Petrarch's War

This revisionist account of the economic, literary, and social history of Florence in the immediate aftermath of the Black Death connects warfare with the plague narrative. Organized around Petrarch's "war" against the Ubaldini clan of 1349–1350, which formed the prelude to his meeting and friendship with Boccaccio, William Caferro's work examines the institutional and economic effects of the war, alongside literary and historical patterns. Caferro pays close attention to the meaning of wages in context, including those of soldiers, revising our understanding of wage data in the distant past and highlighting the consequences of a constricted workforce that resulted in the use of cooks and servants on important embassies. Drawing on rigorous archival research, this book seeks to stimulate discussion among academics and offer a new contribution to our understanding of Renaissance Florence. It stresses the importance of short-termism and contradiction as subjects of historical inquiry.

William Caferro is Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of History and Professor of Classics and Mediterranean Studies at Vanderbilt University. He has held fellowships at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton, Villa I Tatti in Florence, and the Italian Academy at Columbia University and, in 2010, he received a Simon R. Guggenheim fellowship. He has written widely on medieval and Renaissance Italy, including *Mercenary Companies and the Decline of Siena* (1998), *The Spinelli of Florence: Fortunes of a Renaissance Merchant Family* (2001), *John Hawkwood: An English Mercenary in Fourteenth Century Italy* (2006), which won the Otto Gründler Award from the International Medieval Congress, and *Contesting the Renaissance* (2010).

Petrarch's War

Florence and the Black Death in Context

William Caferro
Vanderbilt University

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108424011
DOI: 10.1017/9781108539555

First published 2018

Printed in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc.

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-108-42401-1 Hardback

Contents

Figures, Maps, and Tables

Figures

Maps

Tables

Preface and Acknowledgments

This is not the book I intended to write. But archives are subversive and often tell us what we do not want to know. The present volume began as a study of the effects of war on the Florentine economy from 1336 to 1402. I hope to complete that project, now two decades old, soon. But I encountered documents along the way relating to a "war" that I knew nothing about and that coincided with the immediate aftermath of the Black Death. The material connected Petrarch and Boccaccio, added details to their historical portraits, and raised an array of political, institutional, diplomatic, and above all economic questions about Florence that I did not have answers for, nor had even considered.

This book is an attempt to interpret the evidence. It is, at base, a case study of war, the most overlooked aspect of fourteenth-century Italy, for which no justification is needed. Although I had hoped to mechanically add my findings to existing assumptions about Florence, the addition of war altered the assumptions. The evidence forced me to reexamine and revise many of my own hypotheses. The decision to restrict the study to two years was a difficult one, but the material warranted the approach. The book is thus unapologetically revisionist. It argues against the false distinction between long-term "usable" history and the short-term irrelevant form, and it speaks to the dangers of teleology embedded in historical study, particularly with regard to economic data. It takes as its fundamental tenet that contradiction and anomaly are a part of history, and acknowledgment of them ultimately tells a more useful and interesting tale.

The project has taken a long time to research and write. It has been stopped several times by illness, vision troubles, and studies of Dante. I have accrued substantial debts to numerous colleagues, students, and institutions that have supported my work, helped me fashion my ideas, and urged me to render them in this manner. I want to thank first the Institute for Advanced Study, where the project began and I first presented my "contradictory" data to the economic history seminar organized by Nicola di Cosmo and to the medieval table organized by

Caroline Walker Bynum. I am deeply grateful to both scholars for their generosity, friendship, advice, and encouragement along the way. I wish to thank the Simon R. Guggenheim Foundation for a fellowship to pursue further the research for this book, and to Carolyn Dever, the Dean of Arts and Sciences at Vanderbilt University, for allowing me leave from academic duties to take the fellowship. I am similarly indebted to the Italian Academy for Advanced Study at Columbia University and the weekly seminars led by Achille Varzi and Barbara Faedda. I thank the participants for their critiques: Elisabetta Benigni, Lorenzo d'Angelo, Anna Galeotti, Edward Goldberg, Sarah Goler, Stefano Lorenzetti, Anna Loretoni, Daniele Maras, Eleanora Pistis, Karin Schlapbach, and Marissa Span. I wish, above all, to thank Joel Kaye of Barnard College and Neslihan Senocak of Columbia University for taking time from their busy schedules to attend my presentation and comment on a penultimate version of this book. Their help altered the shape and content of the manuscript. The shortcomings were then and remain my own.

I acknowledge the guidance and friendship of the fellows at the Institute for Advanced Study, especially Richard Abels, Susan Boynton, Luigi Capogrossi, Martin Eisner, Barbara Kovalzig, Jens Ulff-Moller, Glen Peers, and Giacomo Todeschini. I am grateful to Eric Maskin for discussing aspects of economy with me. I thank Luigi Capogrossi and Giacomo Todeschini for ongoing debates about economic history (ancient and medieval) and Susan Boynton for her friendship and support way beyond the call of duty, and her invitation to present my work at the medieval colloquium at Columbia University. I thank the community of economic historians whose counsel I rely heavily upon: Lawrin Armstrong, Judith Brown, Steven A. Epstein, Richard Goldthwaite, Maryanne Kowaleski, John Padgett, Tony Molho, and John Munro. This book was inspired in the first instance by the work of Professor Munro, whose recent death leaves our field with an unfillable void. I am grateful also to my medievalist and Italianist colleagues Alessandro Arcangeli, Daniel Bornstein, Samuel K. Cohn, Bill Connell, George Dameron, Bob Fredona, Tim Kircher, Julius Kirshner, Tom Kuehn, John Law, Lauro Martines, Edward Muir, John Najemy, Dennis Romano, Dan Smail, Sharon Strocchia, and Susan Stuard for their advice and critique. I want to single out Steven Epstein and Sue Stuard, who helped at every stage, both with personal and professional issues. I wish to express my thanks for the mentorship of four outstanding scholars who are greatly missed by us all: William Bowsky, Gene Brucker, Benjamin Kohl, and Ronald Witt.

I owe a special scholarly debt to Teodolinda Barolini and Giuseppe Mazzotta for their generous advice and soaring intellectual example. I am

similarly grateful to Albert Ascoli, Todd Boli, Martin Eisner, Warren Ginsburg, Victoria Kirkham, Ron Martinez, Kristina Olson, Lino Pertile, and Justin Steinberg. I thank Will Robbins for our conversations about literature and history dating back almost two decades now.

My greatest debt is to Francesca Trivellato, whom I admire more than I can express here and without whom there would be no book. I thank her for her detailed critical reading of the text and for her friendship. I also thank her, Naomi Lamoreaux, and Tim Guinnane for an invitation to the economic history seminar at Yale University. I thank Jay Rubinstein and Tom Burman for inviting me to the University of Tennessee to present an early version of this work, and for their continuing collegiality and friendship for our "Tennessee medieval group." I am indebted to Marcus Meumann and Matthias Meinhardt for their invitation to participate in the seminar *Die Kapitalisierung des Krieges* in Berlin, where I presented initial findings. I thank my colleagues/*amici* in Italy, especially Maurizio Arfaioli, Andrea Barlucchi, Lorenz Böninger, Franco Franceschi, Luca Mola, and Alessandro Monte. I am grateful to Andrea Barlucchi and Alessandro Monte for inviting me to participate in the *convegno* on the Ubaldini clan in both Florence and Scarperia, and for encouraging me to present my work in Italian, to the general amusement of all. I have relied on the unparalleled expertise of Professor Barlucchi for help throughout the entire project.

At Vanderbilt, I am grateful for the support and close friendship of my colleagues William Collins in the Economics department, Elsa Filosa in Italian and French literature, Phil Lieberman in Jewish Studies, and Joe Rife in Classics. I wish to thank the participants in our Pre-Modern Cultural Studies Group at the Robert Penn Warren Center: Annalisa Azzoni, Barbara Bowen, Katie Crawford, Jessie Hock, Peter Lorge, Leah Marcus, Tracy Miller, Elizabeth Moody, Lynn Ramey, Samira Sheikh, and Kathryn Schwarz. I thank also the wonderful director of the Warren Center, Mona Frederick, who has made study groups like this possible. I thank my colleagues in the department of History for their advice and support, particularly David Carlton, Julia Cohen, Katie Crawford, Lauren Clay, Leor Halevi, Catherine Molineux, Moses Ochonu, Matt Ramsey, and David Wasserstein.

I wish to thank also my undergraduate research assistants David Gaffney and Hunter Guthrie, who helped manage data and draw maps. I acknowledge the outstanding support of my graduate research assistant Pedro Gomez, now professor of history at the University of Wisconsin, and Laura Hohman, now of Trivecca Nazarene. They not only tracked down sources and arranged data, but helped me interpret it all as well. I thank my former graduate student, Megan Moran, now of Montclair

State, for discussions on Italian history that have taught me a great deal, and my current graduate students Katherine McKenna and Hillary Taylor, who continue to do the same. I thank Hillary Taylor for her help with the final stages of the manuscript and J'Nese Williams for getting the annoying lines out of the text and listening to my rants against technology. I wish to thank Liz Friend-Smith of Cambridge University Press for her kind and generous support in seeing this manuscript through the many stages.

Finally, I want to acknowledge formally the mentorship of Michael Mallett, who introduced me to the topic of Italy and war in graduate school, and to Tony Molho and John Najemy, whose support has allowed me to have a career. It is their intellectual example that so many of us try to follow.

I dedicate this book to my wife Megan Weiler, who transferred her love of Italy to me and with whom I have spent the greater part of a lifetime in the very same parts of the Mugello discussed in this book. Her intelligence and work ethic are my most immediate models. The research for the book coincided with difficult times for both of us, and I dedicate this volume also to friends and family members whom we have loved and miss dearly.