as many historians have remarked, the implication – more accurately the deliberate and much-heightened intrusion – of the signorial state into the ordinary social and business affairs of its citizens is also supported by a massive expansion of administrative record production, and the development of more constant, consistent, and sophisticated forms of institutional record-keeping.

I want to propose a corollary to this widely accepted thesis which, in addition to providing some further context and insight into the operation of signorial government in Renaissance Italy from an historical perspective, also bears significant implications for archivists extending beyond a basic appreciation of their professional origins. If the consolidation of political power by contemporary rulers may be partly attributed to the reconstitution of old and the development of new central agencies which created and controlled unprecedented numbers of official records, the “systematic” and “regular” destruction of these same records also signifies the inauguration of a continuity which historians, political scientists, and legal scholars have typically associated with modern forms of government administration and bureaucracy. In fact, destructions of tax records and the notations of judicial condemnations were an important and constant feature of civic life in Ferrara during the Renaissance. Records were

not only destroyed by periodic popular acts of ransacking and pillage – which despite their apparently promiscuous origins and objectives, had their own purpose and “order of disorder” – but also deliberately by formal ceremonies personally conducted by the prince, or as part of a wider tradition of local festivity, wherein civil authority temporarily accepted a brief period of amnesty resulting in a quasi-organized “riot,” often including a socio-cultural form of records disposal. I believe it is possible to discern at least four categories of records destruction which commonly occurred at this time, and this typology will inform the observations which follow below: first, “unpredictable” instances of civil unrest; second, special moments within the annual calendar year when citizens expected an opportunity to be relieved of their debts through an official ceremonial destruction of records according to specific “selection criteria” based on the credit-worthiness of individuals as objects of princely charity or mercy; third, extraordinary events which customarily meant forgiveness of misdemeanours and trespasses by the prince through a “delegated authority” to destroy records in the midst of celebration; and fourth, the destruction of judicial documents specifying fines, periods of incarceration, and other penalties as an expected result of popular petition to the prince for pardon from disobedience. Owing to the extent and intimacy of its connection, as well as its highly “commercialized” nature to the point of incorporation within annual signorial fiscal plans, it is most appropriate to begin an analysis of contemporary records destruction in Renaissance Ferrara in association with the application of penalties resulting from civil and criminal proceedings (category four above).

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In Ferrara, where the proceeds of civil and criminal penalties were eventually *de jure* part of the *signore*'s income – by the late fifteenth-century Duke Ercole I d'Este (ruled 1471-1505) required *amitade*, or a signorial share of all civil and criminal fines ranging from one-half to two-thirds of the total levy, to be diverted to his household account – official records destruction was a conspicuous revenue generator.¹⁷ The prince and his appointed captains of justice commonly took in lesser sums and even payments in the form of comestibles from the *condemnati* (sentenced prisoners) to secure the destruction of records in lieu of obtaining the full financial payment according to the specifications of the charge.¹⁸ Given the often desperate plight of Estensi financial affairs, this kind of “fixing” and “dealing” was not at all unusual, especially by the period of the later fifteenth century. By this time the Este princes had long lived well beyond their own private means and the financial capacities of the state, wholly exhausting the *comunale* treasury and even local lines of forced credit, and as early as the 1470s, they had actually taken to selling offices of civil administration to the highest bidder on the understanding that office-holders would be

permitted to “squeeze” the *popolo* of their “pennies” so long as signorial financial quotas were maintained.¹⁹ This practice inevitably led to an enormous and rapid rise in all manner of charges against Ferrarese citizens laid before the courts which some historians have attributed to a local “crime-wave,” but which more accurately reflects a regime bent on increasing its sources of capital “income” and maximizing judicial “profit margins” by whatever means it had at its disposal, including the drafting of new sumptuary and criminal laws and coincidentally stepping up the rates of prosecution. Since most of the *condemnati* were patently unable to pay their fines – these were typically exorbitant and frequently designed to lead to confiscation of property – and the dungeons of the *Castello Estense* were bursting full of prisoners, forgiveness of debt and penalty by records destruction was a formal policy actively pursued within the various components of the financial business of the Ferrarese government. This is clearly indicated in many of the extant records of the popular petitions for princely pardon, which plead for mercy and request that their sentences be “torn up.” Of course, there were also charges for drafting, registering, and entertaining such petitions, a significant portion of which went directly into the *cameral* coffers to complete a highly lucrative series of princely “double-dipping” transactions.

Meanwhile, as one observer bitterly complained, urban crime and rural banditry was reaching such unprecedented and grievous levels – he had himself been burgled – that bands of robbers roamed unchallenged through the city streets and even the *piazza* at night, fleecing the largely unprotected and “decent people” of their purses.²⁰ In the trying social circumstances produced by selling civic offices, the *comunale* police were evidently preoccupied with lining their own pockets, rather than performing their public security duties. It was much easier and more profitable to cite a debtor or to trump up a charge of blasphemy or other “moral” offence (notably “illegal” prostitution), than actually to attempt to apprehend heavily armed criminals.²¹ So blatant and heinous were these practices, that Duke Ercole was at one point obliged to eliminate his own hand-picked sheriff, lest even a generally loyal and docile populace begin to consider plotting revolt. And so by a hired assassin’s hand was ended the financial “reign of terror” of the former Captain of Justice and Chief Magistrate Gregorio Zampante, “the greatest of all villains, without any sense of compassion or mercy whatsoever,” of whom even the brothers and children of the Duke were apparently afraid: “Thus ended the life of the miserable and deplorable Zampante, whose soul went straight to hell.”²²

To be sure, this was an unpleasant time to be born without noble status or private financial means, especially for the poor citizens of Ferrara. They suffered enormous hardship at the hands of the Este princes, whose insatiable demand for cash required the tax-collectors and captains of justice to “sop up whatever gravy they could” from their subjects and to extract money from every place “possible and impossible.”²³ Throughout the second half of the

fifteenth century, the Este initiatives to drain their subjects of their meagre resources were utterly shameless, ceaseless, and remorseless. Without any real military means to alter substantially their political fortunes against such formidable neighbours as Milan, Venice, and Florence, the Estensi increasingly invested whatever they could wring from the *popolo* as well as enormous amounts of borrowed capital in the conspicuous consumption of a splendid princely court, hoping to attract attention to their capital city as a European centre of high culture and learning. Ignoring the dire warnings of his financial advisors, who annually scrambled to keep the state barely above a ruinous debt-burden, Duke Ercole finally pursued the princely life-style to the very limit of reason, expending fantastic sums on pleasure-palaces, public buildings, religious temples, spectacular festivities, and entertainments. Aside from his many building projects – most notably the construction of the *Addizione Herculea* (new town) beginning in 1492, which reduced the public treasury to virtual penury – Ercole also “collected” people: academically trained domestic and foreign *litterati*, musicians and singers from France and the Low Countries, artists and *festaiuoli* (festival-makers), religious “mascots” (he actually had the young Sister Lucy of Narni and twenty-two of her followers kidnapped to Ferrara because she sensationally bore the *stigmata* of Christ), mystic learneds from the Indian sub-continent, and eventually “savages” from the West Indies imported from Spain.²⁴ He built a wild game preserve garden (the *Barco*) just outside the city for the display of exotic animals, including a pride of lions and the only known elephant in Northern Italy, which he proudly paraded at every opportunity, and even had an artificial lake constructed which he stocked with sturgeon and other delectables for eating during the Lenten fast.²⁵

Though a good deal of this *magnificenza* was actually much ado about princely “flim-flam” – Ercole could ill-afford to maintain his captive “menagerie” and a sprawling household of gentlemen, scholars, poets, artists, musicians, singers, soothsayers, astrologists, necromancers, historians, and festival-makers (and even an archivist!) numbering as many as 760 individuals, or to keep up a constant appearance of unlimited wealth – the light of the prince’s court was locally incandescent, at least to the beleaguered poor of Ferrara, who had their noses pressed to the palace window-panes, forlornly outside looking in. In the lesser precincts of the city, far out of sight of the splendour Ercole mustered in his palaces, the plight of the ordinary people was unimaginably bad. Food was in chronically short supply, the streets unsavoury by day and completely unsafe after dark, the police and other state officials largely untrustworthy and mostly corrupt, and basic personal survival often required individuals to engage in underground economic activity or to turn to crime. So awful were the urban conditions that one desperate citizen was forced to commit murder merely for possession of a coat lest he freeze to death.²⁶ As a chronicler poignantly remarks summarizing the terrible year of 1497, “when famine descends upon the Ferrarese, the people eat worms, suck the marrow from

bones, and make meals of grass, weeds, and other obscenities, while the prince and his nobles enjoy honey, beans and legumes.”²⁷ “The people cry and suffer,” wrote another, “while the Duke invites ladies and the Court to the *sala grande* for dancing at a ball.”²⁸ Yet even noble status did not necessarily guarantee individuals protection from judicial citation before the civil and criminal tribunals, or other insidious practices such as obligatory loans and gifts, which forced many of the lesser nobility into temporary bankruptcy, or even into something approaching the almost unthinkable state of poverty.²⁹ In Ferrara, the machinations of the signorial *camera* and its adjunct state administrative apparatus located in the *cancelleria*, conspicuously including various aspects of record-keeping and records destruction, combined to form a “racket” for princely revenue generation.

Nothing of this racketeering situation in Ferrara would likely surprise a Renaissance historian, though the legal admission of such obvious fixing and gouging by formal signorial order is somewhat unusual, and as it gradually expanded into increasingly ridiculous speculations upon the international grain exchanges, the selling of local commercial mining rights against pawns, and unfavourable deals with Jewish money-lenders in Florence and Venice, all of this using so-called public assets and funds, the purposes, extent, and complexity of its various business intrigues were possibly unique by any contemporary measure of comparison.³⁰ Nevertheless, institutionalized extortion was fairly common practice in the “small tyrannies” of Renaissance Italy, despite the existence of nascent state bureaucracies ostensibly occupied with the administration and protection of the public *weal*. What I find intriguing in the Ferrarese context – this is also apparent elsewhere – is the evident connection between records destruction and the public role of the prince as dispenser of charity and mercy, and perhaps even more interesting, the inclusion of records destruction as a legitimate and often critical feature of “world-turned-upside-down” social behaviour periodically tolerated by the *signore* and his constituted *comunale* authorities. To put a modern “spin” on these public purges of records, there were both judicial and socio-cultural dispensations occasionally assigned to the retentions of certain classes of documents, typically records of tax and other ordinary scriptures of common financial indebtedness, as well as criminal citations and charges. Further, these acts of charity, mercy, and other customary permissions to destroy records were largely (and ironically) interpreted by the ordinary people as signs of “good government,” tokens of the prince acting in the role of “father to the people.”³¹ Remarkably, by distancing themselves from their own highly unpopular policies – which they naturally blamed on their advisors and appointed *comunale* officials, Tortona being the first in a long line of sacrificial lambs³² – and through the clever use of ceremonial “smoke and mirrors” (and records disposal was an important component of this public relations package), the Este princes generally managed to escape being branded the tyrants they most assuredly were.

There was of course opposition to Estensi rule, but it was typically isolated, sporadic, and disorganized.³³ On two occasions (the Pio and Pazzi conspiracies), local and rival noble factions chafing under Estensi “oppression” attempted to overthrow the *signoria* by occupying strategic points in the city with contingents of their followers, assuming that the citizenry would immediately rally to their banners once the action started, but in both cases the rebels had wildly miscalculated their own strength and completely misread the “conviction of the people.” Not a soul lifted a hand to help them, and they were either immediately and hideously despatched by the Este military, or else captured to suffer inquisitorial torture and eventual execution.³⁴ No doubt the horrible fate awaiting anyone caught “murmuring or plotting” against the prince had something to do with the general state of public acquiescence to Este domination. Punishment for treason – or any other capital offence for that matter – was perfectly public, highly ceremonialized, and ghastly beyond even common signorial standards, so “brutal and hideous,” according to one observer, that it was “enough to induce a stone to weep.”³⁵ When opportunities were presented to demonstrate the rule and power of the prince’s law, the Estensi were consummate and highly successful showmen.

As it happens, “showmanship” was also a conspicuous feature of certain forms of contemporary records disposal. By the middle of the fifteenth century, it was generally recognized by the Este lords of Ferrara and their “cousins” elsewhere in Western Christendom that an integral function of rulership – acting like a prince – was to issue dispensation from or to set aside the civil statutes and ordinances for the well-being of the citizenry. Temperance in the application of public law at civil instance, civil damages collected on behalf of private persons or the state, civil levies on financial transactions, consumer foodstuffs, luxury items, imports and exports, moveables and immoveables, taxes on notarial acts, weights and measures, and civil licences, the income tax, civil fines, and public debt, was a theme common to the daily regimen of petitions which began to flood the Estensi *cancellaria* by the decade of the 1460s. Significantly, neither the law of the *signore* nor (of course) his capacity to legislate were challenged by the petitioner, but rather the prince was called upon to exercise his prerogative of clemency and mercy in a special case. Many of these petitions recount the terrible dread which descended upon the city prior to the posting of condemnations in the windows of the Hall of Justice overlooking the *piazza*, forcing otherwise “honest men” either to flee the city leaving their families behind to starve or turn to crime, or to take their chances in the dungeons and hope for remission, which, given the physical conditions and treatment accorded in Estensi prisons, was not a highly recommended option. In detailed notarial prose, the petitions explain the circumstances attending the “crimes,” describing at length the extenuating factors which forced individuals into tax evasion, fraud, petty larceny, or even the commission of violent felonies (these are quite remarkable documents), and they

invariably end with pleas for mercy to invoke automatically records destruction, i.e., the granting of a pardon meant necessarily the destruction of judicial scripture.

The Estensi response to these “pardon tales” often incorporated elements of public ceremony. For example, Duke Borso (ruled 1450-1471) was accustomed to walk every morning through the *piazza* between the *Castello Estense* and the *Palazzo della Ragione* surrounded by his advisors, and, during this brief interval, to favour several petitions proffered to him from the crowd which gathered daily in the hope of having him score their names from the list of the *condemnati*, a highly important public act of records erasure, since it automatically triggered the destruction of the records maintained by the civil justices.³⁶ In addition, both Duke Borso and Duke Ercole periodically presided with “much pomp and order” at judicial hearings in the great hall in the ostensible interest of assuring the public good, but primarily to confirm and ceremonialize their role as legal arbitrators. Having obtained such an advantageous audience, petitioners might reasonably expect to be pardoned (many were) with a ritual flourish and to have their records “slate” wiped clean. But pleading for mercy by placing oneself at the immediate physical disposition of the prince could sometimes prove to be a tricky business. So outraged was Duke Ercole with the details of one crime (a murder), that he refused to hear anything of the pardon application and had the prisoner summarily seized by the men-at-arms and flung through the third-floor window above the hall (literally “defenestered”) to expire by stages on the cobbles below.³⁷

Frequently juxtaposed with severe applications and demonstrations of *lex talionis* (vengeful law) following the general prescriptions of *inquisitionsprozess* and the local penal code, acts of princely mercy had an undeniably public and powerful context which was indelibly etched in the minds and memories of the people. This included the dramatic arrival of reprieves just before the carrying out of public executions. Kneeling before the block with the “sword of justice” ominously poised, standing on the gallows with the noose secured about their necks, or tied to the stake while the faggots were piled at their feet, Ferrarese criminals were sometimes obliged to hear their crimes and sentences read out and – at the very least – to endure psychologically the torment of their punishment, only to find themselves “providentially” freed by the Duke’s despatch at the very last moment.³⁸ The traitor Agostino de Ferro found himself exactly in this horrible situation when, just as the noose was about to tighten, the assembled spectators took up the cry of freedom, having seen the mounted Este guard pushing through the crowd. Rushing up the steps of the podium, the Duke’s marshal seized the *bachetta* (the baton of justice) from the *Podestà*, “tore up the sentence,” scattered the attending members of the Confraternity of the Dead, and summarily bundled the prisoner off the tribunal and whisked him to the high altar in the cathedral to give bewildered thanks for his most fortunate preservation.³⁹

Over the years, there were also a number of carefully managed “outbreaks” of popular violence which resulted in records destruction, typically amidst riots encouraged by the Estensi to assign blame for the awful conditions in the city to their noble familiars and advisors. For instance, the expulsion from Ferrara during the Venetian War (1482-84) of the Trotti family, who held many of the uppermost posts in the *comunale* government, were the greatest of the local grain speculators and “secret bankers,” and who were blamed by the people for urging the Duke into a wholly untenable military campaign against Venice in conspiracy – it was commonly believed – with the Venetians themselves, occurred in the midst of violent public demonstrations incited by Estensi agents, and resulted in a massive destruction of tax and other records of debt. At the height of the disturbances, apparently “sick with fever,” Duke Ercole appeared before the mob, in his battle armour and clinging to his wife Eleonora, on the balcony of the *Palazzo della Ragione* to signal his tacit agreement with the “judgement of the people,” whereupon the Trotti contingent were roughly assembled, given horses, pelted with excrement, and driven from the city; notably, however, they were under Estensi guard. Significantly, all of the luxuries and furnishings of the Trotti residences and their offices of business had been previously removed to secure storage, save the records in their charge (predictably the tax records of the *Giudici dei XII Savi* then kept by Giacomo Trotti), which the mob was happily satisfied to despoil, trample, and burn. In truth, Ercole could ill-afford to alienate permanently such powerful financial brokers and important allies, and the whole affair was clearly set up. Shortly after the end of the war, the Trotti returned to Ferrara, suitably chastened from the public’s perspective, but fully restored to their former positions of power with the Duke’s blessing. Meanwhile, the citizens had gained some temporary relief from prosecution by eliminating the recorded traces of their indebtedness.⁴⁰

Perhaps the most telling example of this kind of public image-broking with “planned” records destruction concerns the case of Bonvicino della Carte, the chief financial administrator of the ducal *camera* during the great famine of 1475. The chronicler Ugo Caleffini records Bonvicino’s crime as “profiteering in office,” in any other circumstances but these especially hard times a ridiculous and almost laughable charge, given the under-the-table deals between the Duke and local nobility having the financial means to procure civil posts, which precisely encouraged this kind of “illegal” behaviour. A special commission was appointed by Duke Ercole to investigate the accusations against Bonvicino and Hieronimo di Bonfrancischi, the communal treasurer and co-keeper of the records of the local granaries (who was eventually acquitted), headed by the civil justices Galeazzo Trotti, Filippo Cestarelli, and Antonio Maria Guarniero.⁴¹ Found guilty of extortion – he was cheating on the measures of grain sold to the citizenry – Bonvicino was summoned to the palace to plead his case before the prince. On the way to his audience, “such was the

hatred of this villain that he was waylaid by outraged citizens and robbed of his possessions.” While the Duke granted Bonvicino safe-conduct from Ferrara through his counsellors in the courtyard of the palace, Ercole’s refusal to admit him to the prince’s presence was taken as signorial acknowledgement of his guilt, whereupon the *popolo* stormed and ransacked his home. After a convenient interval, Ercole despatched Trotti with a company of cross-bowmen to put an end to the disturbances and ensure a return to civic order. The following day Bonvicino’s crimes were read out from a stage erected in the *piazza* before a huge crowd of two thousand citizens, together with an announcement of a public holiday throughout the ducal dominions. Prisoners were liberated in Ferrara, Modena, Reggio, and the Polesine, which effectively eliminated their public condemnations. Confraternal and priestly processions and the ringing of bells proclaimed “universal public joy,” and a bonfire was finally lit beside the castle to destroy the “tarnished” and “suspect” granary records. An unknown local noble contributed twenty *denari* to the purse of the canons of the cathedral chapter to have the bells of the cathedral rung by day and night, and he also provided two carts of wood to start the records disposal blaze. Meanwhile Bonvicino, wholly impoverished – nothing of his house or personal effects survived, and he was fined thirty thousand golden ducats, which accounted for his entire fortune – and taunted by the insults of the crowd, was driven from the city in a ritualized purging of the “unclean,” exiled *in perpetuum*, without recourse to the aid or succour of a single inhabitant within the Este state.⁴² The hypocrisy of the princely image-management attending this event is perfectly evident, especially in view of the subsequent signorial appropriation of the prince’s share of the fine. Underlying all of this busy public panoply, including the gesture of permitting the records of the granary to be “wantonly” destroyed, was nothing more than a coldly calculated financial decision. Virtually useless scriptures of public debt – no one could actually pay – were exchanged for the most precious of all commodities wanted by the prince: hard cash.

Aside from these highly contrived and spectacular instances of princely politics, there were certain other opportunities for discriminately controlled destructions of records by the public in what amounted to celebratory “mob formation.” As mentioned earlier, it was customary for the prince to suspend the law for a brief period of time upon portentous and monumental occasions: conclusions of alliances and treaties, dynastic births and marriages, investitures and elevations, etc. Much of what transpired in Ferrara during these heady moments of amnesty is revealed by the public “rioting” which attended the birth of Duke Ercole’s first-born son Prince Alfonso in 1476. Typically, as the chronicler Bernardino Zambotti recalls, there was endless bell-ringing, the cannon were continuously set off, prisoners were liberated, and the people indulged themselves in “festival.” But the burning of the shop-keepers’ doors and those of the official pawn-brokers under the arcade of the *Palazzo della Ragione* (which necessarily exposed their records to destruction), the opening

of the prison gates, and the subsequent ransacking of the Jewish money-lending establishments proclaimed a day of liberation which far exceeded the norms of celebratory behaviour traditionally witnessed during Carnival and other such “free” festal occasions.⁴³ Looting was unofficially authorized by ducal acquiescence (Ercole temporarily retired the foot-patrols of the police), old debts were “torn up,” and the records of condemnations made by the civil justices were seized and flung onto a massive bonfire in the *piazza*. It is interesting to note here that the magistrates’ benches were also seized and burnt so that the courts of justice literally could not “sit.” Thus for a brief interval, law and order was effectively suspended. In time, some of the mob actions received official blessing, notably the cancellation of all extant condemnations.⁴⁴ An official manifestation of “public joy” was proclaimed two days after Alfonso’s birth, which commanded all shops to be closed for a week, but with the provision that the “burnings of debts” and other miscreant “lootings” would henceforth cease lest the perpetrators suffer the most “extreme displeasure” of the *signore*.⁴⁵ The pandemonium of the previous days was clearly over and a return to more orderly festivities was at hand, with special masses and processions of gratitude to God in honour of the “wonderful birth.” Legislation was hastily enacted to ensure the safety of Jewish citizens who had, typically, suffered greatly upon this occasion.⁴⁶

Such scenes of extraordinary celebration – and records destruction – were repeated many times in Ferrara, upon, for instance, the birth of a son to Beatrice d’Este in 1493 (then Duchess of Bari and wife of Lodovico Sforza il Moro, *Signore* of Milan), the elevation of Ippolito d’Este to his Cardinal’s cap (also in 1493), the reception of Anna Sforza (Prince Alfonso’s first wife) in Ferrara (1491), and at least as far back as the celebration of the Italian League in 1455 during the early years of Borso’s reign. The Ferrarese chronicles recount no less than fifteen cases of public celebration between 1450 and 1505 – and the number was probably greater – which involved records destruction on a significant scale. Yet the celebratory purging of records was not strictly confined to these periodic outbursts of “public joy.” They were also enshrined in the annual calendar of *comunal* events, most obviously in the regular round of Adventen generosity at *Buone Feste*, the traditional ribaldry and popular “quasi-violence” of Carnival permitted between Epiphany and Shrove Tuesday, the customary Lenten petitions for clemency and pardon, and in the ceremonial freeing of prisoners by the prince before the high altar of the cathedral on Good Friday and upon the eve of the Feast of St. George (patron saint of Ferrara). All of these regular records destructions reflect contemporary socio-cultural and judicial expectations of the fundamental “contractual” relationship established between the “ruled” and their rulers, i.e., the offering of periodic and official moments of public amnesty.

The contemporary concept of amnesty is difficult to define, as it generally involved and took many forms and had certain judicial (and cultural) connota-

tions attendant upon the reversing of laws and penalties; perhaps the use of the word is not wholly correct in the modern context of “records disposition.” However, it is perfectly clear that upon the suspension of normal behaviour for other activities of uncommon, extra-temporal spheres/moments of public *more* customarily established in anti-rule, world-turned-upside-down episodes of riot, carnival, festival, celebration, etc., permitted or not permitted, records were a conspicuous target for burning and despoiling. In fact, the Ferrarese authorities did little to stand in the way – they could hardly resist without major consequences in any event – of a mob bent on destroying records, and tacitly accepted the practice. As these records destructions and other unruly behaviour, though on a considerably lesser scale than witnessed during full-blown urban riot, became increasingly accustomed within the *comunale* framework of celebration and festivity, and actually threatened, in some instances, to undermine the capacity of the *signore* to rule for significant periods of time, it is not surprising to find the Estensi imposing certain limits and controls on this behaviour by incorporating records disposal activities into the state’s repertoire of public ceremony and ritual. By the end of the fifteenth century, acts of indiscriminate violence against “property” – including scriptures of debt both public and private – outside of officially sanctioned destructions were proscribed by severe penalties. Notably, much of this penal legislation was devoted to the imposition of order and controls on public behaviour during Carnival, which annually ran between Epiphany Night (5-6 January) and Shrove Tuesday (High Carnival Day).⁴⁷ For many years during this festive period, the citizens of Ferrara had occasionally and “promiscuously” seized the opportunity availed by the prince’s traditional toleration and licencing of public merry-making, disguising, and “mock” violence to break into the offices of the *cancellaria*, local merchants, and money-lenders to destroy the records of their debts and other charges. As this festive disorder eventually reached far more serious levels (certainly by the late 1480s) with deliberately planned acts of sabotage, pillaging, and destruction of public and private property, and even murder in the name of *vendetta*, Duke Ercole was finally obliged to intervene by enacting extraordinary penal orders and organizing special police patrols. On three occasions, fearing conditions in the city were ripe for full-scale riot, he actually cancelled Carnival celebrations outright.

A number of historians have shown that the pre-industrial urban festivity of Western Europe was highly organized, typically following well-established patterns of customary or specified behaviour according to the purposes and passages of sacred time indicated in the ecclesiastical calendar in combination with indigeneous secular traditions.⁴⁸ Every city possessed such a calendar or “liturgy” of civic events – a “théologie de la ville” or an urban “vie sacrale”⁴⁹ – which included the feasts and fasts of public adhesion commonly observed throughout Christendom, high moments of state or dynastic introspection, and any number of additional holidays related to events of local historical signifi-

cance with divine or other associative commemorations attached, the latter most frequently linked to the feasts and fasts of particular saints and special ceremonies upon occasions of otherwise ordinary liturgical patronage elsewhere, but bearing core-essential memory reference and resonance within the community.⁵⁰ During the reign of Duke Ercole, with its enormously complicated devotional calendar marking no less than sixty-six permanent religious holidays with varying degrees of *comunale* responsibility and personal adherence above and beyond the requirements of the common moveable feasts and fasts organized around the Lenten season (e.g., Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost, Corpus Christi), Ferrara was a highly regulated urban community, wherein intervals of holiday-time were impressed by the prince to create a festival year based on local religious observations combined with a fairly heavy-handed overlay of dynastic reflection.⁵¹ Quite literally, Ercole inserted himself and his *signoria* into the devotional and customary festal business of his subjects, appropriating the extant festivals for his own and, where they were thematically wanting, inventing new “traditions.”⁵² Among many of his festal innovations for example, he washed the feet of the poor on Maundy Thursday, bore the effigy of Christ with his family on *Corpus Christi*, rode through the city in disguise distributing gifts to the people on the eve of Epiphany, and lit the candles and led the procession of the city on the Feast of the Purification (of the Virgin Mary).⁵³ The Feast of St. George (24 April), even with its long tradition (actually antedating Este rule) of public games, later horse-racing, and *comunale oblatione* (public offering) in the cathedral, was wholly transformed into an Estensi “dynasty day,” with an all-inclusive procession of the citizenry through the city conspicuously led by the Duke and his family touching every signal urban place, temple, and altar. As the Duchess Eleonora declared, the reason for this procession was patently obvious: to “win our Lord Ercole the honour and the acclamation of the people.”⁵⁴

In his absence from the city, the Duke insisted that the ceremonial orders of every single fast or feast be scrupulously observed, notably those which resulted in records destruction, and he frequently deputized members of his family to preside in his place. On other occasions, he took the most extraordinary (and possibly unique) step of actually postponing public religious devotions either to permit his own personal participation, or to coincide with the visits of foreign dignitaries who had expressed a desire to view the attending “spectacles” for which the city was becoming justifiably famous: jousts, military pageants, and games; miracle plays; concerts of music and singing; and above all the fantastic Herculean productions of secular theatre in the *piazza* and *sala grande*, which were ostensibly based on the scripts of the ancient Roman playwrights Terrence and Plautus and various interpretations thereof offered by hired scholars and festival-makers. In effect, Ercole actively pursued the local installation of an annual cycle of public festivity and ritual

commemoration, combining elements of state ceremonial with what amounted to state religion, the distilled sum of which was directly linked to the glorification of the Estensi dynasty in a nascent polity-centred form of rulership, and substantially based on an adapted form of *comunale* Christocentric piety: an annual round of devotional sequences and “stages” in and upon which the Duke was (inevitably) the principal protagonist. The Church naturally took a very dim view of this ceremonial panoply, but did not (and could not!) move to invoke censure since there were no legitimate grounds or precedents on which to proceed – this most certainly was not heresy – although Ercole was temporarily excommunicated on two occasions for other, but clearly related, reasons.⁵⁵

It is within the context of these local Ferrarese customs and traditions that one may also observe additional, if particular forms of regular and ceremonialized records destruction. Some of these events were of purely signorial invention, but there was also a considerable degree of inspired adaptation involved. As the Este princes (especially Duke Ercole) attempted to control and manipulate festal time for dynastic purposes, so too did the regular rhythms of the devotional season impose certain requirements upon them: generosity during Advent, mercy and charity during the Lenten fast, and a host of other obligations and behaviours indicated by the customary connotations of the dedicated moment. The conditions of signorial behaviour and the responsibilities associated with these monumental intervals were absolutely unquestioned by both the prince and his subjects, and any deviation from the norm was viewed – certainly by the public – as a clear failing of character, bad rulership, and possibly grounds for “indictment,” at least as suggested in the contemporary legal treatises and advisories on the subject of rulership. It is not for nothing that virtually all petitions for pardon from offences and forgiveness of debt begin with a clear statement of reference to the auspicious time of the year. The Ferrarese knew very well when the prince was obliged by tradition and customary inclination to favour certain kinds of requests, and they launched their pardon campaigns accordingly. In the specific cause of records destruction, though there are a few contemporary examples of “foregiveness” petitions desperately being delivered at Advent counting on signorial generosity to extend to charity and/or mercy, the principal season was Lententide, the forty days of penitential fasting annually running between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday, during which the prince was predictably disposed to rule and act with clemency and disproportionate mercy. Lenten pardoning was customary, but the Estensi turned it into an institutionalized business of government with rules, criteria, and appointed records destruction events with heavy ceremonial context.

The extent to which the Este princes understood and studied the implications of pardoning and amnesty is quite remarkable. It might appear that the opening of prison gates, the taking of petitions in public, the reprieves delivered during

scaffold spectacles, the permission to celebrate and make “free festival” on monumental occasions, all of which typically resulted in the destruction of records, were spontaneous and indiscriminate princely acts, but this is clearly not the case. On the contrary, because they very precisely put into perspective the rule of law, princely pardoning and amnesty authorizations were a very serious business and very tightly controlled. Even in the midst of extraordinary celebration or festive “riot,” there were often provisions made for the police to round up the liberated *condemnati* after-the-fact, and many individuals found themselves re-arrested on different charges to start a new “record.”⁵⁶ Further, considering that the dungeons held all manner of criminal from common debtor to violent and hardened felon, the *signore* could hardly afford to (and most certainly did not!) indiscriminately free prisoners under any circumstances, even during the festive licence granted during major dynastic celebrations. Hence when we read of general public “amnesty” in the Ferrarese chronicles, we are reading largely about a limited liberation of citizens who owed money for minor civil disobediences rather than serious criminal offenders, and instead of a wholesale destruction of records, it was generally the documentation of ordinary public debt that was periodically and selectively “consigned” to disposal fires and other “tolerated” means of popular elimination by looting and vandalism. Moreover, given the money-making machinations of noble stake-holders in high office civic employ and the corruption of the criminal justice system, which maintained and managed a constant stream of delinquents before the courts, these celebrated amnesties were practically designed to cost the *signore* and his “cronies” nothing, as any evident financial losses were quickly recouped simply by stepping up the rates of prosecution. Ultimately, they were symbolic gestures. Nevertheless the records were destroyed, often in the most spectacular fashion.

Indeed one would be misreading and misrepresenting the circumstances of contemporary records disposal by suggesting that the documents destroyed as the result of pardons or amnesties were unimportant – despite their seemingly innocuous and common administrative nature from a modern perspective – or that the ritualized form of their destruction was without significance. It was quite the opposite. To the citizens of Ferrara, these records represented evidence which could be used against them in such a manner as to literally “ruin their lives,” sufficient to drive whole families to “despair” and force individuals into flight, banditry, and even suicide; to the prince, they represented both “markers” of essential capital income and documentation of an effective rule of signorinal law. Consequently, a great deal of thought and preparation was devoted to the ceremony of public pardoning. In point of fact, the *comunale cancellari* regularly “screened” the *condemnati* prior to any amnesty events attended by public ceremony, and on the strength of the case established in the pardon petition they recommended the qualification of individuals for various charity or clemency “treatments” according to predetermined selection criteria,

including the destruction of their “tell-tale” records. Much of this amnesty and records destruction business is revealed in a remarkably candid and enormously informative letter from the Chancellor Siverio Sivieri to the Duchess Eleonora, in which he complains of the long hours spent poring over the lists of the *condemnati* at a rate of more than 150 pardon petitions per day in anticipation of the Duke’s annual Lenten ceremony of oblation on Good Friday and the dedication of the *palii* (flags and colours for the horse-racing) on the Eve of St. George, whereupon there would be ceremonial liberations of prisoners. What he wants to know is whether his “criteria” of prisoner selection will meet with the Duke’s final approval.⁵⁷ In a similar vein, and this selection process is more fully documented in the archival sources, lists of the poor-condemned were provided to the *signore* for his personal review with qualifying criteria appended prior to the annual *Festa dei Poveri*, conducted every Maundy Thursday from 1472, during which Duke Ercole engaged in the elaborate public ritual of washing the feet of twelve selected “destitute” citizens representing the disciples of Christ, distributing alms, and entertaining their pardon petitions.⁵⁸

So it was on three special occasions, on Good Friday, upon the eve of the *Festa di San Giorgio*, and during the *Festa dei Poveri*, that records destruction was officially admitted and sanctioned as a regular ceremonial feature of the civic year. In these instances of prisoner liberation with records destruction included, the Duke presided with the greatest decorum, having in attendance the regular clergy, cloistered representatives, and his own courtiers, using the high altar of the cathedral as a divine authorizing backdrop, and proceeding according to solemn orders and procedures written into a public mass. In effect, he let the prisoners “go,” and thereby promised to forget, erase, or otherwise destroy the records of their offences. The former *condemnati*, now physically “embraced” and personally “forgiven” by the prince, left the cathedral as “free” men and women, without “stain” of the recorded traces of their “disobediences.”⁵⁹

Besides these definitively appointed times, there were many other occasions when, at the whim of the prince, forgiveness of debt or criminal offence was accepted and records destruction ensued. Here again, these events were typically provided with a highly public ceremonial forum supported by a detailed prisoner selection process.⁶⁰ One could continue on to describe these occurrences at length, and, admittedly, the temptation is difficult to resist. Princely pardoning and amnesty, and their attendant records destruction activities, their relation to cycles of festivity and moments of public devotion, their heavy symbolic implications, and their intimate connection to rulership and the maintenance of law and order, reveal a great deal about contemporary social life. In fact, the revelation of these events in the chronicles and the extant papers of the Estensi *camera* and *cancelleria*, especially the texts of the “pardon tales,” are among the most important surviving sources for historians studying Renais-

sance Ferrara given the conspicuous absence of the *comunale* tax and judicial records (notably those of the *Podestà* and lesser sherriffs), many of which were destroyed in the unfolding of the events described above. As several scholars have demonstrated, using similar records in other locations but in contextually related circumstances and times,⁶¹ to understand how social life was organized and how political rule was exercised during the Renaissance is not necessarily or merely to understand the official enabling evidences of “power” – charters, statutes, investitures, decretals, laws – that provide continuity and legal fiction for the sempiternity of sovereign and other delegated authorities and describe the formation and management of the state administration, but also to understand the evidences of their application and imposition, which describe the status and conditions of the “powerless.” In other words, it is not sufficient merely to have access to the “self-reflective” and “self-establishing” records of constituted authority to remember the past.

As Michel Foucault once insightfully observed, to properly understand authority (the *eye of power*) is also to properly understand the effects of its *gaze* and other points of contact and intersection with the possessors of the least power. The site of the “least power” embodied in the *persona* of the condemned and its “treatment” by constituted authority often describes and defines the nature and meaning of the “super-power” embodied in the *persona* of the sovereign.⁶² Given the various circumstances that I have described above concerning institutional record-keeping and its associated acts of records destruction in Renaissance Ferrara, I believe there is a strong case for including decisions about the status and “disposition” of records among the contemporary treatments accorded to and controls exerted over the *body politic* by the prince. It is especially within the judicial business of pardoning and amnesty and its attending records destruction ceremonies that we encounter elements and representation of what could be called the *record-keeping and records destruction power* of the state, an important but heretofore unidentified component, I think, of what the eminent historian Sir Geoffrey Elton once observed in reference to the administrative revolution in Tudor England, i.e., the “making of a new kind of state productive of a new kind of society.”⁶³ Besides serving basic administrative and legal purposes, and providing the means to generate additional revenue for a cash-starved political regime, the production, management, and destruction of records by the Estensi bureaucracy were also used for the purposes of social control and public demonstrations of authority. In many subtle and not so subtle ways, the citizens of Renaissance Ferrera were ensnared in a “web of chancellery” spun from records.

In relating these particular features of official record-keeping and records destruction as they transpired in Ferrara during the fourteenth and fifteenth

centuries, some further questions and issues emerge concerning their historical and archival context. Although discussed by Renaissance historians in connection with the foundation, operation, and evolution of the Italian *signorie*, the contemporary phenomenon of increased records production has generally been viewed variously as the result of the expansion and concentration of administrative power in new central signorial agencies, renewed efforts to regulate and exploit commercial resources and manage the public fisc, the obligation incumbent upon the *signore* to maintain law and order as a “condition” of possessing sovereignty, and the professionalization of public administration through the hiring of university-educated laymen and clerics (humanist scholars, notaries, and *litterati*) in the creation of state bureaucracies. These are all perfectly legitimate and key observations. In the preceeding, I have also attempted to provide some additional context and conclusions about the operation of official record-keeping linked primarily to records destruction activities variously of economic, political, and socio-cultural motivations. What seems to have eluded discussion, however, is the function of contemporary record-keeping in the sense of preserving the records of the state for reasons other than their short- or medium-term administrative or other uses, notably for corporate memory and archival purposes. Why, for example, should only *certain* of the administrative records of the *quattrocento* Ferrarese *cancelleria* have survived intact into the sixteenth century, let alone through succeeding hundreds of years to the present day to stand ready for consultation in the reference room of the *Archivio di Stato Modena*? Is this purely a matter of chance, or evidence of early *archivy* operating implicitly and automatically – as some archivists have suggested – in dedicated conjunction with or observation of administrative record-keeping and *archival* requirements ordained by civil (Roman) law, or the result of deliberate interventions by individuals wishing to preserve or otherwise select records for the information and use of posterity or other reasons? What is the connection between the contemporary creation and increased production of records for administrative-bureaucratic purposes and the foundation and/or existence of archives?

On these issues, historians have remained largely silent, while either lamenting the documentary *lacunae* of the past or celebrating the documentary residue which has survived. In fact, while reviewing the secondary historical literature of Renaissance Ferrara and the Renaissance generally in the preparation of this essay, I could not find a single explicit reference in the “great works” and standard texts of history (including legal studies) to the operation of *archivy* in the modern sense of its meaning, or to any sort of activity which could be construed as the foundation of or basis for a contemporary *public archives tradition* borne of institutional record-keeping and the administration of the state.⁶⁴ Alternatively, a great deal of attention is bestowed by Renaissance historians upon the creation of aristocratic libraries; manuscript and “book” collecting; capital “investment” in culture; philologic interpretations of

classical texts by humanist scholars; historical writing based on “archival sources”; a new philosophic relationship with the historical past emerging with the development of a sense of historical anachronism in reference to the constitution, appreciation, and construction of social memory; even forgery detection by diplomats practising diplomacy and employing a nascent form of *diplomatic*. Have historians inadvertantly or otherwise ignored a fundamental connection between administrative record-keeping and the preservation of contemporary corporate memory in archives? Perhaps.

Alternatively, have archivists been inventing *archival tradition* by retroactively identifying and confirming certain conceptions of modern *public archivy* in the record-keeping and records destruction practices of the Renaissance and earlier, notably in complete isolation from the enormous advances wrought in the evolution of historical perspective and historical writing among other significant contemporary developments, i.e., as a “self-contained body of ideas about the nature of documents” entirely based on Roman Law?⁶⁵ I am concerned about the doctrinaire rendering of several “readings” of the medieval and early modern past, notably those of Luciana Duranti, which have informed the main archival-academic ground (in Canada at least) for some time. It is not so much that what has been written is inaccurate (on the contrary, and I defer to her expert knowledge on any number of points – though I do have grave reservations about certain claims), but that some of the dedicated argumentation either represents a highly selective reading or an inadvertantly naive distortion of the historical past. In this regard, to identify a few highly contentious assertions, the notions that “the Italian city states had democratic governments which, by the thirteenth century, had enunciated the principles of freedom of information and publicity of records,” or that these same city states had articulated official “appraisal methodologies” for the disposal of *comunale* records, or that the two seminal-fundamental archival concepts of “perpetual memory” and “public faith” based on Roman law not only “constituted the core” of medieval legal writing but had actually “entered the statutes of most Medieval city states” eventually to form “the basis for [European] spiritual and cultural unity,” must surely test the bounds of the most accommodating and congenial historical interpretation.⁶⁶ Such debatable claims aside, I am actually more puzzled and perplexed by what appears to be – at least from this writer’s perspective – an insistence upon the constitution of record-keeping and *archivy* as a pure *science*, as a corpus of natural, neutral, and *consistent* organic processes (in observation of certain administrative-juridical principles and ground-rules) of records winnowing, selection, and destruction over the passage of time, leaving archivists merely the task of arranging and describing the documentary residue, which ultimately forms historical memory of “public truth.”

For several reasons, this seems to me an overly-isolationist interpretation of *archivy* as a “scientific” phenomenon, which misguidedly, I think, separates

the development of archival theory and practice from its broader historical background. If the seminal conceptions and practices of *archivy* were originally conceived and early on (in the Low and High Middle Ages) evolved in a wholly administrative-judicial context – this appears a reasonable though not indisputable conclusion on the face of the evidence assembled by Duranti and other archival sources that she cites⁶⁷ – it is yet difficult to accept that all subsequent and legitimate developments within the so-called *science of archivy* have emerged without any reference whatsoever to the understanding, interpretation, or writing of history, especially in Western Europe circa 1300-1800. Not only do I consider this perspective to be misleading, but it plainly ignores a vast historiographical literature dedicated to the history of history, which plots a conspicuous contemporary course of “crossover” multi-disciplinary, inter-connective evolution between history, philology, librarianship, bibliography, sigillography, numismatics, encyclopaedicism, diplomatics, etc., especially during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁶⁸

It also betrays, I think, a very narrow and signally archival-minded view of what history and historical writing consisted of prior to its “professionalization” in the nineteenth century. In locating and articulating the roots and development of *archivy* employing historical argumentation, even dedicated expositions of the archival past such as those proposed by Duranti must give some attention to the broader perspectives offered by historians and historiographers, which may not – and do not in many instances in this case – arrive at similar conclusions. On this point, I refer readers to the views of Denys Hay, a much renowned and celebrated historiographer of medieval and early modern European history, whose overall impression of the “exposition of history” from the fourteenth through the eighteenth centuries suggests that there is actually very little to recommend a distinction between the occupations of chronicler, annalist, diarist, historian, editor, compiler, memorialist, remembrancer, commentator, librarian, diplomatist, and *archivist*. These were all occupations dedicated to the writing and preservation of historical *memory*. Indeed, Duranti herself makes some important connections between the *history of history* and the *history of archivy* which conspire to undermine what Heather MacNeil has called, in defence of Duranti’s perspective, “the essential autonomy of archival science from other disciplines, including history.”⁶⁹ For example, in the first part of her monograph series, which appeared in *Archivaria* over several issues (“Diplomatics: New Uses for an Old Science”), Duranti cites a monumental connection between the foundation of *diplomatic* with the debunking of the Austrian succession from the Holy Roman Empire by Francesco Petrarch (1356) and the Donation of Constantine by Lorenzo Valla (1446), which are considered by many historians to be the crucial events leading to the development of a sense of historical anachronism and the genesis of a modern interpretation of the historical past, but which she quickly brushes aside in a quantum leap to the seventeenth century and the foundation of an *archival diplomatic*

(now separate from *historical diplomatic*?). Perhaps I miss the subtlety of her argument, but a fundamental linkage between historical and archival methodology appears (to me at any rate) clearly established in this particular context, especially when considered in association with other contemporary intellectual and socio-cultural developments.⁷⁰

To be sure, there are other views which archivists must account for in an examination of their professional history. For instance, the eminent archivist Hugh Taylor once wrote about a “historical shunt” which occurred in the nineteenth century, when archivists were apparently diverted from the original administrative-bureaucratic official record-keeping purposes of archives to perform vocational craft service as handmaidens to historians and history.⁷¹ Is it not also possible that certain modern conceptions of *archivy* actually represent an “administrative shunt” from what has always been – in the words of Denys Hay, quoting the well-worn phrase often debunked by archivists in reference to diplomatics – “one of the ancilliary sciences of history,”⁷² amounting to nothing more than a modern “war of independence” conducted by archivists (as Italian archivist Elio Lodolini calls it) against the traditional view of archival science as a discipline “auxiliary of history?”⁷³ Is not all archival “activity” prior to the twentieth century ultimately *historical* in nature? How else does one understand or put into context the multi-form *memory works* of Pellegrino Prisciani, Professor of History and Law at the University of Ferrara and librarian-archivist of Ercole d’Este for thirty years (among other things), who was responsible for the creation of the ducal library in 1480 – now the *Biblioteca Estense* in Modena – and “placing into order” the documents of the *Archivio Segreto* (Secret Archive) in 1486 as ducal *custos* (archivist), but who also spent most of his time acquiring classical manuscripts and other documents for the “archives” in order to write commissioned histories and learned treatises?⁷⁴ Similarly, how does one place into perspective the professional life and works of Prisciani’s most illustrious successor, Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672-1750), possibly the greatest of all early modern European archivists (he was librarian-archivist for the Este dukes of Modena and Reggio for fifty years), but who, through his mightily prodigious and unparalleled output of chronicle copying, editing, and antiquarian-historical writing is reckoned by some scholars to be if not the “father” at least the “grandfather” of modern historiography, in addition to being an inspiration for succeeding generations of Italian archivists and diplomatists?⁷⁵ And what is one to make of the great Maurist scholar Jean Mabillon (d. 1707), author of the *De re diplomatica* (1681), the first major work on diplomatics and still considered in some quarters to be the definitive text on the subject? Celebrated by archivists as one of the “fathers” of modern *archivy*, he is also identified by many scholars to be the most brilliant historical academician of the late seventeenth century. In fact, the composition of his diplomatic treatise ultimately inspired the description of Mabillon as the “Newton of history” by his Bollandist rival Johann Von

Papenbroche, whose claims that certain early Benedictine charters were spurious actually encouraged Mabillon to produce the text.⁷⁶

Regardless of one's conclusions on these largely unanswered and controversial questions of archival-historical context, the connections between institutional record-keeping – including records destruction – and the foundation and operation of early modern archives undoubtedly merits further research. Some potential avenues towards this endeavour have recently been suggested in the work of Armando Petrucci – most prominently in his essay (mentioned earlier) “The Illusion of Authentic History: Documentary Evidence” – which have also some considerable bearing, I believe, on the goals and objectives of modern archivy. As Petrucci illustrates through the example of the medieval/early modern Italian chancellery, there is much for archivists to learn about the nature and purpose of documentation by using the “methodology and formal-analytical instruments that belong to diplomaticists” (what Duranti has called the “new uses for an old science”); however, in a simultaneous, and I would argue inspirationally post-modern – he quotes sources as diverse as Roland Barthes and Jacques Le Goff and invokes textual criticism of possibly hermeneutic dimensions – and insightful reproach of the traditional diplomatic engagement of documentary understanding as summarized in the writings of the master Italian diplomatist Cesare Paoli (1899), he warns against “the mistake of reducing the always projecting and variegated density of documentary sources to the pure and simple connection with the juridical event.”⁷⁷ In Estensi Ferrara, as I have briefly indicated above in reference to certain socio-cultural and political features of signorial record-keeping, there was much more to the contemporary processes of creating and destroying documents than an exclusively juridical purpose. Petrucci employs some other significant examples – the chancellery of republican Florence under the chancellorship of Coluccio Salutati and of Sforzesca Milan under the chancellorship of Cicco Simonetta – to arrive essentially at what I think is a similar conclusion. To paraphrase his analysis, during the creation of documents and during the different phases of elaboration and disposal to which they were (and continue today to be) subjected, records underwent modifications of great importance in form, substance, and status to the extent that there was (is) significant separation between the relationship of the actual action and “the shape of a manifestation of the will of the issuing authority.”⁷⁸ In other words, understanding the process of making and destroying records is equally as important – if not more – as understanding the legal status/constitution of the records themselves.

I am bound to say that Duranti would not disagree. There is an enormous complexity to the making and destruction of records. They are, according to Petrucci,

always influenced by varying moments, to whose achievement different persons and environments make contributions: it is a reality made of obligatory formalities, or more

or less long times of execution, and “administrative” and “propagandistic” deformations that are more or less conscious and vast. In short, rather than being evidence of a preceding or contemporary juridical-historical event, which is to some extent external to it, the document is first and foremost evidence of a process entirely internal to its own making. And only the reconstruction of the process of documentation, of its articulations and reasons, can permit us to consider, with both greater insight and greater humility than before, the complex relationship between written documentation and the event that from time to time gave (or should have given) impulse to the process of documentation: what we call, in the language of diplomatics, the connection between action and documentation.⁷⁹

In this context, I become uncomfortable when Duranti limits the definition and boundaries of the context consonant with the processes of making and destroying documents, i.e., the parameters of the connection between “action and documentation.” Like Petrucci, I take these parameters to be more overtly and broadly “ideological,” “historical,” or “social,” rather than neutrally and narrowly “administrative-juridical” or organically “processive” (Duranti). I am also convinced, unlike Duranti, that archivists should be involved in deciphering and representing, in the conscious appraisal and acquisition of its supplementary documentary context of contemporary *mentalité*, the background of what is ultimately, in *all* cases – according to Petrucci – a *process* of producing or disposing of “political” and “propagandistic” records. More specifically, I am concerned by Duranti’s insistence upon an unqualified core-essential connection between the *scientific documentation* (according to diplomatic and other legal principles) of juridical acts and the coincidental establishment or constitution of “public truth,” a notion which many modern diplomaticists have apparently long abandoned.

In the first place, despite Duranti’s evident admiration (which I certainly share) for the inventive brilliance of the medieval Italian city-states in matters pertaining to law and philosophy, the argument that an official record-keeping and archival infrastructure was established which in all cases *guaranteed* “public truth” – in any form other than in pure theory – is entirely suspect. There is a vast difference between installing a process to assign and/or preserve the authenticity and integrity of documents, and a process to create *truth* (is the latter even conceivable or possible?). Indeed, while it is perfectly clear that the basic elements of modern archival theory and practice – especially in matters related to records arrangement and description – are present in the record-keeping practices of the Este cancelleria,⁸⁰ and most directly related to the duties and activities of the local *College of Notaries* whose members were officers invested with the *publica fides* and largely composed the Ferrarese civil service – the roles and powers of the medieval notariate in reference to the development and evolution of record-keeping and *archivy* definitely require further study – it is equally clear that the constitution of the “public truth” ostensibly preserved in the Ferrarese archives through formal processes con-

necting written evidence and juridical events was also the product of an ideological system (in this case the signiorial system). Ideological and other socio-cultural and political filters – demonstrably including the fiction of narrative⁸¹ – are conspicuously present in any number of contemporary official documents, to the point that the Italian chancellery of the Middle Ages and Renaissance (certainly in Ferrara), far from being the resident site of “public truth,” was the official medium and administrative organ for the propagation of “forgeries,” “distortions,” and “nontruthfulness,” i.e., it represented an institutional paradoxical coincidence “between the maximum of authenticity and the maximum of nontruthfulness.” Ironically, in entrusting the *publica fides* and official record-keeping (*de jure*) to the *notariate* (which attained great power as a consequence), which introduced “formal complexities in the documentary routine,” there was a coincidental growth in the capacity of the chancellery to *lie* with impunity.⁸² The officially condoned dubious and even “illegal” business activities of the *quattrocento* Ferrarese *cancelleria* confirms this evident dichotomy of purpose. As I have attempted to illustrate above, all so-called record-keeping “principles” in abeyance, the Ferrarese *cancelleria* (and the ducal *camera*) did whatever it wanted in collusion with a corrupt magistracy and civil service, so long as it guaranteed a signiorial share in the financial proceeds of its record-keeping (and records destruction) practices. The Ferrarese chancellery sponsored and preserved its own “public truth,” or at least a version of it, much to the general pain and discomfort of the citizens it was ostensibly designed (theoretically) to serve.

It is in the recognition and investigation of this “creator context,” ideological, historical, social or otherwise, that we arrive at the heart of the most important occupational question confronting the profession of *archivy* today, and where I have the most profound difficulty in reconciling Duranti’s views with my own. I am referring here to the notion that in the observation, promulgation, and conscious regulation of *scientific* or other principles for official record-keeping archivists ultimately preserve the “public truth” for the use and edification of posterity. Quoting Sir Hilary Jenkinson, Duranti, for example, is of the opinion that the records of administrative or executive transactions,

because they are created as a means for, and a by-product of, action, not “in the interest or for the information of Posterity,” and because they are “free from the suspicion of prejudice in regard to the interests in which we now use them,” archival documents are impartial and “cannot tell... anything but the truth.”

This characteristic of impartiality, according to which archives are inherently truthful, makes them the most reliable source for both law and history, whose purposes are to rule and explain the conduct of society by establishing truth.⁸³

I must confess that I entirely miss the “subtlety” apparently revealed here, and that I find these statements (both Jenkinson’s original and Duranti’s

contemporary reproduction) to represent the most naive and optimistic assumptions. And in light of what apparently transpired at the Public Record office during Jenkinson's tenure on staff – the deliberate cover-up, destruction, and falsification of countless First World War documents revealing the most awful incompetence of the British High Command (Haig in particular) which cost the lives of thousands of men,⁸⁴ one must also wonder about Jenkinson's intellectual convictions in this regard. Whether or not he was directly involved, his approach to public archivy would (in any case) have “whitewashed” these actions: they happened anyway, according to the “neutral” and “impartial” principles of official record-keeping in the establishment of “public truth.” I am not so sure that archivists should be occupied with the definition and preservation of “public truth” as *evidence auditors*, but alternatively, should archival *science* continue to be satisfied with the role of passively accepting, preserving, and describing the “official records” – in observation of so-called *scientific* principles – even if some of them are patently “deformed” or “manipulated” or “untruthful?” Should archivists accept the deliberate or wanton or inadvertant destruction of records simply as evidence of contemporary *mentalité*? Should archival *science* be entirely separated from a complete understanding of the contextual processes external to the production of a document – which have obvious implications to internal documentary meaning – in the assignment of this interpretive responsibility willy-nilly to the “competence” of “historians?” Should archivists confine themselves exclusively to the task of being *neutral* information managers – which our forebears most obviously were not as both the legally designated and *de facto* “producers,” “shapers,” and “custodians” of *public truth* – in the service of the state and other constituted authorities? I do not think so, and Renaissance record-keepers and archivists evidently did not think so either.⁸⁵

On the contrary, archivists have an obligation and a responsibility to *inform* (not engineer) posterity, rather than merely to accumulate and preserve the so-called juridical “evidences” of the past, of which some will always be “suspect” even if the appropriate record-keeping procedures and formulas have been followed. We must try to understand, and somehow represent in the preservation of a substantial contextual documentation (social, cultural, ideological, etc., as well as administrative-juridical) for *evidence* in all forms – which may initially be represented by David Bearman's basic sense of a “documentation of documentation” – but which I would give much broader latitude of purpose, i.e., beyond accepting institutional or corporate “self-documentation.” In other words, archivists ought to become “analysts” and “keepers” of documentary context for documents by appraising and preserving the discourse of document-making. Unfortunately, the possibility of a professional vocation in this regard is currently limited, I think, by a number of factors, including an unwillingness to see or place *archivy* in a broader intellectual complex of *remembering*, and in some instances, a stubborn (and largely misguided)

reliance upon a conveniently narrow interpretation of the archival past to suit prosecuted purposes (and ideologies) of contemporary professional impulse in protest against being branded “second-rate” historians or historical “auxilliaris.” Indeed, as I have intimated elsewhere, it is much easier to suppose that something like modern *public archivy* in the narrow sense of its administrative-juridical meaning existed during the Renaissance (which provides a comfortable illusion of professional foundation) than to say what it really amounted to,⁸⁶ and it is highly debatable whether the existence of these historical precedents finally confer transcendent status upon some current archival claims and practices, which would leave archivists isolated in a bureaucratic pigeon-hole of “blind” state service. In many respects the history of archives has yet to be written, and it is high time, encouraged by some recent multi-disciplinary studies, that archivists begin to expand their sphere of interest and capacity of competence to a complete understanding of the documentary past and the articulation of its present and future. In the end, what I can most definitively say, on the basis of some research into what transpired in Ferrara circa 1350-1500, is that records destruction in the later Middle Ages and Renaissance was not necessarily the product of neglect or conducted in ignorance of its consequences. On the contrary, it was very often deliberate, highly organized, tacitly accepted, and even commanded by institutional authority, was conspicuously the subject of in-depth study and debate both by rulers and advisors, and was frequently supercharged with political, financial, cultural, social, and symbolic overtones. It is important that archivists begin to recognize that record making and destruction has historically often been – and often is – the product of forces other than bureaucratic institutions operating in the perfectly neutral-moral state of *governance* once imagined by John Locke and eventually assumed (implicitly) by Sir Hilary Jenkinson. Poor Tomasso da Tortona, who had the great misfortune to find himself in the wrong place at the wrong time, evidently learned this lesson the hard way.

* This essay is respectfully dedicated to the memory of my teacher, Professor Denys Hay (d. 1994), Chair of Medieval History and of the Department of History at the University of Edinburgh for twenty-five years (1954-1979) and an internationally noted scholar, whose instruction had a profound impact on my understanding of the Middle Ages and Renaissance in Italy. In many other subtle ways, which I did not necessarily credit or foresee during the seven years I was his pupil, his guidance would also subsequently influence my views of academic scholarship, history, and historical writing generally, and ultimately – something he would have been pleased about I think – my perception of archives and libraries as sources of historical knowledge and memory (in his upstairs “library,” Professor Hay had a complete “set” of *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, and he was entirely devoted to the antiquarian works of L.A. Muratori). Drs. Terry Cook and Robert McIntosh of the National Archives of

Canada, and my former NA colleague Dr Brien Brothman, now at the State Archives of Rhode Island, kindly read the manuscript and offered their insights and commentary. I also wish to thank my fellow “Italianist” at the National Archives, Monique Benoit, for her special assistance with issues and decisions concerning translation. As always, any errors of commission or omission are entirely my own.

Abbreviations:

ASMo	Archivio di Stato Modena
ASE	Archivio Segreto Estense
ASMan	Archivio di Stato Mantova
BEM	Biblioteca Estense di Modena
BCAF	Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea di Ferrara
Cal	Ugo Caleffini, <i>Chroniche del Duca Ercole</i> , Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS. Chigi I.I.4
CMPDE	Cancelleria Marchionale Poi Ducale Estense
DF	Giuseppe Pardi, ed., <i>Diario Ferrarese dall'anno 1409 sino al 1502 di autori incerti</i> , in L.A. Muratori, <i>Rerum Italicarum Scriptores</i> , revised edition, vol. xxiv, part vii, Bologna, 1928.
Zam	Bernardino Zambotti, <i>Diario Ferrarese dall'anno 1476 sino al 1504</i> , ed. G. Pardi, in L.A. Muratori, <i>Rerum Italicarum Scriptores</i> , revised edition, vol. xxiv, part vii, Appendice, Bologna, 1934-36.

All Italian quotations are presented in their original form and spelling. I shall be ever grateful to my thesis examiner, Professor Nicolai Rubinstein of the University of London, for his generous and egregious editing of my transcriptions.

Notes

- 1 Richard Brown, *The Politics of Magnificence in Ferrara 1450–1505: A Study in the Socio-Political Implications of Renaissance Spectacle* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1982), p. 41, which refers to a riot over the raising of the comunal income-tax and the murder of the *Secretarius* Tommaso da Tortona, head of the state chancellery and keeper of the tax records.
- 2 The standard texts on the history of the Este family and its long association with the City of Ferrara are by Antonio Frizzi, *Memorie per la Storia di Ferrara*, 5 vols. (Ferrara, 1847–1854); Luciano Chiappini, *Gli Estensi* (Varese, 1967); and Werner L. Gundersheimer, *Ferrara: The Style of a Renaissance Despotism* (Princeton, 1972). For the fourteenth century in more particular detail, see Alfonso Lazzari, “Origine della signoria estense a Ferrara,” *Atti e Memorie della Deputazione Ferrarese di Storia Patria* 14 (1954), pp. 1–68, and Jane K. Laurent, *The Este and Their Vassals: A Study in Signorial Politics* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Brown University, 1976).
- 3 Frizzi, *Memorie per la Storia di Ferrara*, III, pp. 368–372; Chiappini, *Gli Estensi*, pp. 70–73. Despite the expansion of civil bureaucracy vested in the *cancelleria* through the end of the

- fifteenth century, and its gradual rise in importance to rival the power and profile of the ducal *camera*, the comunal treasury remained a conspicuous source of signorial income, and was frequently tapped to underwrite everything from running and refurbishing the prince's court to building palaces and fortresses to staging ceremonies and "spectacles" to prosecuting military campaigns. For a detailed explanation of the organization of Ferrarese civil government and Estensi financial affairs and practices, see Pietro Sitta, "Saggio sulle istituzioni finanziarie del ducato Estense nei secoli xv e xvi," *Atti e Memorie della Deputazione Ferrarese di Storia Patria* 3 (1891), pp. 91–251.
- 4 "Vivat Dominus Marchio et moriatur Dominus Thomasinus proditur," Anon., *Chronicon Estense*, in L.A. Muratori, ed., *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores ab anno Aerae 1000 ad 1500* (Milan, 1739), Vol. 15, Column 509. See also Frizzi, *Memorie per la Storia di Ferrara*, III, pp. 371–72.
 - 5 It was not until the reign of Niccolò III d'Este (1393–1441) that the secretaries and chancellors ceased to manage both the cameral records of the signorial household and the documents of the chancellery. The most complete history of the origins of the *cancelleria* and Ferrarese record-keeping in general is found in Laurent, *The Este and Their Vassals: A Study in Signorial Politics*, esp. pp. 57–97. See also Paola di Pietro, "La cancelleria degli Estensi nel periodo ferrarese 1264–1598," *Atti e Memorie delle Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Antiche Provincie Modenesi* 10 (1975), pp. 91–99, and Filippo Valenti, "Note Storiche sulla Cancelleria degli Estensi a Ferrara dalle Origine alla Metà del secolo xvi," *Bulletino dell'Archivio Paleografico Italiano* 2–3 (1956–1957), pp. 357–65.
 - 6 Brown, *The Politics of Magnificence in Ferrara*, p. 41.
 - 7 *Chronicon Estense*, Column 509; Frizzi, *Memorie per la storia di Ferrara*, III, p. 370.
 - 8 James O'Toole, "The Symbolic Significance of Archives," *American Archivist* 56 (1993), pp. 234–55, especially pp. 253–55.
 - 9 See, for example, Luciana Duranti, "The Concept of Appraisal and Archival Theory," *American Archivist* 57 (Spring 1994), pp. 328–44; "Archives as a Place," *Archives and Manuscripts* 24, no. 2, pp. 242–55; "The Odyssey of Records Managers," in T. Nesmith, ed., *Canadian Archival Studies and the Rediscovery of Provenance* (Metuchen, 1993), pp. 29–60; and more generally in her exhaustive study of diplomatics, "Diplomatics: New Uses for an Old Science," *Archivaria* 28 (Summer 1989), pp. 7–27; (Part II), *Archivaria* 29 (Winter 1989–90), pp. 4–17; (Part III) *Archivaria* 30 (Summer 1990), pp. 4–20; (Part IV) *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990–91), pp. 10–25; (Part V) *Archivaria* 32 (Summer 1991), pp. 6–24; (Part VI) *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991–92), pp. 6–24.
 - 10 Armando Petrucci, *Writers and Readers in Medieval Italy: Studies in the History of Written Culture*, Charles M. Radding, ed. and trans. (New Haven, 1995), especially "The Illusion of Authentic History: Documentary Evidence," pp. 236–50.
 - 11 Cesare Paoli, *Programma scolastico di paleografica latina e di diplomatica* 3 (Florence, 1899), p. 18.
 - 12 A useful introduction to the social, economic, and political history of Northern Italy during this period, marked both by its critical examination of the sources and its analytic perspectives, is by Lauro Martines, *Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy* (New York, 1979), which also contains comprehensive bibliographic notes on what is inevitably an enormous literature at pp. 345–50, including most of the works available in Italian, English, and German. In addition to Martines, see also J.K. Hyde, *Society and Politics in Medieval Italy: The Evolution of Civic Life, 1000–1350* (New York, 1973) and Daniel Waley, *The Italian City-Republics* (London, 1969).
 - 13 Martines, *Power and Imagination*, p. 22.
 - 14 *Ibid.*, p. 34.
 - 15 For what transpired in Ferrara, beginning with the comparatively early election of Obizzo II d'Este as *signore* in 1264, see Brown, *The Politics of Magnificence in Ferrara*, pp. 37–130, and Laurent, *The Este and Their Vassals*, especially pp. 90–129. Notably, one of Prince Obizzo's

- first acts, later confirmed in the revised codification of Ferrarese statute law in 1287 (William Montorsi, ed., *Statuta Ferrariae Anno 1287* VI, 60, p. 390) was to outlaw the merchant trade guilds, and he also banished dozens of urban aristocratic families from the city, replacing them with his own noble supporters. Despite Obizzo's tactics, it was not until the 1340s that the Estensi finally stabilized their power with the successful realization of "refeudalization" and the resolution of internal family squabbles.
- 16 The master-work of Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, 1957), remains the standard text on this general subject, with numerous passages devoted to the writing and thinking of the two great Italian jurists of the period, Baldus de Ubaldis (1327–1400) and Bartolus de Sassoferato (1314–1357), but see also the equally impressive works by Walter Ullmann, *A History of Political Thought: The Middle Ages* (London, 1965) and Quentin Skinner, *The Foundation of Modern Political Thought, 2 vols., Volume One: The Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1978).
 - 17 For an explanation of the *mitade*, see Brown, *The Politics of Magnificence in Ferrara*, pp. 175 and 194, and Sitta, "Saggio sulle istituzioni finanziarie del ducato Estense," pp. 182–84. By 1496, in an effort to further increase signorial revenue, Ercole finally ordered all of the proceeds of condemnations to be diverted directly to his cameral treasury, subject to a public *mitade* amounting to a one-third share as a reward to anyone informing on a citizen leading to a successful prosecution, which abrogated the former comunal share, ASMo, ASE, Registri di Camera, *Mandati*, reg. 36, c. 127r–129r: *In favorem camere per condemnationibus applicare Camere ducale*. He also legislated a host of new civil offences, principally "moral" crimes such as uttering oaths, "terrible" blasphemy, "illegal" prostitution, etc., all with exorbitant fines attached. Naturally enough, citations increased dramatically and revenues soared. Meanwhile, as all of the contemporary chroniclers indicate (Caleffini, Zambotti, Zerbinati, Antigini, Mosti, Legnago, et al), the citizens of Ferrara "lived in fear," wondering if their neighbours were spying on them or were secretly paid informers in the pay of the *camera*.
 - 18 These kinds of arrangements were typical of the settling of outstanding accounts recorded in the *Compusteria*, the *Registri di mandati* of the *fattore generale* of the *camera*, and the *Registri di cancelleria* of the *Comune*, wherein magistrates, revenue collectors, and other signorial agents commonly accepted lesser sums and payments in goods and services in exchange for pardons and/or the cancellation of civil and criminal proceedings. It is also notable that the Estensi frequently paid their own householders and contractors in comestibles rather than in hard currency, which they conspicuously hoarded for themselves. Even the great architect Biaggio Rossetti, who was responsible for designing and building the famous *Addizione Herculea* (new town) of Ferrara in the 1490s, had to be content with a salary paid in "wood" for two years, ostensibly because he wished to build a home for his family, but actually because the *camera* was directed by the *signore* not to pay any household *stipendiari* in cash. ASMo, ASE, Registri di Camera, *Mandati*, 1497, reg. 37, c. 42v. Ercole's formal order merely confirmed a state of affairs which had existed since the Venetian War (1482–84), wherein most of his household were reduced to petitioning for their salaries in comestible substitutes, as were eventually the comunal magistrates, police, and notaries. ASMo, ASE, Registri di Camera, *Mandati*, 1488, reg. 27, c. 151v.
 - 19 Duke Ercole began to sell public offices shortly after his accession in 1471, and by 1486, as observed by the chronicler Caleffini, appointments to government posts were wholly commercialized. Cal, fol. 244v. Significantly, terms in office were for two years only, allowing the Duke to resell positions constantly in what was a thriving and highly lucrative market. The sums paid for these offices were absolutely astronomical by contemporary standards, especially for judicial and police posts, and such were their value that individuals were prepared to invest in their commercial "futures" and enter into onerous arrangements. For example, in 1493, Francesco Albaresani paid over 1000 *lire marchesane* (LM) two years in advance for civil tenure as a district Captain of Justice in Ferrara 1495–97. ASMo, ASE, Registri di Camera, *Mandati*, 1493, reg. 33, c. 222v. A similar sum was paid by Paolo da Pizabecari for

- the office of notary “de li Rebelli de la camera,” interestingly here with a clause of misfortune attached, whereby if the office-holder by reason of sickness or war did not complete his term, his heirs would remain liable to pay any outstanding monies owed the *camera* in satisfaction of the original agreement. ASMo, ASE, Registri di Camera, *Mandati*, 1494, reg. 34, c. 14v. Small wonder, therefore, that abuse of office and racketeering was common, considering that these individuals could only expect a salary of 150 LM per annum for positions which cost 1000 LM to obtain. ASMo, ASE, Registri di Camera, *Mandati*, 1493, reg. 33, c. 222v. For a full account of what transpired, see Brown, *The Politics of Magnificence in Ferrara*, “Crime and Crime Prevention in Ferrara,” pp. 163–204, and W.L. Gundersheimer, “Crime and Punishment in Ferrara 1440–1500,” in Lauro Martines, ed., *Violence and Civil Disorder in Italian Cities* (Berkeley, 1972), pp. 104–128. That Duke Ercole was devising fiscal plans and spending projections based upon *mitade* revenues derived from the prosecution of criminals is perfectly clear. He expected certain sums from each office-holder to be turned over to the *camera* on an annual basis, and assigned quotas specifically to this end. We need go no further than the case of Carlo da Conte, *Podestà* of Rachano, who was dismissed from his post in March 1496 for failing to fill his quota of delictual fines despite the fact, as da Conte complained, that war, plague, and famine had practically eliminated the local population to the extent that “there was no one left to prosecute.” ASMo, ASE, Registri di Camera, *Mandati*, 1496, reg. 36, c. 76v.
- 20 “Et niuno era ponito, et li boni erano oppressi da li tristi” (And no one was punished, and the “good” were oppressed by the “bad”). Cal, fol. 275r. Or as Caleffini describes elsewhere, “in questo tempo e tanti zagaduri et ladri et assassini in ferrara che e cossa Incredibile.” Cal, fol. 248v.
- 21 The irony of the “terrible crime” of visiting a brothel or consorting with a prostitute, regardless of the “public truth” in such matters, resides in the fact that prostitution was, as in many north Italian cities, organized and run under a state monopoly. Ferrarese prostitutes were obliged to register their names with the *Ufficio delle Bollette*, to wear the symbol of their profession, and to pay an annual tax to the ducal *camera*. *Statutis Civitatis Ferrarie 1456 V*, v, 22, *De mulieribus inhoneste viventibus*. The *Comune* proscribed “illegal” prostitution with increasingly heavy penalties, but the distinction between what was legal and illegal eventually became so obscure that the police and civil magistrates took advantage and simply arrested and prosecuted whomever they pleased.
- 22 DF, p. 184, ll. 7–8. Following this notice are three *bischizi* (sonnets) vilifying Zampante’s memory and explaining how he extorted monies during his career as a public sheriff, p. 194, ll. 15–41; p. 186, ll. 1–14. Mario Equicola, *Annali di Ferrara*, BCAF, MS. Classe II, no. 355, fol. 69r, identifies the assassin as one Girolamo Cassela da Reggio, who theoretically took revenge on Zampante because he had had him beaten, “et questo perche essendo Podesta haveva fatto dare molti trati di corda contro ragione al detto Girolamo.” Equicola was a renowned humanist “scholar for hire” and a noted Estensi apologist, and in this case, he is clearly covering up the truth of the matter. It is quite possible that Ercole himself feared Zampante (this is hinted by Zambotti), and had him murdered to eliminate what was becoming an increasingly uncomfortable relationship.
- 23 The infamous orders concerning “sopping up the gravy” were issued by Duke Borso in preparation for the reception of Lodovico Gonzaga (*Marchese* of Mantua) at the fortified town of Ficarolo in 1470. ASMo, ASE, CMPDE, *Carteggio de Rettori Modena e Modenese*, busta 2a: Borso d’Este to Luchino Marocelli (Captain of Justice in Ferrara), 24 February 1470. An extraordinary second letter was sent to the Captain of Justice in Ficarolo, which ordered all persons in the public debt and all prisoners awaiting trial for civil and criminal offences to be summarily convicted, with the financial proceeds to be turned over to Mauro dalla Carte, Provisory General of the Borsian court, to help defray the expenses of Gonzaga’s reception: “che tu gli faci ragione summaria contra tuti quelli che sono sotoposti ala tua jurisdictione et non solo summaria ma breve et expedita senza strepito et alcuno figura de iudicio et remosso... .” ASMo, ASE, CMPDE, *Registri di Cancelleria*, Lettere dal 1445 al 1449; dal 1469 al 1471, sez.

C., reg. 2, c. 17r. The orders to find money “in every place possible and impossible” were issued by Duke Borso (then Duke of Modena and Reggio) to the cameral *fattore generale* in preparation for his ceremonial investiture as Duke of Ferrara by Pope Sixtus IV in Rome (1471), which caused them to take “very menacing steps beyond harsh words” against the citizenry. ASMo, ASE, Registri di Camera, *Mandati*, 1472, reg. 16, c. 66r.

- 24 The particular details of Ercole’s passion for building and collecting valuable objects of art and “noteworthy people” (including the examples cited here) are revealed by Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti in his laudatory treatise on the Herculean Golden Age, ostensibly concerned with Ercole’s religious works, but ultimately concentrating on the virtue of *magnificenza* consonant with his creation of a splendid princely court. See Sabadino, *De triumphis religionis ad illustrissimum principem Herculem Estensem Ferrariae Ducem*, in W.L. Gundersheimer, ed., *Art and Life at the Court of Ercole I d’Este* (Geneva, 1972), MS. text pp. 29–114. Ercole’s somewhat unusual “collecting mania” (as described by Gundersheimer) represents a highly exaggerated example of what was a burgeoning contemporary interest in the acquisition of “objects” of culture, principally books, manuscripts, and plastic art – which the Duke also pursued in his typically monumental way with the creation of the *Biblioteca Estense* in 1480 – both as a nascent antiquarian pastime and as evidence of a dedicated adaptation of the “new learning” (the values of humanist education and scholarship) in relation to the “arts and graces of life” and the “day-to-day administrative machine” of government. Denys Hay, *The Italian Renaissance in its Historical Background* (Cambridge, 1979), esp. pp. 155–84. Some aspects of the contemporary obsession with “collecting” purely as an end in itself are explored in an intriguing book by Werner Muensterberger, *Collecting: An Unruly Passion – Psychological Perspectives* (Princeton University Press, 1994), especially pp. 175–83 on the activities of the Florentine humanist scholar Poggio Bracciolini (I am grateful to Terry Cook for drawing this reference to my attention).
- 25 Aside from the *Addizione Herculea* to the old medieval town, which cost an inestimable sum of money, the *Barco* possibly represents the most conspicuous of the consumptive extravagances of Ercole’s *signoria*. See its description in Alfonso Lazzari, “Il Barco di Ludovico Carbone,” *Atti e Memorie della Deputazione Ferrarese di Storia Patria* 24 (1919), pp. 3–44.
- 26 An incident which actually caused the Duke to subsequently penalize any individual involved in the theft of garments worn by Ferrarese citizens with “unpardonable death by hanging.” Zam, p. 70, ll. 28–33.
- 27 DF, p. 199, ll. 30–32.
- 28 Zam, p. 30, ll. 16–19; p. 31, ll. 1–8.
- 29 Despite the steady rise and extension of comunal taxes during the second half of the fifteenth century, the official appropriation of signorial shares (*mitade*) in the proceeds of civil and criminal condemnations, and the scheme of selling civil offices with all its associated pay-offs and revenue-generating deals, the annual *entrata* (income credits) of the ducal *camera* remained constantly insufficient to support princely consumption on the Estensi scale. Signorial agents regularly scoured the countryside and the great houses searching for financial “donors” using the tactics of forced gifts, wherein noble families were obliged to make “presents” of private possessions which would be subsequently placed in pawn as signorial security against bank drafts, and especially forced loans, in which individuals were coerced into handing over cash in exchange for virtually useless signorial IOUs. In fact, forced loans from the nobility were an essential component of Estensi fiscal policy. Typical of the lists of sponsors to be found in the cameral registers are the “impresto de Reggio” and “impresto de Modena” in 1475, when a chancellor was sent “a Modena et Reggio per sua S. atorli impresto... et de commissione de epso nostro S. missi in bancho de Baldassera de Giovanni mercandante....” ASMo, ASE, Registri di Camera, *Mandati*, 1474–75, reg. 18, cc. 157r–157v. It was also usual for the Estensi to finance state ceremonials in this way, as in 1502, when Ercole underwrote some of the expenses for the reception of Lucrezia Borgia by tapping noble resources. See for example the records of the chancellor Leonello Recepta,

- who canvassed the nobility in Reggio on Ercole's behalf to the tune of 15000 golden ducats (an enormous sum). ASMo, ASE, CMPDE, *Carteggio di Referendari, Consiglieri, Cancellieri e Segretari*, Leonello Recepta Cancelliere 1501–1509, busta 4, "Impresto de Reggio," 25 March 1501. The consequences of being caught in this signorial "net" were fiscally devastating to many noble families, some of whom were unable to recover.
- 30 It is difficult to summarize here the extraordinary lengths to which the Estensi went to maintain their local and international image as *magnificenti*. One of the most telling examples concerns the famous *triangolare*, an enormous diamond which was Duke Ercole's personal trove and signorial emblem (the exterior of Ercole's most famous *delizie* was completely fashioned with multiple diamond-shaped stone studs, hence the name *Palazzo dei Diamanti*), which he was finally forced to pawn with the Gondi money-lending consortium of Florence (a half-pawn was also consigned to the Medici Bank) during the height of the Venetian War. Just to borrow back this jewel for one week to wear it on the occasion of the marriage of his daughter Isabella to the *Marchese* Francesco Gonzaga of Mantua, Ercole promised the Gondi all of the revenue from the salt mines of Commachio for a period of ten years. ASMo, ASE, CMPDE, *Minutario Cronologico: Lettere Sciolte*, busta 3, 1487–93, *Ercole d'Este ad Salinarum Mutine*, 26 December 1489. For the complete story of these and other similar circumstances, see Brown, *The Politics of Magnificence in Ferrara*, pp. 37–60.
- 31 "Comi boni padri famiglia," as explained by Michele Savonarola, *De felici progressu Borsii Estensi ad Marchionatum Ferrariae liber*, BEM, Fondo Estense, MS. Latin cod. 215, Alpha W 2, p. 15 (I am quoting here from the "vulgar" [Italian] translation of the Borsian presentation copy preserved in the Biblioteca Classense di Ravenna, cod. ital., no. 302, at fol. 34v).
- 32 The list of "sacrificed officialdom" is a very long one. See Brown, *The Politics of Magnificence in Ferrara*, "The Image of Responsible Government," pp. 61–131.
- 33 The Marxist historian Antonio Piromalli, *La Cultura a Ferrara al tempo di Ludovico Ariosto* (Rome, 1954), and in "Società ferrarese e mondo morale da Pistoia all'Ariosto," *Italianistica* 3 (1974), pp. 600–618, perhaps made more of this opposition than he ought to have by concentrating on the satirical sonnets of Antonio Camelli da Pistoia and others, which were periodically found tacked to church doors and public buildings during Ercole's reign, and which clearly indicate popular dissatisfaction with conditions under Este rule. The run of events, however, does not, I think, support the widespread popular animosity towards the Este family which he contends. Nevertheless, I would not disagree with his general conclusion that Duke Ercole perpetrated "una mediocrità umana" in Ferrara, contrary to what was written about the Herculean "Golden Age" during the late nineteenth century, a traditional Ferrarese historiography which naturally found great favour among fascist historians of the 1920s and 1930s, and to a certain extent has since formed the historical view of the local medieval and Renaissance period (including the recent perspectives offered by Gundersheimer in *Ferrara: The Style of a Renaissance Despotism*), despite the important correctives offered by writers such as Montorsi, Farnetti, Zucchini, Lombardi and especially Franceschini in the 1960s and 1970s.
- 34 For details of the Pio Conspiracy against Duke Borso, see Antonio Cappelli, "La congiura dei Pio, Signore di Carpi, contro Borso d'Este, Marchese di Ferrara, Duca di Modena, scritta nel 1469 da Carlo da San Giorgio bolognese, con aggiunta di osservazioni e documenti," *Atti della Deputazione di Storia patria per le Provincie Modenesi* 2 (1864), pp. 367–416. The Pazzi Conspiracy of 1476 against Duke Ercole and its aftermath, which included a series of especially brutal public executions coupled with a "monstrous" mutilation of the corpses in the piazza, is related in the three main contemporary chronicles: DF, p. 91, ll. 12–32, 92, ll. 1–36; Zam, p. 15, ll. 26–29, 16–17, 18, ll. 1–35; Cal, "Guerra fra messer Nicolo da Este et ferraresi," fols. 78v–80r (Ercole's nephew Niccolo was "turned" by the Pazzi conspirators with the promise he would rule in his uncle's place).
- 35 This is the observation of the Mantuan Ambassador Bernardino Prosperi, doubtless an individual hardened to the cruelty of signorial justice, writing to Isabella d'Este Gonzaga upon the

- beheading of two young men in the piazza in 1491: “Ma in vero Sra. mia sel caso de Mes Zilfredo fo atroce et crudele, il vedere decapitare quisiti dui gioventi *e stato una cosa de fare piagere uno saxo...*” ASMan, Archivio Gonzaga, busta 1233, Bernardino Prosperi to Isabella d’Este, 10 October 1491. Ercole once described his personal commitment to public executions to his elder brother Duke Borso as follows: “La corte prochedera col pie del piombo [“with feet of lead,” i.e., “hanging”] contra loro et punirli secondo li statuti per quanto meritano et per la restituzione de le robe o del precio.” ASMo, ASE, Casa e Stato, *Carteggio Fra Principi Estensi* (a) *Principi Regnanti*, busta 67, Ercole to Borso d’Este, 24 October 1465. Judging from what subsequently transpired during Ercole’s reign, which witnessed an unprecedented number of spectacular public execution ceremonies in the piazza (previously, Ferrarese criminals were executed outside the city), it is not to be doubted that he meant every word. See Brown, *The Politics of Magnificence in Ferrara*, “The Spectacle of the Scaffold,” pp. 234–82.
- 36 *Cronaca Antignini*, BCAF, Coll. Antonelli, no. 257, fol. 27r.
- 37 *Libro de’ Giustiziati in Ferrara 1441–1557*, BCAF MS. Classe I, no. 404, fol. 10r. See also Zam, p. 200, ll. 24–30.
- 38 A remarkable incunable exists in the *Biblioteca Comunale Ariostea di Ferrara* (citation above note 37) which provides a notarial description of every public execution in Ferrara during the years of its coverage, and includes a painted depiction (at the central spine, fols. 17v–18r, known as “Il Supplizio”) of a scaffold spectacle which has all the “players” on stage at the “moment of truth.” It recalls all of the horror evoked by Johan Huizinga in his famous chapter on “The Violent Tenor of Life” in *The Waning of the Middle Ages* coupled with the graphic brutality of Breughel’s later sixteenth-century pictorial allegories. The overall effect is positively “freezing.”
- 39 As detailed in Cal, “Como fu per essere impichato Agostino de ferro,” fol 56v. Locally founded in 1366, the pious Confraternity of S. Maria or the *Battuti della Morte* (*Confraternitas batutorum nigrorum Sancte Marie Albe a morte nuncupati*) was a religious organization entrusted with the tasks of hearing confessions, comforting the condemned on the scaffold by offering prayers for his/her soul, and later interring the cadaver in consecrated ground, which had been customarily left to rot where it fell or else flung into the river Po by soldiers of the garrison. The *Battuti* initially operated out of the Church of S. Giacomo Apostolo close by the comunal gibbet, which was initially set in a swampy wasteland known as the *Prato della Trappola* near the fortified bridge of the Castel Tedaldo, but when the scene of capital punishment shifted to the city centre (piazza) during Ercole’s *signoria*, they constructed a new chapel and dedicated a cemetery beside the hospital of Santa Anna facing the eastern moat, and built a confraternal oratory immediately east of the square (S. Maria Annunziata) with endowments from artisans, merchants, and several prominent Ferrarese citizens. The *Battuti* wore long flowing black robes and were completely masked with facial visors topped with pointed caps depicted with white “skull and crossed bones.” It is difficult to imagine any solace being derived by the condemned with the presence of these sinister figures loomingly gathered on the execution podium bearing their relics and crosses. Brown, *The Politics of Magnificence in Ferrara*, pp. 222–23.
- 40 Possibly the greatest of the “stage-managed” events – according to several chroniclers, Ercole was actually feigning sickness to gain the sympathy of the crowd and had planted “rabble-rousing agents” in the city to stir things up – which resulted in the dismissal of public officials and their exile from the city by the *signore*, as well as a massive destruction of public records, the details of the Trotti expulsion from Ferrara are described at considerable length in Cal, *Partita del traditore de Paulantonio da ferrara pure adi novembre 1482*, fols. 170r–170v. There is evidence that some members of the Trotti faction were in fact conspiring against Duke Ercole with the Venetian *Visdomino* (Giovanni Vittore Contarini) resident in Ferrara in exchange for lands and titles, certainly the lesser sons of the extended Ariosto clan (Brunaro and Francesco di Rinaldo); however, it is also clear that the principal Trotti spokesman, Paolo Antonio, and most of his immediate entourage for that matter, had remained loyal, despite the suspicions of the people.

- 41 Whenever the Este actually got serious about fighting crime, notably during the 1480s and 1490s, they appointed “*commissione speciale*,” what amounted to noble vigilante groups with extraordinary civil powers to summon, arrest, prosecute, and condemn “malefactors.” This was of course tantamount to admitting that the regular police forces and civil justices would not prosecute anyone unless there was some profit to be gained, or that they could not be trusted to enforce the law. In fact, this was perfectly true.
- 42 All of these events, including the setting of the records destruction bonfire, are detailed in Cal, fols. 58r–60v.
- 43 Zam, p. 12, ll. 24–27, p. 13, ll. 1–3. Most Ferrarese chronicles mention the official “manifestation of joy,” but the anonymous *Cronaca di Ferrara*, BCAF, Coll. Antonelli no. 255, more fully reveals the violence, looting, and burning which attended the celebrations at fol. 39r., including the fact that the public notaries’ benches were also destroyed, which meant that there was no one officially present to transcribe “records” of crimes or take down complaints and evidence.
- 44 ASMo, ASE, CMPDE, Registri di Cancelleria, *Herculis I epistolarum registrum*, sez. C, 1476, reg. 4, c. 101r
- 45 Zam, p. 13, ll. 6–9; Equicola, *Annali di Ferrara*, fols. 54v–55r; Handedio di Vitale, *Memorie-Cronaca*, BCAF, Col. Antonelli, no. 257, fol. 7r.
- 46 ASMo, ASE, CMPDE, Registri di Cancelleria, *Herculis I epistolarum registrum*, sez. C, 1476, reg. 4, cc. 110r, 132r. It is interesting to note that a letter was also sent to the *Podestà* of San Felicia in advance of the “birth” instructing him to take precautions to safeguard the local Jewish community (especially in case it was a boy), indicating that Ercole fully expected violence against the Jews and their property as part of the “spontaneous acts” to celebrate the prospect of a legitimate male heir.
- 47 Typically, much of the legislation was devoted to the regulation of “mascarading” (permission to “disguise” was formally given by the prince every year on the eve of Epiphany), which provided criminals and mischief-makers with an obvious “cover,” but there were also measures taken to limit the number of individuals who could congregate together after dark, and prohibitions against post-curfew movement about the city without lanterns or tapers.
- 48 For example, Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1978); Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival in Romans*, Mary Feeny, trans. (London, 1980); Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (London, 1975); Edward W. Muir, *The Ritual of Rulership in Sixteenth Century Venice: A Study in the Construction of Myth and Ideology* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Rutgers University, 1975), etc.
- 49 Roger Cailliois, *L’Homme et le Sacré* (Paris, 1938), Chap. 3, “Théorie de la fête”; Joseph Comblin, *Théologie de la Ville* (Paris, 1968), esp. pp. 211–16. There exists a vast historical literature on this subject. See for example, Brown, *The Politics of Magnificence in Ferrara*, “La Città Festeggiante: the Festival Year,” pp. 283–484; Charles Phythian-Adams, “Ceremony and the Citizen: the Communal Year at Coventry,” in P. Clark and P. Slack, eds., *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500–1700* (London, 1972), pp. 57–85; Anne-Marie Lecoq, “La ‘Citta festeggiante’: les fêtes publiques au XVe et XVIe siècles,” *Revue de l’Art* 33 (1976), pp. 83–100; Claude Gaignebet, “Le Cycle annuel des fêtes à Rouen au milieu du XVIe siècle,” in Jean Jacquot, ed., *Les Fêtes de la Renaissance* vol. III, CNRS (Paris, 1975), pp. 569–78; Richard Trexler, “Ritual Behaviour in Renaissance Florence: The Setting,” *Medievalia et Humanistica* 4 (1973), pp. 125–44; Federico d’Agostino, “Il Rituale e la Festa Come Punti di Intersezione tra Rappresentazione Collettiva e Interazione Simbolica,” *Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia* 19 (1978), pp. 593–614; Jacques Heers, *Fêtes, jeux et joutes dans les sociétés d’occident à la fin du moyen age* (Montréal, 1971), etc. An excellent and more recent study of this phenomenon is by Robert A. Schneider, *The Ceremonial City: Toulouse Observed 1738–1780* (Princeton, 1995).
- 50 The most complete study of this subject that I know of is by M. Gary Dickson, *Patterns of European Sanctity: the Cult of Saints in the Later Middle Ages* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1975, 2 vols).

- 51 For a reconstruction of the "Calendar of the Festival Year in Ferrara c. 1500," see Brown, *The Politics of Magnificence in Ferrara*, Appendix B.
- 52 The notion of "invented tradition" and its relation to pseudo-historical commemoration in public ritual, state ceremonial, and popular holiday behavior is most extensively treated in an important series of six essays – by Eric Hobsbawm, Hugh Trevor-Roper, Prys Morgan, David Cannadine, Bernard S. Cohn, and Terence Ranger – edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Past and Present Publications, London, 1983). Since the appearance of this collection, a rich range of literature has emerged to explore the interconnections between invented tradition, public ceremonies and commemorations (statues, historic sites, etc.), heritage, and memory. See for example, David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 1985); Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York, 1991); and John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, 1992).

The notion of "inventing tradition" naturally extends to historical writing itself. In this general context, and for this specific reason, it has been suggested by some archivists (beginning with Sir Hilary Jenkinson) that historians are prone to "flights" of interpretation and hypothetical synthesis based on dedicated readings and manipulations of archival sources and documentary texts, and so are not suited to engage in archival work, which is allegedly impartial and neutral and deliberately avoids any taint of "subjectivity." Whether or not these conclusions are true (personally I think not), historians have, nevertheless, generally tended to recognize their own predilections, biases, philosophies, and ideologies – and have discussed them openly – while archivists have rarely ventured to examine comprehensively the history of their profession and/or the nature of their "archiviological" writings. Save the recent observations by Terry Cook in his much-welcomed survey/synthesis of twentieth-century archival writing, "What is Past is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas Since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift," *Archivaria* 43 (Spring 1997), pp. 17–63, archivists do not have anything even close to resembling the broad introspection of works (in the case of the period presently under discussion) such as Norman F. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century* (New York, 1991), or Denys Hay, *Annalists and Historians: Western Historiography from the VIIIth to the XVIIIth Century* (London, 1977), or Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1978), among a host of others, let alone the vast literature available on the "philosophy of history" and the recent "post-modern" debates.

- 53 Brown, *The Politics of Magnificence in Ferrara*, pp. 12–13, 372–77; 384–87; 13–15, 369–71; 371–72.
- 54 ASMo, ASE, Casa e Stato, *Carteggio Fra Principi Estensi*, (b) *Principi Non-Regnanti*, busta 131, Eleonora d'Aragona to Ercole d'Este, 24 April 1479.
- 55 In his efforts to obtain greater state control over public religious devotions (and inevitably, the substantial revenues associated with them), on two occasions Ercole strayed into very dangerous territory by actually ignoring the Pope's official appointments to local dioceses and selecting bishops more amenable to the prince's "temporal guidance." The Estensi usually succeeded in providing their own candidates to minor benefices and, by mustering their substantial curial influence in Rome, managed to maintain the management of some of the more prestigious and lucrative ecclesiastical offices; however, diocesan matters were something else altogether, and Ercole was finally obliged to withdraw his nominations in both cases. A. Samaratani, "I vescovi ferraresi di Comacchio nella storia della civiltà estense," *La palestra del clero* 42 (1963), pp. 730–41, 766–76.
- 56 For instance, one bewildered citizen relates how he was seized by officials of the ducal *camera* for failing to pay the cost of a licence and flung into prison; the following day he was released along with all the other prisoners in honour of the marriage between Isabella d'Este and Francesco Gonzaga. Yet only hours passed before he was dragged from his bed and imprisoned

- once again, this time by the *Podestà's* bailiffs, who acted “without respect” for his previous pardon. ASMo, ASE, Registri di Camera, *Mandati*, 1490, reg. 29, c. 39r. Signiorial amnesty in Ferrara, it appears, could be of an extremely short duration!
- 57 ASMo, ASE, CMPDE, *Carteggio di referendari, Consiglieri, Cancellieri e Segretari*, busta 4, Siverio Sivieri to Eleonora d’Aragona, 21 January 1493.
- 58 Brown, *The Politics of Magnificence in Ferrara*, pp. 372–77.
- 59 These annual ceremonies are described at length in Zam et al, the most significant passages of which are reproduced in Brown, *The Politics of Magnificence in Ferrara*, pp. 246–47 and 377–81.
- 60 “Whim” is the operative word. Just to celebrate his return to Ferrara after a lengthy absence, for example, Duke Ercole decided to “free prisoners and grant pardons.” As usual, the Duke called for the list of the *condemnatii* in advance in order to make some selective decisions upon who should qualify for amnesty based on the nature of the cases established in the pardon petitions. ASMo, ASE, Casa e Stato, *Carteggio Fra Principi Estensi (a) Principi Regnanti*, busta 68, Ercole d’Este to Eleonora d’Aragona, 22 June 1487.
- 61 The most obvious example is Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford, 1987). See my review of this book in Richard Brown, “The Value of ‘Narrativity’ in the Appraisal of Historical Documents: Foundation for a Theory of Archival Hermeneutics,” *Archivaria* 32 (Summer 1991), pp. 152–56.
- 62 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Allan Lane, trans. (London, 1977), esp. pp. 54–57.
- 63 G.R. Elton, *Tudor Revolution in Government* (Cambridge, 1953), p. 427.
- 64 In this regard, given certain claims concerning the juridical foundation of *archivy* in the Middle Ages and its centrality to the writings of medieval jurists, one would at least expect to find references to this phenomenon in Kantorowicz (*The King’s Two Bodies*), Ullmann (*A History of Political Thought: The Middle Ages*), or Skinner (*The Foundation of Modern Political Thought*), but curiously there is not a single one.
- 65 Duranti, “The Concept of Appraisal and Archival Theory,” p. 331.
- 66 Duranti, “The Odyssey of Records Managers,” p. 47; “The Concept of Appraisal and Archival Theory,” p. 333. Other archivists are also now beginning to question Duranti’s historical interpretations, notably Frank Boles and Martin A. Greene, “Et Tu Schellenberg? Thoughts on the Dagger of American Appraisal Theory,” *American Archivist* 59 (Summer 1996), pp. 298–310, esp. p. 300:

Duranti reminds us that the Roman Empire established two legal concepts regarding archives which continue to have significance today. Roman law established archives as places of “perpetual memory” and “public faith.” Duranti defines perpetual memory as a consistent, enduring, and stable documentation of past events. She defines public faith to mean entrusting the documents that recorded this perpetual memory into reliable hands, generally a state-run archives.

That these concepts exist, and that the concepts continue to have importance, is a point of some significance. But Duranti’s further statements, that Roman law, including these two archival concepts, “constituted the core” of medieval legal writing, entered the statutes of “most” medieval states, eventually became the “common civil law” of all Europe, (and one assumes North America as well), and ultimately formed “the basis for [European] spiritual and cultural unity” stretches an interesting observation about archival history beyond reasonable interpretation.

My principal concern here is with the distortion of medieval and Renaissance history through a selective “mining” of references coupled with *a priori* statements concerning archives and archival theory, which together tend to exaggerate the prominence and role – and isolation – of *archivy* in the contemporary remembering complex at the expense of other

intellectual and cultural developments. In addition, if the record-keeping and records destruction activities in Ferrara are any indication of archival practice in northern Italy during the period of the Renaissance, one is bound to question the concepts of “perpetual memory” and “public faith” as the exclusive guiding and binding principles which either prescribed the preservation or disposal of documents. As we have seen, there were also socio-cultural, political, and other, far more mercenary and self-serving records disposition “principles” at work in the local chancellery, some of which had a profound impact on the “stability” and “public truth” of what eventually survived in the archives for the information of posterity. In Ferrara, it was perfectly acceptable for the police, magistrates, notaries, tax-collectors, and record-keepers (*et al*) to erase, fix, tamper with, and rewrite the official operational documents of government for any number of ulterior motives and purposes. I must say that these frequent and gross documentary manipulations do not accord particularly well with the attributes of perpetual memory and public faith-truth ostensibly assigned to official records deposited in the archives as “prescribed” in Roman civil law, which are purported to have governed their impartiality and authenticity (and disposition-preservation) at this time.

In their criticism of Professor Duranti’s perspective on “archival accountability” based on classical European archival thought, Boles and Greene go much further than merely questioning her historical reading(s) and interpretations. In a significant and timely defence – in my opinion – of American appraisal theory against the so-called “universality of Roman archival theory,” they also make a major contribution to the modern archival profession by articulating the utility and legitimacy of what could be called *local domain* archival principles and practices. I have not the space here to comment on their arguments and perspectives, which have, I think, considerable relevance to the different operational circumstances, environments, and problems currently confronting archives around the world. Of course, as we have collectively learned through many information exchanges, there is also some substantial common ground (electronic records treatment, rules for arrangement and description, access to information and privacy, etc.). But does this entail a single, eternal-universal theoretical “beat” to archivy to which all archival drummers must continue necessarily to drum? And did this single, exclusive, and monotonous theoretical “beat” of archival drumming begin in the Renaissance or immediately before in passages from antiquity to the “Middle Age?” In the case of both the former and latter resonances, somehow I think not. There were – and are – many different archival drum-beats.

- 67 See also in this regard the recent study by Lawrence J. McCrank, “Documenting Reconquest and Reform: The Growth of Archives in the Medieval Crown of Aragon,” *American Archivist* 56 (Spring 1993), pp. 256–311.
- 68 Hay, *Annalists and Historians*, pp. 87–168.
- 69 The “leap” from historical to archival diplomatic has recently been the subject of some interesting debate between Tom Nesmith and Heather MacNeil over “our very different histories,” i.e., about the differences between the *history of history* and the *history of archivy*, or “the essential autonomy of archival science from other disciplines, including history” (MacNeil, “Archival Studies in the Canadian Grain: The Search for a Canadian Archival Tradition,” *Archivaria* 37, pp. 134–49, esp. pp. 144–47, analyzing and criticizing Nesmith, “Introduction: Archival Studies in English-speaking Canada and the North American Rediscovery of Provenance,” in T. Nesmith, ed., *Canadian Archival Studies and the Rediscovery of Provenance*, pp. 1–28; see Nesmith’s *riposte*, “Nesmith and The Rediscovery of Provenance: Response to Heather MacNeil,” *Archivaria* 38, pp. 7–10). Aside from revealing different ways of “looking at diplomatics,” this discussion recalls and refreshes some of the contentious rhetoric regarding the modern vocation of the archivist (either as information manager or historian) which appeared in the pages of *Archivaria* c.1985–1986 (Taylor, Cook, Bolotenko, Kesner, Cox, Spadoni, et al), and to which I made a small contribution at the time (Brown, “Reassessing the Historical Shunt,” *Archivaria* 21 [Winter 1985–86], pp. 5–7). Points were then and continue to be “scored” on either side. But what connection does the debate over the

modern vocation-occupation of the archivist actually have with the general substance and understanding of medieval and early modern European history? My problem with the “discussion” is not so much its current dialectical dimensions (and I said so at the time) – I would inevitably side with Nesmith as an “historian of the record” and “total archivist,” though I have some appreciation and sympathy for the partial application of some of the views of Duranti and MacNeil in the current electronic systems environment. However, I have enormous difficulty in accepting their clearly modern-contemporary perspective on archivy being applied retroactively over the pages of history. All my historical understanding and training is decidedly against any retrospective of the past viewed exclusively through predecided interpretive filters – here through a particular set of archival lenses – and in the case at hand, I think it both ill-considered and largely unnecessary, as well as pseudo-historical. The modern applications and utilities of diplomatic instruction for archival science do not need nor do they deserve the dubious benefit of an invented archival tradition: they stand on whatever merits they may have against other archival propositions and hypotheses. In my opinion, the relative value of this approach to contemporary archivy is not only demeaned by its own selectively constructed pseudo-history, but in the concerted effort to provide it with a form of antecedent historical legitimacy, it also leads to the distortion of history itself. A hearing of other views and perspectives is definitely in order, if only to situate archivy and archival tradition in a wider historical context and to deepen our understanding of our professional roots.

- 70 Duranti, “Diplomatics: New Uses for an Old Science,” pp. 7–27. For the broader historical context and the significance of both Petrarch and Valla’s documentary “decodings,” see Peter Burke, *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* (London, 1969), especially on the “criticism of documents” and the “rise of historical explanation,” pp. 50–104.
- 71 Hugh Taylor, “Information Ecology and the Archives of the 1980s,” *Archivaria* 18 (Summer 1984) pp. 25–37.
- 72 Hay, *Annalists and Historians*, p. 153.
- 73 Elio Lodolini, “The War of Independence of Archivists,” *Archivaria* 28 (Summer 1989), pp. 36–47.
- 74 For the career of Prisciani, see A. Rotondo, “Pellegrino Prisciani (1435–c.1518,” *Rinascimento* 11 (1960), pp. 69–110; Ferruccio Marotti, *Lo spettacolo dall’Umanesimo al Manierismo* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1974), “Gli ‘Spectacula’ di Pellegrino Prisciani,” pp. 53–76; Giulio Bertoni, *La Biblioteca estense e la coltura ferrarese al tempo di Ercole I* (Turin, 1903).
- 75 Hay, *Annalists and Historians*, p. 166.
- 76 *Ibid.*, pp. 161–62.
- 77 Petrucci, “The Illusion of Authentic History: Documentary Evidence,” p. 237.
- 78 *Ibid.*, p. 248.
- 79 *Ibid.*, p. 239.
- 80 Paola di Pietro, *I “Catastri delle Investiture” dell’Archivio Segreto Estense – osservazioni su alcune tipologie contrattuali* (Tesi di laurea, Università degli studi di Bologna, 1974); Laurent, *The Este and Their Vassals*.
- 81 Davis, *Fiction in the Archives*, especially pp. 7–35 (“The Time of Storytelling”).
- 82 Petrucci, “The Illusion of Authentic History: Documentary Evidence,” pp. 246–47.
- 83 Duranti, “The Concept of Appraisal and Archival Theory,” p. 334.
- 84 As revealed by Denis Winter in *Haig’s Command: A Reassessment* (London, 1991), which unearths a systematic government cover-up through the deliberate falsification of official history and the destruction of archival documents. See the recent review of this book by Tim Cook in *Archivaria* 43 (Spring 1997) pp. 193–97.
- 85 Petrucci, “The Illusion of Authentic History: Documentary Evidence,” pp. 239–40.
- 86 Brown, “Reassessing the Historical Shunt,” pp. 5–7.