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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following volume found its beginning in two sessions held at the April 2003 Renaissance Society of America meeting in Toronto. The original authors, in addition to Lisa Passaglia Bauman and Stuart Lingo, who joined the project later, began by presenting research on their respective della Rovere family members. The interaction provoked by the conference panel and continued by the publication project has produced a very cohesive group of essays that look at the della Rovere family as a whole, facing distinct but not uncommon issues at any given time. In the way that the book offers a perspective on the identity of various ecclesiastics, dukes, and signore of the della Rovere, we believe it will be complementary to the two recent publications: *I della Rovere nell’Italia delle corti*, 3 volumes, by Bonita Cleri, Sabine Eiche, John Law and Feliciano and *I della Rovere: Piero della Francesca, Raffaello, Tiziano* by Paolo Dal Poggetto.

From the very beginning Raymond Mentzer was very encouraging about the project, and two anonymous referees helped sharpen the focus of the book. For all the authors, I would like to thank them for their help, patience, and professionalism. We would have liked to include in this volume a work by the dean of della Rovere studies, Sabine Eiche, who could not take time away from other long-standing projects to provide a contribution. However, the bibliography shows that her work was everywhere a point of departure for almost all the authors. For the model of scholarship she has provided and the personal encouragement and help she has given us, we gratefully dedicate this book to her.

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INTRODUCTION

IAN VERSTEGEN

The della Rovere family, from the ambitious Pope Sixtus IV, Francesco della Rovere (1414–84), to the solitary Francesco Maria II, last Duke of Urbino (1549–1631), present a varied and disparate group. Spanning two centuries, the family includes bootstrap ecclesiastics like Sixtus IV, wildly nepotistic and scandalous creati like Cardinal Raffaelle Riario, to established Dukes of Urbino like Francesco Maria and Guidobaldo II, leading into the Counter-Reformation and Francesco Maria II’s final act of piety in the devolution of his duchy to the Holy See. To be a della Rovere meant different things at different times. Yet, due to certain constants like fairly recent ennoblement and ecclesiastical origins, the various family members shared something in common: different family members had to observe a similar strategy of self-fashioning that complemented their realities and maximized their success.

Since the publication of Stephen Greenblatt’s Renaissance Self-Fashioning, the notion that early moderns improvised their identities has become commonplace.¹ But the specific implication of Greenblatt’s views that selves were mere cultural artifacts, imposed by society as a fiction, has been more controversial. If identity was provisional and sincerity dissembled, individual agendas provided the anchor against which skillful manipulation of intentions and desires could be measured.² So what was the agenda of the della Rovere? How did they negotiate the economy of nobility in the Renaissance?³

As Richard Goldthwaite has argued, concepts of nobility were extremely fluid in Italy, especially when compared to the land-based aristocracy of northern Europe.⁴ With no sense of divine right, nobility oftentimes equaled power. Dynasties came and went, and with the nonhereditary papacy as the model of statehood, there was a resignation to vast political hiccups. Nevertheless, the northern model and the memory of feudal times in the medieval Italian past provided a powerful and resilient model.

¹Greenblatt, Renaissance Self-Fashioning.
²Martin, “Inventing Sincerity, Refashioning Prudence.”
³For an expansive discussion of nobility in the Italian Renaissance, see Donati, L’idea di nobiltà in Italia: Posner, Performance of Nobility.
⁴Goldthwaite, Wealth and the Demand for Art, 150–76.
The various essays collected here together chart the ways these realities found their individual instantiation in different historical moments with different historical agents. What each shares in different proportions is a unique recognition of Scholastic-Franciscan origins as providing a more authoritative claim to sacramental nobility than an ancient family; in the Sistine and Julian era, a sort of cultural capital competed with noble capital, and later in the sixteenth century, an enlightened nobility competed with a more ancient nobility. In fact, the notion of *sprezzatura* that surfaced in Urbino was precisely useful for the della Rovere in demonstrating a mode of behavior that made bloodline superfluous. This issue of identity and its maintenance, of carving a unique niche for a family name in a rapidly changing atmosphere, is the central issue.

By taking a synoptic view, this collection attempts to produce different conclusions than can be reached by examining isolated patrons. There are many mature studies of individuals from the della Rovere family. Although studies of the papacies of Sixtus IV and Julius II abound, rarely do familial considerations surface, or when they do, because they are examined through papal monuments, the result can be forced. Furthermore, both Sixtus and Julius had an unusual respect for the autonomy of the pope, which means they are least amenable to a family-inspired model of patronage. This book may be considered an interpretive addendum to recent work by Italian scholars on the della Rovere. It is less concerned with exhaustive coverage of the monuments of patronage than with the role of patronage in negotiating identity.

**THE BEGINNING—SIXTUS IV**

There would be no della Rovere popes, cardinals, or dukes without Francesco della Rovere (1414–84), who rose up through the ranks of the Conventual Franciscans to become pope. He was minister general of the Franciscans in 1464, became a cardinal with the titular church of San Pietro in Vincoli, was made cardinal protector of the Franciscans, and finally, in 1471, became pope. Although Sixtus quickly fabricated a family origin in the noble house of the della Rovere counts of Vinovo near Turin, making two of its sons cardinals (Cristoforo della Rovere, d. 1478, and Domenico della Rovere, d. 1501), the harsh reality for Sixtus was that his family were humble merchants. His theological training became his most important distinguishing feature, for he could lay great claim to Peter’s throne not through ancient privilege but through individual study, sacrifice, and devotion.

Understanding his background puts a new spin on Sixtus’s various projects, for many scholars have debated whether his papal projects can be traced to his beginnings as an Observant Friar. Indeed, Franciscanism was always close to his heart and actions.
In 1472, he made St. Francis’s feast day into a double feast and in 1477, he raised the Immaculate Conception to a feast, where it remained until becoming dogma in the nineteenth century. In 1482, he canonized Bonaventure. In 1483, he pulled the Franciscans from Venice to protest their war with Ferrara. But as Andrew Blume shows, it is difficult to discern dynastic ambitions in the works of Sixtus IV, for the simple reason that he was raised in the church and took its universalistic aims quite seriously and more often acted as pope than as della Rovere.

The resolution to this quandary may be that, in spite of his success as pope, Sixtus’s Franciscan affiliations served not to monopolize the content of the various programs, but as a feature of the pope’s identity as theologian and thinker. This is certainly the case in the most important papal portrait, Melozzo da Forli’s fresco from the Vatican Library, featuring the Appointment of Platina as Papal Librarian, where dynasty and theology are indissolubly linked. Jill Blondin’s essay shows how Sixtus’s Franciscan commitments continue into his reign in his patronage of the ancient site of Assisi. This nonpapal locale indicates the way the pope could divide his commitments between personal patronage and his own papal projects.

Sixtus’s nepotism was notorious and he elevated no less than six nephews to the college of cardinals. He elevated Pietro Riario (1445–74) and Giuliano della Rovere (1443–1513) in 1471, Raffaello Riario (1460–1521) and Girolamo Basso della Rovere (1434–1507) in 1477, and the two Piedmont della Rovere previously mentioned. The older view was certainly that Sixtus was not a very holy man, and his nepotism is proof of this. Furthermore, Sixtus’s nepotism led to conflict when nephews like Pietro Riario and Giuliano della Rovere openly quarreled. On the other hand, as a Roman outsider with none of the connections available to him to effectively administer the papacy, nepotism helped a difficult situation. Blume goes further to suggest that Sixtus effectively expanded his “church family” through these elevations.

An important fact is that many of these nephews raised to the cardinalate had also received training with the Franciscans, especially Pietro Riario, Giuliano (later Julius II), his brother Bartolomeo (1447–94), and Clemente Grosso (d. 1504). Numerous della Rovere daughters were sent to the Poor Clares. As early as 1471, Sixtus IV made his nephew Pietro Riario cardinal protector of the Franciscans. When Riario died in 1474, Giuliano della Rovere, the future Julius II, took on this honor.

Franciscan commitments most importantly included Marian devotion and this extended to the Holy House of Loreto, which was under the jurisdiction of Girolamo Basso della Rovere’s bishopric of Recanati. This was furthermore located near Sixtus’s most important strategic placement: his nephew Giovanni della Rovere’s (1457–1501) lordship of Senigallia. Sixtus IV had made Loreto a parish in 1482, placed it under

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10 Stinger, Renaissance in Rome, 95–96.
11 It is significant that the Franciscan Marco Vigerio of Savona (1446–18 July 1516) was allowed to use the della Rovere name and was, like Sixtus IV, a famous theologian. Confusingly, Vigerio had already abdicated his post as bishop of Senigallia in 1513 in favor of his nephew of the same name. He served as bishop until his death in 1560. His family intermarried with the Cibo of Genoa and continued to live in the Marche.
12 Deodata della Rovere, sister to Duke Francesco Maria, was a Poor Clare.
papal protection in 1484, and begun the church for the Holy House, completed by Girolamo Basso in 1500.\textsuperscript{13}

Sixtus was the greatest papal patron of the fifteenth century and single-handedly responsible for making Rome the papal capital it became; in the words of Raffaello Maffei (1451–1537) he “made Rome from a city of brick into stone just as Augustus of old had turned the stone city into marble.”\textsuperscript{14} He built several churches, many devoted to the Virgin, Sant’Agostino, Santa Maria della Pace, San Pietro in Montorio, and Santa Maria del Popolo. He built the Ponte Sistina leading to his Genoese district in Trastevere and cleared the Via Pellegrini, the processional route from St. Peter’s to St. John the Lateran during the \textit{possesso}.

**ECCLESIASTICS**

After Sixtus’s death in 1484, his family continued to have unprecedented influence under the friendly and pliable papacy of Innocent VIII. Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere is known to have been an antiquarian and collected many statues in the courtyard of his palace at SS. Apostoli, some of which he would transport to the Belvedere when he became pope.\textsuperscript{15} He not only decorated his palace, but also had Baccio Pontelli build the fort of Ostia, his suburbanian see.\textsuperscript{16} Cardinal Giuliano’s influence on the weak Pope Innocent VIII may have also resulted in the building of the Belvedere, again with Pontelli.\textsuperscript{17}

Things changed with the 1492 election of Alexander VI, Rodrigo Borgia, testing the newly ennobled family. As Dietrich Fernández points out, Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere retreated to Savona and showed himself to be already a great patron even while he was estranged from Rome after his uncle’s death. Embellishing the family stronghold in Savona, he built on a massive scale with the intention of fortifying family strength that might outlive the finite terms of the papacy. Ironically, the native line of della Rovere in Savona would turn out to be the least powerful.\textsuperscript{18} However, the noble della Rovere, counts of Vinovo (in Torino), with whom Sixtus had ingratiated himself


\textsuperscript{14}Partridge, \textit{Art of Renaissance Rome}, 21; Maffei is echoing Seutonius on Augustus.

\textsuperscript{15}Frank, “Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere”; and Brown, “The Apollo Belvedere.”

\textsuperscript{16}On Ostia, see Danesi-Squarzina and Borghini, \textit{Il Borgo di Ostia}.

\textsuperscript{17}On the Belvedere and Pontelli’s possible authorship (rather than Pollaiuolo, as Vasari indicated), see Fiore and Tafuri, \textit{Francesco di Giorgio}, 272.

\textsuperscript{18}The main later inhabitants of Savona were the family of Julius’s sister, Luchina, who married Gabriele Gara (d. 1479) and then Giovanni Francesco Franciotti, a member of Sixtus IV’s court. They maintained the della Rovere name; however, none of Luchina’s children remained in Savona. The dates of death are not known for either Luchina or her husband, Gabriele Gara, but it is probable that they lived in the della Rovere palace in Savona until their deaths. The della Rovere did maintain a presence in Liguria, however, through the line known as the Grosso della Rovere. They were descended from Simone, who was the son of another Luchina, the sister of Sixtus IV. Simone died fighting in the sack of Rome, but established a line resident in Genoa, of whom the last, who died in the eighteenth century, was the doge of Genoa, Francesco Maria di Clemente. I am grateful to Henry Dietrich-Fernández for supplying this information.
with the nomination to cardinal of the brothers Cristoforo and Domenico della Rovere had a real foothold. Domenico paid for the building of Turin Cathedral, the family Castello della Rovere, and also owned the Palazzo della Rovere in Rome in the Borgo (now Palazzo dei Penitenzieri), the palace in the style of the apostolic palace he hopefully emulated. The Vinovo-Turin della Rovere continued to hold power well into the sixteenth century, producing several archbishops beyond Domenico (Giovanni Francesco della Rovere, 1509–15 and Girolamo della Rovere, 1564–92).

Clearly, Julius II (1443–1513) had one of the most spectacular papacies of the Renaissance. His patronage is a small library in itself. His projects include the Belvedere (Bramante) connecting the Vatican to the papal villa, new apartments by Raphael, the vault decoration of the Sistine Chapel by Michelangelo, a monumental tomb (Michelangelo), numerous civic works including the Via Giulia, a projected prison, improved Roman churches (most notably the new choir for Santa Maria del Popolo by Bramante, and ex novo churches like Santa Maria di Loreto), and finally additions to the Holy House and apostolic palace of Loreto itself.

Similarly, Marian churches, like Santa Maria del Popolo, which housed the remains of his relatives Cristoforo and Domenico della Rovere (of the Turin branch) and Girolamo Basso of the Savona branch, received attention from Julius II. Lisa Passaglia Bauman shows how this della Rovere mausoleum greeted visitors to the city at the northern gate of the city (Porta del Popolo) and, through its conservative monumental tombs and decoration (Pinturicchio frescoes), announced the della Rovere as already established even as they were erected.

The prototypical papal portrait by Raphael (National Gallery, London), for instance, debuted in Santa Maria del Popolo. As noted, Bramante’s new choir for the Popolo made the church a frequent stop on Julius’s itinerary. For that matter, Raphael’s work for Agostini Chigi, the adopted son of Julius II, who permitted him to incorporate the oak into his arms, can be related to della Rovere Franciscan themes. Chigi’s chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo (again, Sixtus’s and Julius’s church) included a change of dedication to the Virgin of Loreto, of course a direct reference to Sixtus’s and Julius’s various works on behalf of its cult. In this way, Marian themes were underscored in this Augustinian church.

Julius in turn continued to populate the college of cardinals with relations. Julius elevated Clemente Grosso (1503; d. 1504), Galeotto Franciotto della Rovere (1504, d. 1507), Leonardo Grosso della Rovere (1505, d. 1520), and Sisto Gara della Rovere.

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20 See the genealogical table in Grosso and Mellano, La controriforma nella arcidiocesi di Torino.

21 For a useful overview of Julius II’s patronage, see Shaw, Julius II: Warrior Pope; and Bottaro, Dagnino, and Terminiello, Sisto IV e Giulio II: Mecenati e promotori di cultura.

22 The year of Girolamo Basso’s death (1507), Julius transferred the authority for the Holy House of Loreto from the bishop of Recanati to the church.


24 Rowland, “Render unto Caesar the Things Which are Caesar’s,” 694.
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two prominent women of the Italian Renaissance. Currently she is associate professor of art history at University of California, Riverside.

*Ian Verstegen* received his PhD in art history from Temple University. He has previously published articles on Federico Barocci and linear perspective in the Renaissance. He is an independent scholar living in Philadelphia.
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d. = died
r. - reigned
m. = married to
bold numerals = illustrations

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