

## *A Life in Letters*

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I say to you Giovanni that I had no greater trust in anyone in this world than I had in you, but I have seen in this journey what I am when I am with you, and it would have been much better if I had realized before and I will act in a different way than I have acted up until now. The trust I had in you duped me, but from this day on I wash my hands of all your affairs, as I would receive nothing but shame for it. It is also better that where I cannot gain, I will not act further in this matter. (Letter 1)

Maria Salviati de' Medici (1499–1543) was not quite fifteen when she wrote these words in May 1514 to her then fiancé, Giovanni di Giovanni di Pierfrancesco de' Medici (1498–1526). The fiery language of her letter demonstrates the anger and disappointment that Maria sometimes expressed to Giovanni—on more than one occasion—and to other men at certain times of travail in her life.

Many of the key moments in Maria's life were connected to the political fortunes of her maternal relatives—the Medici. Florence's republican government was inspired by the classical Greek and Roman republics. It was an all-male elite polity, which had a conciliar government whose members rotated through a series of short-term elected offices. The purpose of this type of governance structure was to prevent the domination of government by one family or individual. Nevertheless from 1434 for sixty years the Medici family was the most prominent family in the Florentine republic. Its leaders characterized themselves as “first amongst equals,” while controlling its political, cultural, religious, social, and economic institutions as its chief patrons and de facto rulers, until the male members of the family were expelled in November 1494.<sup>1</sup> Five years later, Maria was born and began her life in a city in which the new anti-Medicean government was fearful that Maria's Medici relatives would return to power. In 1512, the Medici family did, indeed, return and were once again powerful patrons and de facto rulers of Florence and its territories—until May 1527, when they were ousted once again, this time for a period of three years. When they were in power, Maria could act as a patron to others as well as an intercessor with more powerful and influential members of the family or with employees of their regime. But even in exile, she would use her station and influence to try to turn things to advantage. In 1530, the

1. For a critical discussion on the Medici family and the extent of its power in fifteenth-century Florence, see Robert Black and John E. Law, eds., *The Medici: Citizens and Masters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

Medici family again returned to Florence, this time as hereditary rulers.<sup>2</sup> By her final years, she had become “Lady Maria,” the powerful dowager in a Medici duchy.

Maria’s words in the first letter in this collection (letter 1) indicate that already at a young age she had a sophisticated understanding of her obligations as a Medici patron. She understood that clients expected patrons to get things done for them in an effective manner. For the women of the Medici family, in particular, the ability to write letters of intercession and recommendation to powerful men—often, but not always, their male relatives—made these women powerful patrons and figures of authority and influence in their own right. In republican Florence, the capacity of women to intercede with more powerful kin, friends, neighbors, or godparents, or, indeed, with other more influential women in their circle, enabled both men and women to participate in an important informal under-government that ran alongside the more formal government structures.<sup>3</sup> By the early sixteenth century, many more people were writing letters to powerful people (male and female) in the hopes of obtaining patronage from them.<sup>4</sup> Maria was still just a teenager when she embarked on her career as a writer of such strategic and influential letters. The exact details of the situation that provoked her letter to Giovanni are not stated explicitly, but it is obvious that the source of the difficulties was Giovanni’s failure to inform Maria of the trouble he had just caused. Failure to resolve such a situation would be shameful and dishonorable for the patrons concerned and could damage their reputations, with severe consequences. As one member of the Florentine elite put it in the mid-fifteenth century: “Life without honor is a living death.”<sup>5</sup> It is a sentiment with which Maria would have concurred.

Maria’s letter to Giovanni opens a voluminous correspondence, which documents the life of this significant Florentine noblewoman. Through her correspondence we can observe the key personalities and events that influenced the

2. For the broad contours of this history of the Medici family, see John M. Najemy, *A History of Florence: 1200–1575* (Malden, MA, and Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2006).

3. On the concept of under-government, see Francis William Kent and Patricia Simons, “Renaissance Patronage: An Introductory Essay,” in *Patronage, Art, and Society in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Francis William Kent and Patricia Simons (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 78.

See Natalie R. Tomas, *The Medici Women: Gender and Power in Renaissance Florence* (Aldershot, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2003; reprinted London and New York: Routledge, 2017), VitalSource Bookshelf edition, 44–64, for an extensive discussion and references on this theme in relation to the Medici women of the previous generations in republican Florence.

4. Carolyn James and Jessica O’Leary, “Letter Writing and Emotions,” in *Routledge History of Emotions 1100–1700*, ed. Andrew Lynch and Susan Broomhall (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 256–68, esp. 261–62.

5. On this theme, see Tomas, *Medici Women*, 64, and the references cited there, including the source of the quotation at 64 n. 206.

transition of Florence from republic to principate in the 1520s and 1530s.<sup>6</sup> Maria's maternal and paternal relatives shaped and participated in the key events of these decades. The men included bankers, cardinals, diplomats, politicians and soldiers, rulers of Florence, and two Medici popes. Maria's mother and her aunts were influential advocates at the papal court, and Maria's aunt by marriage, Alfonsina Orsini de' Medici (1472–1520), governed the city as its de facto ruler from 1515 in the absence of her son, Lorenzo di Piero di Lorenzo de' Medici (1492–1519) (hereafter Lorenzo II de' Medici). Maria's correspondence also lets us see how she responded to the various crises that confronted her over her lifetime and how she seized the opportunities that presented themselves to advance her husband's and son's careers and, to some extent, her own.

Maria's voice, and the echoes of her voice—reflected or refracted in the letters she received—were complex in tone and connected to the changing circumstances in which she found herself. Maria's efforts to be a dutiful wife to Giovanni are obvious in many of the letters she sent him. However, when his actions caused, or threatened to cause, trouble, most often to himself but also sometimes to her, she made her feelings plain. Maria was also devoted to their son, Cosimo di Giovanni di Pierfrancesco de' Medici (1519–1574). Her fierce loyalty and concern for the health and welfare of husband and son meant that at times Maria risked being perceived as disrespectful toward male elders. Nevertheless, she always tried to portray her actions as those of a dutiful daughter, wife, or widowed mother who was trying to support both husband and son in difficult times. As a mature widow, with a young son to raise, Maria viewed her supreme obligation as supporting Cosimo's interests at all times. This attitude prompted her occasionally to disobey the requests of the male members of her natal family. The replies to Maria's letters by sometimes harried male employees, such as that of Cosimo's tutor, the priest Pierfrancesco Riccio (1501–1563), enable the reader to “hear” the echo of the widowed Maria's voice in their replies.

Cosimo's unexpected accession to the position of head of the Florentine republic in January 1537—he was later confirmed as its duke by imperial decree in September—enabled Maria to become the most influential woman in his regime.<sup>7</sup> As the duke's mother, Maria occupied a very powerful, albeit not formalized, position at his court and within his regime. That level of influence lasted until the arrival of Cosimo's wife, Eleonora di Toledo (1522–1562), in late June 1539. Before Eleonora's arrival, Maria had engaged with Cosimo's secretaries and ambassadors on government business and was a key advisor; she may even have acted as regent

6. Najemy, *History of Florence*, 419–68.

7. For a discussion of the events of this period relating to Cosimo de' Medici's accession and his eventual use of the title Duke of Florence, see Nicholas Scott Baker, *The Fruit of Liberty: Political Culture in the Florentine Renaissance, 1480–1550* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 190–93.

during Duke Cosimo I's absences.<sup>8</sup> Maria's role changed after Eleonora's arrival—except for her role as an intercessor with Cosimo and other influential members of the regime, which continued on without interruption. Her position as “Lady Maria” at her son's court had a major impact on her final years. She became the manager of the ducal children's court, an important responsibility that helped to guarantee the Medici regime's future. After 1540, her correspondence documented both her continuing influence at the court but also her declining health, to which Maria seemed somewhat resigned in her last surviving letter, written to her daughter-in-law about a week before her death.

Maria was a prolific letter writer. Her extant correspondence consists of over three hundred letters, spanning the period from some months after her betrothal to Giovanni in 1513 to shortly before her death in 1543. A similar number of letters received from other correspondents have survived.<sup>9</sup> Thus it is possible to examine Maria's life story in fairly extensive detail, from relatively early in her life until her death. Out of that voluminous correspondence, I have selected 150 letters that best illustrate the trajectory of her life as well as the breadth and depth of her correspondence. The majority of the letters I have chosen to translate (106) were written by Maria herself. Of the remaining forty-four letters, eight were from women and the remainder, thirty-six, from men.

Maria's correspondence provides an insight into how early modern Italian aristocratic women were able to exert influence and sometimes even to exercise power much greater than their formal position would seem to indicate. She used her family connections, as I have noted, to promote her husband's and son's interests, including in the supposedly all-male arena of the papal court. Maria did this by appealing to her relatives in positions of power to support her husband or son financially or by obtaining appropriate positions or jobs for them. Occasionally, she would use her connections to write to an intermediary to request assistance if she could not write to the person directly. That person would then speak or write directly to the patron, asking for the favor on her behalf. Maria's elder brother, Cardinal Giovanni Salviati, acted as her intermediary in requesting aid from the French king, Francis I (r. 1515–1547), after her husband's death, for example. At

8. Natalie R. Tomas, “‘With his authority she used to manage much business’: The Career of Signora Maria Salviati and Duke Cosimo I de' Medici,” in *Studies on Florence and the Italian Renaissance in Honour of F. W. Kent*, ed. Peter Howard and Cecilia Hewlett (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2016), 139. There was no formal appointment of a regent at this time. As the most senior member of Cosimo's family, Maria may have taken on the responsibilities of regent informally.

9. For an inventory of Maria Salviati's correspondence, see Georgia Arrivo, *Scritture delle donne di casa Medici nei fondi dell'Archivio di Stato di Firenze (Mediceo avanti il Principato, Mediceo del Principato, Miscellanea Medicea, Guardaroba Medicea, Carte Stroziane 1a e IIIa Serie, Depositeria Generale, Ducato d'Urbino, Acquisti e Doni)* (2003), 9–19. <[http://www.archiviodistato.firenze.it/memoriadonne/cartedidonne/cdd\\_02\\_arrivo.pdf](http://www.archiviodistato.firenze.it/memoriadonne/cartedidonne/cdd_02_arrivo.pdf)>. The surviving correspondence indicates that Maria sent and received many more letters that no longer exist.

other times Maria would appeal directly to an influential relative, such as her elder brother or Pope Clement VII (Giulio di Giuliano di Piero de' Medici), for the assistance. She would appeal to her son, Cosimo, once he unexpectedly became Duke of Florence, to influence him and to benefit others. Like other married women, and widows in particular, Maria also acted as a marriage broker. Both Duke Cosimo and others asked her to arrange marriage alliances among the local Tuscan elite.<sup>10</sup> Maria's role as a broker of marriages helped her, too, to act as a mediator in disputes, sometimes between different members of elite families and at other times for poor clients.

Maria is an unusual example of a widow who managed to exercise considerable influence in courtly environments, even though she was never brought up to exercise such a role. Her correspondence provides an important gendered perspective on the Medici transition from a republican first family to ducal rulers.<sup>11</sup> In this perspective, Maria's life and her relationships are seen as an example of a female career,<sup>12</sup> rather than solely as a lens through which to view the lives of her more famous husband and son.<sup>13</sup>

10. Tomas, "With his authority," 143.

11. On this whole theme, see Tomas, *Medici Women*.

12. For a discussion of the concept of a female career for aristocratic women in this period, see Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women 1450–1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 5, 26. For Maria's career at her son's court, see Tomas, "With his authority."

13. Maria's husband, Giovanni de' Medici, was a famous mercenary soldier, some of whose correspondence was published in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, in part due to his mythical, heroic status. See Pierre Gauthiez, "Nuovi documenti intorno a Giovanni de' Medici detto delle Bande Nere," *ASI* 30, no. 227 (1902): 71–107, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44459389>>, "Nuovi documenti intorno a Giovanni de' Medici detto delle Bande Nere," *ASI* 30, no. 228 (1902): 326–62, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44456420>>, and *ASI* 31, no. 229 (1903): 97–126, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44459548>>; Filippo Moisè and Carlo Milanese, "Lettere inedite e testamento di Giovanni de' Medici detto delle Bande Nere con altri di Maria e Iacopo Salviati," *ASI* 7, no. 2 (1858): 3–48, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44452549>>; Carlo Milanese, "Lettere di Giovanni de' Medici detto delle Bande Nere," *ASI* 8, no. 1 (1858): 3–40, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44452576>>, *ASI* 9, no. 1 (1859): 3–29, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44454564>>, and *ASI* 9, no. 2 (1859): 109–47, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44454591>>. For a recent discussion that unpicks the mythology around Giovanni, see Maurizio Arfaio, *The Black Bands of Giovanni: Infantry and Diplomacy During the Italian Wars (1526–1528)* (Pisa: Pisa University Press, Edizioni Plus, 2005).

Cosimo I de' Medici's unexpected accession to the duchy of Florence has prompted historians to investigate how his upbringing may have contributed to his success. See Cesare Guasti, "Alcuni fatti della prima giovinezza di Cosimo I de' Medici," *GSAT* 2 (1858): 13–64, 295–320 <<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015022372257&view=1up&seq=19&skin=2021&q1=64>>.

Several of Cosimo's early letters can be found in Cosimo I de' Medici, *Lettere*, ed. Giorgio Spini (Florence: Vallecchi, 1940). An older biography of Cosimo I de' Medici that is still useful (and is also currently the only biography available in English) is Cecily Booth, *Cosimo I, Duke of Florence* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1921). See now Alessio Assonitis and Henk Th. van Veen,

*Maria's Early Life*

Maria Maddalena Romola di Jacopo di Giovanni di Alemanno Salviati was born on Wednesday, 17 July 1499, in Florence and was baptized on the same day.<sup>14</sup> She was the seventh of thirteen children born to Jacopo di Giovanni di Alemanno Salviati (1461–1533) and Lucrezia di Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici (1470–1553).<sup>15</sup>

Jacopo Salviati was from an elite Florentine family and became an eminent banker and politician. Lucrezia was the eldest daughter of Lorenzo di Piero di Cosimo de' Medici (1449–1492), who was Florence's de facto ruler from 1469 to 1492. Maria, therefore, was born into one of the most elite families in Florence. At the time of Maria's birth in 1499, the Medici family were in exile, but Jacopo Salviati, his wife, and children were able to remain in their native city despite their strong Medicean links because of Jacopo's republican sympathies and ties to the leaders of the anti-Medicean regime in Florence.<sup>16</sup>

Apart from her birth record, there is little surviving documentation regarding Maria's early life before her marriage. Like many other upper-class Florentine girls, she may have been taught the Italian alphabet by her mother, before she turned seven.<sup>17</sup> From that point onward, she was probably educated at home by a tutor or sent to a convent to learn to read, and possibly to write as well as to count.<sup>18</sup> Irene Fosi has suggested that Maria and her younger sister, Francesca,

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eds., *A Companion to Cosimo I de' Medici* (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

14. Maria's birthdate and other names are recorded in the birth register housed in the Florentine Cathedral; AODSMFF 225 272r. <<http://archivio.operaduomo.fi.it/battesimi>>.

On the large numbers of Florentine children who had a given name of Romolo/a during the last decades of the fifteenth century and the early decades of the sixteenth century, see Christianne Klapisch-Zuber, "San Romolo: Un vescovo, un lupo, un nome alle origini dello stato moderno," *ASI* 55, no. 1 (1997): 3–48, 6. <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26222046>>.

15. A complete list of their children can be found in Pierre Hurtubise, *Une famille-témoin: Les Salviati* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1985), 148. Hurtubise's family tree at 499, does not include the twins Jacopino (1509–1525) and Jacopina (1509–1509) as Hurtubise did not include children who did not survive until adulthood in his family trees. See the Salviati family trees in the genealogies in this volume.

16. Tomas, *Medici Women*, 108.

17. For mothers as educators of children younger than seven, see Margaret L. King, "The School of Infancy: The Emergence of Mother as Teacher in Early Modern Times," in *The Renaissance in the Streets, Schools and Studies*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler and Nicholas Terpstra (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2008), 41–86.

18. There is a growing literature on the extent of female literacy in Renaissance Italy, including Florence; how children were educated is one of the topics studied. The classic work, which includes some information on female education, is Paul F. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300–1600* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 87–89, 93–102. A useful discussion that surveys both the primary evidence and the secondary literature for female literacy in fifteenth-century Florence is Judith Bryce, "Les Livres des Florentines': Reconsidering

were educated by a Lisabetta Salviati at the Camaldolese convent of Il Boldrone,<sup>19</sup> to which Maria donated twenty-five scudi in alms sometime after 1540.<sup>20</sup>

In 1509, when Maria was aged ten, Jacopo and Lucrezia Salviati fostered the orphaned son of the famous ruler of Imola and Forlì, Caterina Sforza (1463–1509). Jacopo Salviati, who was Caterina’s banker and adviser, and the parish priest, Francesco Fortunati, who was her spiritual adviser, were both appointed guardians of the eleven-year-old Giovanni de’ Medici.<sup>21</sup> Giovanni was originally called Lodovico, but was renamed for his father, Giovanni, who died some months after his birth. Unusually, therefore, Maria grew up with, and came to know well, the young man to whom she was eventually betrothed.<sup>22</sup>

At the time of her betrothal in January 1513, the Medici family were once again the rulers of Florence, having returned to power in September 1512. Several factors may have spurred Jacopo Salviati to contract a marriage for Maria: she was in her teens and thus had reached a suitable age for marriage, and the Medici had recently returned to Florence—an alliance with them through his daughter would further entrench the Salviati family’s place within the ruling elite. Jacopo provided a substantial dowry of three thousand florins for Maria’s marriage.<sup>23</sup> Apart

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Women’s Literacy in Quattrocento Florence,” in *At the Margins: Minority Groups in Pre-Modern Italy*, ed. Stephen J. Milner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 133–61. Bryce refers briefly to women’s numeracy at 139; Lisa Kaborycha, “Brigida Baldinotti and Her Two Epistles in Quattrocento Florentine Manuscripts,” *Speculum* 87, no. 3 (2012): 793–826, <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0038713412003065>>.

For home tutoring, see Lucrezia Salviati’s reference to having been taught to read at home by the celebrated humanist Angelo Poliziano, who taught her brothers a much broader humanist curriculum. See Medici Archive Project, BIA Database doc. ID 14859, <<http://bia.medici.org/DocSources/src/docbase/PrintDocument.do?entryId=14859>> (MDP 380 162r). See now, for another example of home tutoring of young children: Lisa Kaborycha, ed. and trans., *A Corresponding Renaissance: Letters Written by Italian Women, 1375–1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 136–37.

On convent schools, see Sharon T. Strocchia, “Learning the Virtues: Convent Schools and Female Culture in Renaissance Florence,” in *Women’s Education in Early Modern Europe: A History, 1500–1800*, ed. Barbara J. Whitehead (New York and London: Garland, 1999), 3–46.

19. Irene Fosi, “Medici, Lucrezia de,” *DBI* 73 (2009), <[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lucrezia-de-medici\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29>](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/lucrezia-de-medici_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29>). The nun may be Lisabetta di Nastagio Salviati, who was listed in Il Boldrone’s partial convent roster of nuns in 1476 (personal communication from Sharon Strocchia, February 2019).

20. MAP 140 255r, <<http://www.archiviodistato.firenze.it/map/riproduzione/?id=138299>>.

21. Joyce de Vries, *Caterina Sforza and the Art of Appearances: Gender, Art and Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Farnham, UK, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 232.

22. In two surviving letters from Lucrezia Salviati to Giovanni, written in April and June 1514 respectively, Lucrezia emphasizes that her affection for him is the same as for her other children and, in each letter, refers to Maria’s greetings to him. See Moisè and Milanese, “Lettere inedite,” *ASI* 7, no. 2 (1858): 24–25, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44452549>>.

23. ASP Miscellanea II, 1 fasc. 23, c. 110r.

from the benefit of joining both the junior or cadet line of the Medici (Giovanni) with the main line of the Medici family (Maria), thereby healing an old Medici family quarrel through marriage, Jacopo and Lucrezia Salviati may have thought that the couple's closeness in age and long acquaintance with each other laid the foundation for a happy union.<sup>24</sup> The length of that acquaintance may explain why Maria felt able to use such an angry, vexed, and despairing tone so early in their marital relationship in letter 1.<sup>25</sup>

### *Maria as Wife*

I would not bother you so much, but as we cannot speak in your absence, we have to send letters to each other. Because pulled by a yearning for a relationship (which is denied me), I can do nothing else but write to you. (letter 18)

Maria and Giovanni were married in November 1516.<sup>26</sup> Giovanni de' Medici's profession as a captain of a band of mercenary soldiers meant that he was often away from home.<sup>27</sup> This meant that Giovanni and Maria's husband-wife relationship depended upon and was maintained by a written correspondence. In fact, Maria was by far the more the more assiduous correspondent in this exchange, even if the number of letters sent by Giovanni that have not survived are considered. Maria's attempts to get Giovanni to respond to the concerns she raised in letters and to write more frequently with detailed accounts of his activities—and, one suspects, with some evidence of his feelings for her—were largely unsuccessful. With one exception, the letters from Giovanni to Maria were functional in nature: they were short, listing the goods he required Maria to send to him or outlining specific activities that required her assistance (letters 4, 27).<sup>28</sup>

Giovanni put additional strain on his relationship with Maria in February 1518, when he challenged Camillo d'Appiano, a cousin of the Lord of Piombino, to a duel over the treatment of one of his men by Camillo's troops. Fighting duels was illegal. Infuriated by Giovanni's actions, Duke Lorenzo II de' Medici, the de facto ruler of Florence, refused to include him in his entourage to France, and a

24. For marriage alliances formed to heal family rifts, see Tomas, *Medici Women*, 20, 146.

25. Carolyn James, "Marriage by Correspondence: Politics and Domesticity in the Letters of Isabella D'Este and Francesco Gonzaga, 1490–1519," *RQ* 65, no. 2 (2012): 321–52. This article suggests that conjugal relationships built up through correspondence over time.

26. Pierre Gauthiez, "Nuovi documenti intorno a Giovanni de' Medici detto delle Bande Nere," *ASI* 30, no. 227 (1902): 88, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44459389>>.

27. Mercenary soldiers were common in Europe at this time. Individual Italian cities often hired men like Giovanni to fight their wars and Giovanni would fight for different sides in a war at different times.

28. The context for the different tone of letter 31 will be explained later.



few weeks later the Florentine police magistracy punished Giovanni by formally exiling him.<sup>29</sup>

This was not the first time Giovanni had fallen foul of the law for impulsive behavior. When he was around twelve, the Florentine regime ruled that he was to be confined to his family's villas for two years because of his unruly and violent ways.<sup>30</sup> Because of Giovanni's Medici lineage and Jacopo Salviati's influence with the leaders of the regime, the punishment was relatively mild compared to penalties imposed on other exiles, who were usually sent to live in cities or towns outside Tuscany. On this occasion, Giovanni was exiled from Florence for five years and could not come within ten miles of the city. He also had to stay away from the University of Pisa to keep him from attacking foreign students and was banned from Piombino and two nearby towns that were part of Piombino's territory: Campiglia and Volterra. The first prohibition was the core punishment, designed to separate Giovanni from his relatives, friends, and neighbors, thereby isolating him socially. Maria immediately began the type of intense advocacy that would be apparent for the rest of her life in relation to defending both her husband and son. She used her connections with the leaders of the Medici regime to have Giovanni reinstated in the Medici regime's good graces as soon as possible (letters 5–11). She and other family members were afraid that Giovanni would break the terms of his exile, which would have resulted in his being declared a rebel, having his property confiscated, and being executed if caught.<sup>31</sup>

As recent research has shown, the women left behind in Florence often bore the brunt of the negative impacts of exile.<sup>32</sup> An unhappy and inconsolable Maria retired for a period of time, possibly for a few months to the convent of

29. The decree and a letter about Giovanni's punishment in 1518 is in Gauthiez, "Nuovi documenti," *ASI* 30, no. 227 (1902): 106–7, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44459389>>.

30. Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 229 and 327 n. 10 reports that Giovanni was exiled for two years to beyond twenty miles from the city in 1511 for his connection to the rape of another young boy by two other youths in Giovanni's company at the Medici palace.

None of the other accounts discuss this incident's details. Maurizio Arfaioli, "Medici, Giovanni de," *DBI* 73 (2009), <[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-de-medici\\_res-f082f986-dcde-11df-9ef0-d5ce3506d72e\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/giovanni-de-medici_res-f082f986-dcde-11df-9ef0-d5ce3506d72e_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/)>; Moisè and Milanese, "Lettere inedite," *ASI* 7, no. 2 (1858): 18, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44452549>>; Gaetano Pieraccini, *La stirpe de' Medici di Cafaggiolo: Saggio di Ricerche sulla trasmissione ereditaria dei caratteri biologici*, 3 vols. (Florence: Vallecchi, 1924; reprinted Nardini, 1986), vol. 1, 370.

31. Gauthiez, "Nuovi documenti," vol. 30, no. 227 (1902): 106–7, <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44459389>>.

32. See the discussion in Tomas, *Medici Women*, 105–6; the same source gives an example of the difficulties faced by the women left behind in Florence and cites literature on the broader issue of the treatment of women from exiled families. See too the letters of a Florentine woman to her exiled sons: Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi, *Letters to Her Sons, 1447–1470*, ed. and trans. Judith Bryce (Toronto and Tempe, AZ: Iter Academic Press and Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2016).