

CESAR BORGIA IN VIANA  
HISTORICAL MEMORY IN NAVARRA

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## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Chapter 1: Introduction and Historiography.....	1
Historiography.....	4
Chapter 2: Contested Memory, Regional Identity.....	26
The History of Navarra.....	30
The Life of César.....	51
Chapter 3: A Ghost in Viana.....	72
How Viana Shaped César.....	73
How César Shaped Viana.....	97
Chapter 4: Conclusion.....	108
Bibliography.....	111

## Chapter 1

### Introduction and Historiography

Viana is a small town a little south of the Pyrenees in the Spanish autonomous community of Navarra best known for being the final resting place of Cesare Borgia, the son of Pope Alexander VI and brother of the infamous Lucretia Borgia. Cesare has been written about for various (and sometimes contradictory) ends throughout the centuries, by both scholars foreign to the lands he lived in and those intimately familiar with him as a feature of their own local history.<sup>1</sup> Because of the number and variety of retellings of his dramatic life and scandalous lineage, as well as for his impact on folklore in Viana in particular, Cesare provides an interesting case study for the creation and use of history and of the symbolic in maintaining and shaping local culture.

Historians have relied upon Cesare Borgia's life as a way to explore the Italian Renaissance in general and the years of Alexander VI's papacy in particular, from 1492 to 1503. As Cesare played a very visible role in his father's ecclesiastical and political state, he came to be associated with it in near-contemporary writings and, through them, in later secondary sources as well. As the historian Ivan Cloulas put it, "as the Renaissance became more fashionable than ever, Alexander and his family entered a new phase of notoriety."<sup>2</sup> With scant documentation of Cesare's life, historical interpretation has relied as much on earlier historiography as it has on primary sources to reach to portray Cesar and the times he lived in. Therefore, the popularity of Cesare as a historical actor, in both academic in popular sources, has been dependent primarily upon trends in centuries since his death, "Cesare" is less an historical actor and more of a metaphor of

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<sup>1</sup> See Johannes Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S. G. C. Middlemore (New York: Penguin Books, 1990) (1860, Switzerland); Ivan Cloulas, *The Borgias*, trans. Glinda Roberts (New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1989) (1987, France); Sarah Bradford, *Cesare Borgia: His Life and Times* (London: Penguin Books, 1976) (1976, Great Britain); Christopher Hibbert, *The Borgias and Their Enemies: 1431-1519* (London: Harcourt Inc., 2008) (2008, Great Britain); Paul Strathern, *The Artist, the Philosopher, and the Warrior* (New York: Random House Publishing, 2009) (2009, United States), as well as Carinaños, *César Borgia y Viana* (Spain, 2007); Óscar Villarroel González, *Los Borgia: Iglesia y poder entre los siglos xv y xvi* (Madrid: Sílex, 2005) (Spain 2005), for a by no means exhaustive sampling.

<sup>2</sup> Cloulas 327.

Renaissance culture, constantly presented with new meanings as interest in the early modern era changes.

Cesare Borgia was born in 1475 to Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia and his long-term mistress Vannozza dei Cattanei. As Grace Coolridge argues, Spanish men often had longstanding sexual and romantic relationships with women outside of marriage, and children produced from these unions were often not only seen as members of their family but also were legally naturalized, creating what she terms alternative (but still legally and socially legitimate) families.<sup>3</sup> This was part of “almost a system of polygamy among Spanish noblemen, many of whom had a wife and several mistresses,” and which was not uncommon among Italian families as well.<sup>4</sup> Cesare was the oldest of his three full siblings, although he was Rodrigo’s fourth child and had at least one younger half-brother as well. As was common practice for the second son of a well-off family, Cesare was put on track for an ecclesiastical career and he began receiving church benefices and titles at an early age through Rodrigo’s influence as Vice-Chancellor of the Church and his great wealth. Rodrigo for his part had been made cardinal (and emphasized his maternal surname of de Borja, translated from Spanish into Italian as Borgia, instead of his paternal surname of Lançol) when his maternal uncle became Pope Callixtus III. Nepotism of this kind was not unusual. Cesare became the archbishop of Pamplona in 1491 when he was sixteen years old and without having taken holy orders. Although he only held that post for about a year, he was then made a cardinal after Rodrigo became pope in 1492: the same year that the Reconquista ended and Columbus first landed in the Americas. By the time Cesare became the first person to resign the cardinalate in 1498, his brother Juan had been killed, his sister Lucretia had been through two scandalous marriages (and would shortly be married a third and final time), and his father’s foreign policy had shifted from being in favor of Spain to France, where Cesare went to start off his secular career as the new *gonfaloniere* of the papal troops, filling the role Juan left

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<sup>3</sup> Grace E. Coolridge, “Contested Masculinity: Noblemen and their Mistresses in Early Modern Spain,” in *Contested Spaces of Nobility in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Matthew Romaniello and Charles Lipp (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2011), 61-83.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid 72.

empty.<sup>5</sup> Cesare obtained the holdings of Valentinois (and with them his nickname il Valentino) and married Carlota de Albret, the niece of the king of France and the sister of the king of Navarra. It was during this period as well that Cesare took on the motto “aut Caesar aut nihil,” a nod to his famous namesake.

Returning to Italy with the agreement to help the French king in his military endeavors in the peninsula in exchange for the use of his forces for his own plans until he was able to recruit or hire his own men, Cesare embarked on a whirlwind campaign throughout the Romagna, bringing the nominally Papal States under his--and the Church's--sway. Much has been made about this period, including by Machiavelli who spent time following Cesare's troops as a diplomat for Florence, and by numerous military and political historians who followed in Machiavelli's wake.<sup>6</sup> Both Machiavelli and others have also written about the reasons for his loss of power when his father died in 1503 and when he was exiled to Spain by Pope Julius II, his father's old rival and political enemy, in 1504. Cesare escaped with help from la Castila de la Mota (the first time that had been accomplished as well) and made his way north to Navarra. There he sought the assistance of his brother-in-law, the king of Navarra, with his eye to a future role with the Holy Roman Emperor, as he was by this point out of favor with the authorities in Spain, France, and his natal Rome. In Navarra Cesare was made captain general and was sent to Viana, just outside of the diocese of Pamplona where he had so briefly been archbishop. Viana was one of Navarra's defensive outposts at the southern end of the kingdom and standing on the wall that encircles the old town, it is still possible today to see the regions of Álava, La Rioja, and Aragón. The Count of Lerín had thrown

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<sup>5</sup> Juan for his part was also filling the role of their older half-brother, Pedro Luis, who died in Spain in 1488, prior to Rodrigo's assumption of the papacy. (Óscar Villarroel González, *Los Borgia: Iglesia y poder entre los siglos xv y xvi*, 103) Pedro Luis had fought for Ferdinand of Aragon in the battle of Granada which ended the Reconquista and been made the first Duke of Gandía and engaged to María Enríquez de Luna. After his death, Juan was sent to Gandía, on the eastern coast of Spain, as the second Duke and was married to the same María Enríquez de Luna. Edward Muir notes the frequency in which children were put into the roles of deceased siblings. (Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 24-25.)

<sup>6</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* described Cesare based on his experiences during this time. Interestingly, the two had also both attended the University of Pisa during overlapping years.

his lot in with the Aragonese forces and had many men besieged by Navarran troops in the castle near the walled town. According to oral tradition and a few written documents composed shortly after the fact, Cesare had been wounded in his escape from de la Mota but had healed in the several months it took to travel up to Navarra.<sup>7</sup> March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1507 brought a storm and Cesare recalled the men he had stationed preventing access to the castle, and the Count of Lerín took the opportunity to send men to the castle with needed supplies. Informed of this shortly after midnight, in the dark early morning hours of March 13<sup>th</sup>, he summoned the forces at his disposal and rode out from where he was quartered near the church of Santa María and through la Solana, the main door cut into the thick stone wall about the town. Cesare became somehow separated from his men and was killed in la Barranca Salada, a gulch on the uneven marshy ground of Viana two days before the Ides of March in 1507.

#### Historiography

This death has been condensed into “a little earth” at the end of any number of biographies that inevitably relished the rise and lust for temporal power of Cesare and his family members. After so much emphasis on the carnivalesque portrait of Rome in the Renaissance, the brief epilogue of life into death comes as a stark and disappointed contrast. Just as the family’s origins in Spain are generally much alluded to but little discussed, except for an obligatory prologue or opening paragraph, Cesare’s death is an unfortunate break from the momentum of the master narrative, useful only as a moral tacked on to the end, an after-note once the “real” action has passed.<sup>8</sup> It is removed from history because it is the end of history. Biographies must always include the individual’s death if they seek to explore the entire lives of the great men they place on pedestals, and perhaps they always invite the biographers to sigh wistfully and wonder what might have

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<sup>7</sup> Carinaños 23,197.

<sup>8</sup> One more extreme example of this is in Cloulas’ rendition in *The Borgias* where the account of Cesare’s death is about a page long, broken over 290-291, and told as an event that already took place from the viewpoint of Lucrezia in Ferrara.

been. In this set of narratives it is especially noticeable that “[history] may always be ironic,” as Hayden White wrote, “but it need not be emplotted that way.”<sup>9</sup>

There has been much written on Cesare Borgia, both in the form of traditional biography and in smaller or less formal inserts within broader works and characterizing Cesare as both hero and villain. As is common knowledge among scholars of his family today, “contemporary historians and chroniclers were for the most part exceedingly severe” with Cesare and his relatives once he and his father died.<sup>10</sup> The “black legend” of poison, incest, and murder that surrounds the Borgia name is a direct result of the political situation at the time, where papal power quickly passed to Julius II, an old enemy of Alexander VI and by extension his family, as well as the maneuvering for power between the Papal States and the other political entities in Europe. The history of the Borgias is tied to the Black Legend of early modern Spain as well. This “characterization of Spain by other Europeans as a backward country of ignorance, superstition, and religious fanaticism that was unable to become a modern nation,” influenced writing on the Borgias as their connection to the Spanish kingdoms was clearly visible.<sup>11</sup> The corpus of stories about the family “was also constructed with cultural materials available in the sixteenth century; some from as old a tradition as that of the myths of the Antichrist and of Cain and Abel,” which influence can still be seen in modern works produced about the family, both fictional and historical.<sup>12</sup> The existence of this black legend has been taken into consideration by later historians, who began to look more critically at the earlier sources and to question the motives and political attachments of their authors, as well as to return information to its original historical context, although it has been an uneven process between the two fetishized extremes of condemnation and

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<sup>9</sup> Hayden White, “The Historical Text as Literary Artifact,” *Narrative Dynamics: Essays on Time, Plot, Closure, and Frames*, ed. Brian Richardson (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2002), 195.

<sup>10</sup> Carlo Beuf, *Cesare Borgia: The Machiavellian Prince* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942), 369.

<sup>11</sup> Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan, *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 1.

<sup>12</sup> José María Cruselles Gómez, “Los Borja en Valencia. Nota Sobre Historiografía, Historicismo y Pseudohistoria,” *Revista d’Història Medieval* 11 (2001): 280.



apology.<sup>13</sup> Cesare has been similarly (if not as drastically) refashioned from a murderous cut-throat, the epitome of Shakespeare's own Machiavel, to a talented statesman and military leader who, with his father, might be thought of as a predecessor to Italy's unifiers of the 1800s.<sup>14</sup>

Johann Burchard's *At the Court of the Borgia: Being an Account of the Reign of Pope Alexander VI*, written before his death in 1506, is one of the better known contemporary books on Cesare in the context of his father's papacy. While it is often taken to be a lengthy primary source, there is evidence to suggest that this is not the case. As the editor and translator of the 1963 edition, Geoffrey Parker, explains, the text was initially a private journal kept by Burchard while he worked as the Master of Ceremonies from 1483 to 1506 and actually covers from the end of Sixtus IV's pontificate to the beginning of Julius II's.<sup>15</sup> Burchard either leaves out or only briefly alludes to several well-known events that occurred under Alexander VI, and Parker postulates that he either felt unable to elaborate safely or that a later editor redacted the sections "because they contained more damaging and explicit comment about papal affairs than was found in

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<sup>13</sup> This has been the case for other historical figures as well, and Cesare's own sister Lucrezia provides a good parallel. Her popular historical image received a makeover by the German historian Ferdinand Gregorovius who argued that she was not the villainous poisoner that other texts had painted her as, but, in keeping with the madonna/whore duality, instead a passive and childlike innocent. He wrote that, "it would be wrong to regard this [modesty and piety] simply as a mask; for that would presuppose and independent consideration of religious questions or a moral process altogether foreign to the woman of that age [...]." [Ferdinand Gregorovius, *Lucrezia Borgia*, trans. John Leslie Garner (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904), 16.] This is of course highly problematic as well, and more modern scholarship has offered a further corrective, most well-known in Sarah Bradford's *Lucrezia Borgia: Life, Love, and Death in Renaissance Italy*. [Sarah Bradford, *Lucrezia Borgia: Life Love, and Death in Renaissance Italy* (London: Penguin Books, 2004).] See Hermann-Röttgen, *La Familia Borja* for a more in depth analysis of the changing uses of Lucrezia in history and fiction.

<sup>14</sup> Johannes Burckhardt's influential *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* states that "the great, permanent, and increasing danger for the Papacy lay in Alexander himself, and, above all, in his son Cesare Borgia" (Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 45).

<sup>15</sup> Johann Burchard, *At The Court of the Borgia: being an Account of the Reign of Pope Alexander VI written by his Master of Ceremonies Johann Burchard*, ed. and trans. Geoffrey Parker (London: The Folio Society Ltd., 1963), 9.

other parts of the *Diary*.”<sup>16</sup> The Spanish historian Óscar Villarroel González writes, however, that there is evidence that the journal was hardly daily, but rather that Burchard composed it sometime after Alexander VI’s papacy and presented it as a diary in order to give it an air of authenticity when intentionally circulated.<sup>17</sup> Journals kept during this period were public rather than private items, due to the expense involved in creating them and the still very public nature of writing itself. Letters as well, which today would be considered private, could be sent to a friend and then circulated for a broader reading (or listening) public. In fact, Parker even notes that Burchard’s text was read by at least the man who took up his position after him, as was expected, since he included much information on the rituals and ceremonies that took place under his care.<sup>18</sup>

There are other problems with a straight-forward reading of this book. The German historian Marion Hermann-Röttgen argues that at least some of the redactions in Burchard’s diary were made under Julius II and Paul III, neither of whom had reason to hide evidence of Alexander VI’s wrongdoings.<sup>19</sup> Villarroel points to evidence that details given by Burchard held “connotations and magical symbols associated with the demonic that were used to refer to Pope Alexander VI, which coincided exactly with those represented in the work *Malleus Maleficarum*, written by the German inquisitors Institoris and Spranger at the end of the fifteenth century,”<sup>20</sup> with whom Hermann-Röttgen has noted that Burchard kept in close contact.<sup>21</sup> Villarroel further points out that sources which have been definitively dated to the years in question often provided much more mundane answers than those that Burchard hints at, which are often more in line with later gossip. Parker himself mentions without discussion that although Burchard was aiming for the cardinalate, he did not become a bishop until 1503 under Innocent

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid 13.

<sup>17</sup> Óscar Villarroel González, *Los Borgia: Iglesia y poder entre los siglos xv y xvi* (Madrid: ELECE, Industria Gráfica, 2005), 332.

<sup>18</sup> Burchard 10.

<sup>19</sup> Marion Hermann-Röttgen, *La Familia Borja: historia de una leyenda*, trans Heike van Lawick (Valencia: Institució Valenciana d’estudis i investigació, 1994), 75.

<sup>20</sup> Villarroel 332. See also José María Cruselles Gómez, “Los Borja en Valencia. Nota Sobre Historiografía, Historicismo y Pseudohistoria,” *Revista d’Història Medieval* 11 (2001): 279-280 and especially Marion Hermann-Röttgen, *La familia Borja. Historia de una leyenda*. Edition Alfons el Magnanim (Valencia: Generalitat Valenciana, 1994).

<sup>21</sup> Hermann-Röttgen 69.

VIII<sup>22</sup>—an act that was finalized by Julius II, who was known not to harbor any lost love for Alexander VI.

The most infamous event in Burchard's diary is of a hedonistic orgy the night before All Saints' Day, which prevented Alexander VI from conducting mass in the morning, but as another German historian, Susanne Schüller-Piroli, has pointed out, it is impossible to say what, if anything, really occurred that night because the account Burchard has given is practically lifted from the descriptions of demonic rituals in *Malleus Maleficarum*, with the purpose of casting Alexander VI as the Antichrist.<sup>23</sup> This was a serious cultural allegation at the time for, as the Spanish historian Federico M. Beltrán Torreira discusses, the ultimate enemies of the Christian population were those considered to be servants of the Antichrist.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, *At the Court of the Borgia* recorded many actual events and it presented itself as fact, as historians have long taken it, especially when looking at it in comparison with Italian texts that had traditionally used more emotional language,<sup>25</sup> making it part of the historiographical discourse as well as accumulating a discourse around itself. This is an oversight similar to those the anthropologist Clifford Geertz famously writes about when explaining that "what [...] most prevents those of us who grew up winking other winks or attending other sheep from grasping what people are up to is not ignorance as to how cognition works [...] as a lack of familiarity with the imaginative universe within which their acts are signs."<sup>26</sup> Without this familiarity, it is easy to overlook the allusions or subtext that would have been very obvious to contemporary readers.

Machiavelli's *Il Principe*, first published in 1513, is another contested text that has its own historiography and later authors have used it in their histories as well. Although it is frequently claimed that Machiavelli worked for Cesare, he was actually a

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<sup>22</sup> Burchard 9.

<sup>23</sup> Hermann-Röttgen 66-67.

<sup>24</sup> Instituto de estudios riojanos de La Rioja, *Memoria, mito y realidad en la historia medieval: XIII Semana de estudios medievales, Nájera, del 29 de julio al 2 de agosto de 2002* (Logroño: Gobierno de La Rioja, 2003), 86. The collections of Riojan and Navarran conference papers were found with the gracious assistance of Dr. Jesús María Usunariz at the University of Navarra.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid 71.

<sup>26</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 13.

diplomat from Florence, which felt itself threatened by the Borgia presence in the region. In *Il Principe*, Machiavelli dealt explicitly with Cesare alongside other deceased historical figures. While his work does many things, one of them is to tell a military history of the Italian peninsula and he looked at Cesare in this context. Machiavelli's Cesare should be seen as a "poetic idealization"<sup>27</sup> rather than as accurate a portrait as possible. Machiavelli examined different leaders, or princes, that had conducted campaigns and ruled states in the peninsula and compared their traits and their reigns against one another, and he ultimately held up an idealized Cesare as an example of the kind of leader that Italy needed. He argued in favor of the unification of Italy, especially in light of recent external threats such as the French invasions, and he used Cesare to illustrate the kinds of characteristics that a successful prince would need to have. For Machiavelli, Cesare and the historical years of his military campaign represented an opportunity for progress and growth beyond the fractured and inefficient states of the Middle Ages to reclaim the glory that Italy had once had in unification.

Both Burchard and Machiavelli used Cesare to represent an aspect of the years he (and they) lived in, but Burchard saw him as emblematic of corruption and Paganism, whereas Machiavelli used him to illustrate the yearning for the power and personal cultivation of Antiquity and as such lost interest in him and became disillusioned "the moment that luck abandoned him"<sup>28</sup> and he fell from power, no longer able to support his fantasy. This assertion, striking from the viewpoint of the twenty-first century, was reflective of the humanist milieu in the Italian peninsula at the time he was writing. As Jerry Bentley discusses,

Historians have often called attention to the point that after 1494 the concept of fortune loomed large in Italian political thought. In an age in which French, Spanish, and imperial armies employed the Italian peninsula as a battleground, fortune represented all the uncontrollable forces that dominated political life in the various Italian states during the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Hermann-Röttgen 15.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid 42.

<sup>29</sup> Jerry Bentley, *Politics and Culture in Renaissance Naples* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 241.

Just as Machiavelli discussed fortune as part of a wider conversation, he incorporated Cesare into the humanist discussion of the qualities of a good leader, providing a literary counterpoint to the accusations made by Burchard and others. Machiavelli sought to convince potential employers of his own diplomatic finesse and to propose specific military and leadership strategies that would make his new patron the next ideal prince, with Cesare being one of the historical examples he drew upon heuristically. His general conclusions about, and interpretations of, Cesare were pushed aside in favor of Burchard's in the following years, however, as his own star continued to fall in the turbulent political situation in Florence and the peninsula in general.

Later historians looking to craft a vision of Alexandrian Rome commonly draw upon both Francesco Guicciardini and Stefano Infessura as well. Both of these authors were influential in shaping the black legend surrounding Cesare and his family and generally the tone of their books is similar to that of Burchard's and they tend to be categorized together as older sources telling in effect the same stories about the family. Guicciardini in fact leaned heavily on both Burchard and Machiavelli's writings without questioning their veracity.<sup>30</sup> Guicciardini was a Florentine like Machiavelli who lived through Cesare's military campaigns in the Romagna, which were widely seen as a threat to Florence and whose *Stori d'Italia* "came to formalize the myth and to disseminate it among a select and cultured public that thereafter devoured the adventures of the Borgias with gusto."<sup>31</sup> He actually wrote a series of histories covering the time of Alexander VI's papacy and was the first to claim to write a history of the Borgias, even though in doing so he created myth.<sup>32</sup> His well-known *Diario della città di Roma*, written during his time at the court of the Colonna, who were often at odds with the Borgia, presents a negative view of the family, but this was not consistent between his books. He would often introduce things with the phrases "as many believed," "it was believed," "the rumor ran," and so on,<sup>33</sup> because although he had a wealth of stories to draw upon, he lacked modern methods of research and analysis<sup>34</sup> and as such included as fact things that would be

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<sup>30</sup> Hermann-Röttgen 18.

<sup>31</sup> Gómez 280.

<sup>15</sup> Hermann-Röttgen 16.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid 17.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid 28.

looked at more skeptically by later historians. His views on these rumors changed over the years, however, leading after Guicciardini's involvement with the Council of Trent to an emphasis on the demonic nature of Alexander VI and his family and an emphasis on demonstrating how the Borgias lived according to the seven deadly sins.<sup>35</sup> He listed as Alexander VI's failings, "obscene costumes, lack of formality, lack of chastity, lack of modesty, absence of truth, neither faith nor religion, an insatiable greed, an unlimited thirst for glory,"<sup>36</sup> giving this first history of the Borgias a decidedly biased point of view.

At about the same time Tomaso Tomasi published the oldest biography proper of Cesare: *La Vita di Cesare Borgia*,<sup>37</sup> while working for the Medici and Julius II, neither of whom wanted to support a positive or nostalgic view of the Borgias.<sup>38</sup> Tomasi was credited with the creation of the black legend that continues to influence contemporary representations of Cesare today,<sup>39</sup> but it would be more accurate to say that he helped organize or synthesize it, as many of the more memorable and commonly repeated incidents concerning Cesare appear further back in Burchard (for example, the Night of the Chestnuts, a massive hedonistic party in the Vatican that devolved into an orgy<sup>40</sup>) or Machiavelli (as in the Wonderful Deceiving,<sup>41</sup> when Cesare invited his traitorous generals to dinner and had them all executed when they arrived) and were not created by Tomasi. One idea that Tomasi did draw upon more than earlier writers was that because Cesare was born out of wedlock to a sinful woman and, as the idea ran, "two beasts united into one."<sup>42</sup> By this logic it was impossible to view him in a positive light, as his

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid 44.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Tomasi has often been confused with Gregorio Leti, who edited his text and had it published again in 1644. (Hermann-Röttgen, 86)

<sup>38</sup> Ibid 80.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Edward Mallett, *The Borgias: The Rise and Fall of a Renaissance Dynasty* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1969), 347.

<sup>40</sup> Villarroel also singled out the Night of the Chestnuts as an example of where it is possible to see the influence of *Malleus Maleficarum* on *At the Court of the Borgia*. (Villarroel 332.)

<sup>41</sup> This wording was initially Paolo Giovio's, although Machiavelli references him and it has become the phrase most associated with Cesare's revenge on his untrustworthy generals. Paolo Giovio also presents another good example of someone who wrote a historical work that did concern Cesare while not being a biography of him.

<sup>42</sup> Hermann-Röttgen 82.

evil nature was predetermined and a fact of both religion and nature. This negative emphasis from Tomasi as well as other authors writing shortly after the Borgias' fall from power, when it was politically and economically opportune to do so, would continue to influence not only their contemporaries but later historians as well who often took them at face value.<sup>43</sup>

In 1712 José de Moret and the Jesuit Francisco de Alesón published *Annales del reyno de Navarra*, a set of volumes on the history of the kingdom of Navarra. The lengthy *Annales* presented the kingdom in a largely positive light, although they vacillate on the moral standing and political capabilities of some of its rulers, including Cesare's brother-in-law, Don Juan III. It is therefore not surprising that when they discuss Cesare, it is void of much of the overtly sexual or violent language that the works following Burchard's tradition used, as to do otherwise would threaten to undermine their larger narrative. They do ultimately attack Cesare, writing that

Due to the credit of his arms and his conduct, many princes including the King and Queen of Spain and the King of France solicited his Alliance. But what was the importance of all of this if at the same time he was the declared enemy of God, whose honor should have always been placed in front of his own interest, and did not tire of offending with his depraved customs: especially with his treachery, not keeping his word nor his oath when it was not convenient for him, which he liked to excuse with politics and reasons of state?<sup>44</sup>

They acknowledge his military capabilities, explaining why the various rulers they praised in their annals were willing to consider an alliance with him but then assert that none of that mattered because of his untrustworthiness, his politicking, and that, most importantly, he was not a good Christian. Moret and Alesón were drawing on Machiavelli and Guicciardini when they did so, as both men thought that “the coexistence of personal immorality and political brilliance [was] a necessary compromise.”<sup>45</sup> It was possible therefore to admire Cesare's military successes while still criticizing him as fundamentally evil. In drawing on this tradition, Moret and Alesón were also able to condemn Cesare without condemning the services he had rendered to Navarra.

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<sup>43</sup> Hermann-Röttgen argues about Guicciardini in particular that his text was “accepted without criticism” until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Ibid 16)

<sup>44</sup> Moret 142.

<sup>45</sup> Hermann-Röttgen 42.

Moret and Alesón wrote a history of Navarra, not a biography of Cesare, and therefore when they discussed him it was in connection to the wider political affairs that preoccupied the area. Cesare had taken part in the struggle to maintain independence from Aragón, and Moret and Alesón devote twenty pages to his involvement and eventual death in Navarra, going into some detail about what happened to his body between 1507 and the time of their writing. They also wrote in length about Cesare's family both before and after this section, as the Borgias' history continued to interact with Navarra's. Later historians quote frequently and directly from this text when writing about Cesare's experiences in Spain. The *Annales* is generally not incorporated into the analysis of later works, such as those by Ivan Cloulas or Michael Mallett, because Moret and Alesón talked only briefly about Cesare in the process of writing a history of Navarra. This historical background is rarely of interest to historians writing about Cesare, who tend to focus heavily on the events taking place in Italy instead and are interested in using Cesare to explore the Italian Renaissance, not the political struggles of early modern Iberia.

Although most of the discourse on Cesare is concerned with his time in Italy, the next text to still be a part of the historiographical discourse on him did delve into his time in Navarra as well. The French historian Charles Yriarte traveled to Navarra before publishing *César Borgia, sa vie, sa captivité, son mort* in 1889 and relied upon the *Annales* as a guideline for his research there. Like Moret and Alesón, he was interested in what happened to Cesare's body as well as with the monument that was constructed for it inside the church of Santa María. Cloulas cited his text as being one of the earliest that "broke away from a traditional view of Cesare as an unpleasant and worthless villain."<sup>46</sup> Cloulas sees this break as part of the shift in the historiography of the Renaissance after the French Revolution when "the French revised not only their ideas about Machiavelli but also their opinion of Cesare Borgia. [...] It was the birth of the precious notion of historical relativity. Machiavelli's intentions and Cesare Borgia's

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<sup>46</sup> Mallett 347. Mallett also cites Edoardo Alvisi's *Cesare Borgia: Duca di Romagna* (1879) alongside Yriarte as an early and important instance of biography breaking away from this view, but I have been unable to find a copy of Alvisi in English. Bradford also cites Alvisi as "authoritative and well documented" but also implies that in 1976 at least it was only available in Italian. Bradford 305.



exploits were now better understood. The old view of the terrible family had undergone considerable evolution.”<sup>47</sup> In this context, Yriarte can be seen as representative of a larger repositioning of historical perspective and writing that emphasized historical context and an acceptance (sometimes to the point of apology) of different moral systems and ways of life. At the same time, as Cloulas points out, “It would be all too easy to attack [the Church’s] vices by pointing to the Borgias, and the avant-garde poets did not miss the opportunity to do so,”<sup>48</sup> insuring that Yriarte’s interpretation would not be the only one and nor would it override Cesare’s violent and sexual legend. This legend continued to be perpetuated and was included in full force in one of the keystone texts on Renaissance history, Jacob Burckhardt’s *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*.

The Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt published *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* in 1860, by which point Cesare had long been established as a villain.<sup>49</sup> Although Yriarte wrote thirty years after Burckhardt and although Yriarte’s text is also still well known, Burckhardt’s text has been more frequently cited, in part because of his more prominent role in Renaissance historiography. Burckhardt writes that, “the great, permanent, and increasing danger for the Papacy lay in Alexander himself, and, above all, in his son Cesare Borgia”<sup>50</sup> but also concludes that this Papacy was itself dangerous to the broader population and in so doing synthesizes elements from both Burchard and Machiavelli’s histories, creating a Cesare who was both modern in his ambitions and dangerous in their implementation. Burckhardt accepts and uses Burchard’s account of death and violence and simultaneously writes that “Machiavelli was a patriot in the fullest meaning of the word”<sup>51</sup> and that when he praised Cesare in *Il*

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<sup>47</sup> Cloulas 333.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid 339.

<sup>49</sup> This was carried out perhaps most famously by Alexandre Dumas, who wrote an essay on Cesare in the 1839-1840 collection *Celebrated Crimes* before going on to his better-known works. *Celebrated Crimes* is still in print today and although it is not often made clear to a general audience that it is considered fiction, it is not cited as a source in any of the historical works on Cesare or his family as far as I know. There are strong similarities between it and many of these works, but that is likely due to their reliance on the same older sources, such as Tomaso Tomasi.

<sup>50</sup> Johannes Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S. G. C. Middlemore (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 45.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid 50.

*Principe* it was not from a moral standpoint but from an eye to Florence's increased well-being under a weakened papacy. It was this same patriotism, says Burckhardt, that may have caused Machiavelli "to do violence to history"<sup>52</sup> in his twisting of historical facts to suit his own vision of what was needed.

The fact that Burckhardt brings up this concern shows his interest in the progress and development of humanity and human civilization. He makes sweeping claims about the Italian Renaissance as an exceedingly important moment in human history and as the instance of (as Part IV of his text is titled) "the Discovery of the World and of Man" and the creation of modernity. This theme is among others that became part of the dialogue on the Renaissance for many years after and that historians still refer back to, even if not always as explicitly. Burckhardt's text became a cornerstone of Renaissance history and his emphasis on Burchard and Machiavelli became a characteristic of later writings on Cesare as later authors reached back to Burckhardt's work as part of their analysis.

Historiography after Burckhardt took on a more consistently apologetic tone, with several histories or biographies trying to deal with Cesare and his family in "an attempt to present as they really were certain very human, strenuous men, the creatures—as all men are—of the age and environment in which they lived."<sup>53</sup> Rafael Sabatini published his biography of Cesare in 1912 and relates the familiar narrative but with an emphasis on locating him in a particular historical setting, one reinvigorated by Burckhardt.<sup>54</sup> He claimed that, "History should be as inexorable as Divine Justice."<sup>55</sup> This theme of justice was one that recurred throughout his text, and Sabatini saw himself in many ways as Cesare's defense attorney—the very first line in his book reads:

This is quite frankly a brief for the defence: an inquiry into the charges brought against the House of Borgia, an examination of the witnesses, contemporary and subsequent, who bring them, and an endeavour to arrest the accumulation and growth of those charges, which have been steadily

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid 53.

<sup>53</sup> Rafael Sabatini, *The Life of Cesare Borgia: Of France, Duke of Valentinois and Romagna, Prince of Andria and Venafri, Count of Dyois, Lord of Piombino, Camerino, and Urbino, Gonfalonier and Captain-General of Holy Church [sic]: A History and Some Criticisms* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1912), x.

<sup>54</sup> Sabatini cites Burckhardt as one of his important sources, making him one of the only non-Italian sources he used.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid xv.

proceeding for four hundred years and are proceeding still in our own time.<sup>56</sup>

Sabatini was in search of a correct reading of history and sought to distinguish his modern and enlightened history from earlier writings he saw as misinformed. This line of reasoning followed that if past historians were wrong, the common people were ignorant of their own lived histories. His description of the people of Viana, the town where Cesare died, as “amazed [and] uncomprehending,”<sup>57</sup> neither anticipating nor realizing the historical importance of Cesare’s death, is reflective of this larger trend. Because of this perceived intellectual advancement in modernity, Sabatini does take a harder look at the written sources than many others who had written before him had, saying that, “In the study of the history of the Borgias [...] too much has been accepted without question.”<sup>58</sup> This is consistent with his stated view of himself as being a defender of Cesare’s legal case in court and his theory that a modern rational analysis of history can save it from prior misinterpretations.

Not many authors writing on Cesare challenged these basic structural ideas. During the 1960s and 1970s, there was a surge of literature on Cesare and the Borgias that continued to use the theory of the birth of the modern man in the Renaissance as the assumption underlying their texts and as the explanation behind the various political and personal conflicts surrounding Cesare. These books also generally kept to a comfortable narrative pattern,<sup>59</sup> following the same basic biographical set up as Tomasi and focusing their analysis on Cesare’s life in Italy without delving into more complicated social or cultural factors more than had been done before, generally serving to reinforce the legends surrounding the family regardless of whether the particular author agreed with them. This wave of popular history was not unique, but most of the older examples of similar phenomenon are out of print and have been phased out of bibliographical use. Gómez asserts that the similarities in texts over the centuries can be ascribed to the fact that people are fundamentally the same and have the same guilty pleasures and desires. As he puts it,

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<sup>56</sup> Sabatini x.

<sup>57</sup> Sabatini 445.

<sup>58</sup> Sabatini xv.

<sup>59</sup> Gómez 282.

[People's] desires continue to be essentially the same. The political propaganda of the Lutherans and Angelicians, the Tridentine morality of the Catholics, and the superstitions and misogyny of all of them gave occasion to successive elaborations. Each century provided its own deformities and the myth adapted itself to historical situations and changing cultures, without losing any of its aura of the incredible but certainly while inciting our curiosity of the private lives of our fellow human beings and producing huge dividends on the publishing market.<sup>60</sup>

There may have been different reasons emphasized for the continuing spread of the black legend in culture and historiography, but at a very fundamental level they could all be compared to one another. Similarly, there is a continued desire to rescue the family from history and the cultural forces using it as a scapegoat, and this has also been part of the repeating pattern of historiography on Cesare and his family.

In the twentieth century (and twenty-first, the latest English language biography of Cesare was published in 2008) a few texts did begin to cite the Borgia family's roots in Spain as a factor in the role they played in the socio-political system in Italy. This followed with the conclusion that that the Italian Renaissance did not exist in isolation, as had earlier been implied if not stated, but was part of a broader pan-European movement. While books typically made note of the fact that the family had recently moved from Spain, it was not until Clemente Fusero's *The Borgias* was published in 1966 that this began to receive more substantial analysis.<sup>61</sup> While Fusero does examine the family's prior history in Spain and how being Spanish had an impact on their acceptance in Italy, *The Borgias* is still very much more a political history than an ethnographic or cultural one. This shift was, of course, not total, although the idea has since become fairly standard. Sarah Bradford, for instance, published *Cesare Borgia* in 1976 and does pay more attention to issues of ethnic identity and family origin. It was long commonplace for authors to take the cultural context of the Italian Renaissance into consideration as opposed to simply casting moral judgments, or to at least announce that the context should be taken into consideration as a disclaimer before judging regardless. Bradford,

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid 280.

<sup>61</sup> Corvo's use of their Spanish heritage as an explanation for a wide variety of characteristics not counting as substantial.

however, directly addresses “racial prejudice”<sup>62</sup> as one of the things that needs to be taken into consideration when writing a history of this sort. Bradford is also the first non-Spanish historian writing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century on Cesare who worked directly with scholars and archives in Navarra and Viana. She did not, however, complicate ideas of ethnic or cultural identification as much as she might have, as while she cited ethnic identity as a reason for why Cesare’s family was at odds with the other members of the Roman elite, she did not explain why that would be such a pivotal factor or what it meant to have a Spanish identity during this period in the first place, nor did she explore what effect that Spanish background had on later historiography. It is certain that it was influential, as many later historians either attributed the Borgias’ failings to their background or, less commonly, wrote glibly that it is impossible to tell where the family was from at all.<sup>63</sup> Bradford still took a promising step towards a new area of scholarship by emphasizing its importance even if she did not expand much on what it meant and later authors have continued the dialogue by exploring what influence a sense of being a cultural outsider would have had on Cesare and his family.

Bradford cites Michael Mallett’s 1969 text *The Borgias: The Rise and Fall of the Most Infamous Family in History* as “the most up-to-date and fair account of the Borgias in general.”<sup>64</sup> Mallett traces out the family’s continued existence after the early 1500s farther than other works had, showing how Cesare connected to a more recent time with a resulting emphasis on the creative process of making history and of history’s intersection with popular culture and fiction. Whereas other narratives usually ended either in the early sixteenth century or with Saint Francis Borgia who died in 1572, Mallett touched briefly on how the legacy continued to develop well into the 1800s and how at least one descendent of the Borgias reacted to it. This dilation of the frame has become more common in later histories on Cesare in Spanish as well as in English. Bradford similarly drew a connection between Cesare’s death and his later representations, but as she had spent time researching in Viana her emphasis was more on a brief overview of what happened to Cesare’s body and grave, similar to Moret, Alesón and Yriarte, all of whom

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<sup>62</sup> Bradford 3.

<sup>63</sup> Gómez 287.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid 305.

had also gone to Viana to conduct research. Later historians outside of Spain did not pick up on this specific focus, however, although Mallett's method of looking at Cesare's intersection with later works and representations did gain ground.

Ivan Cloulas, among others, wrote in response to Bradford and Mallett and he devoted the epilogue of his book, *Cesare Borgia*, to tracing out the Borgias changing appearances in history as well as in fiction up to a French film on Lucrezia in 1953, dilating the historical frame even beyond what Mallett had done. Cloulas published his history in 1987 while working as the conservator-in-chief of the French National Archives, giving his text an air of authority and likely contributing to the fact that books on Cesare in multiple different languages cite his text. Predictably, Cloulas relies heavily on French sources, including Yriarte, and had access to French language texts in addition to those available in English. He also perpetuates the story of incest within the family, which had previously been questioned and which both Bradford and Mallett called "quite unfounded."<sup>65</sup> By providing numerous examples of their appearance in fiction at its conclusion, Cloulas kept these stories alive within the historiography on the Borgias, ultimately blurring the line between fantasy and reality as he included fictional sources as examples of Cesare in popular culture without analyzing their uses of the Borgias. Hermann-Röttgen categorizes him because of the inclusion of stories like that one as one of the many "works about the Borgias that try in a similar way to present a historical topic in a literary form,"<sup>66</sup> criticizing his book and others as a rehashing of the old legend without any new analysis and with a sometimes unstable boundary between the historical and the fictional.

Just as Cloulas was able to use sources that are only available in French, historians in Spain have not always had their works translated into other languages either, and there is a historiographical tradition in Spain that while active is not being reflected on to any great extent outside of the country. This was explained by J. Sanchis y Sivera in *Algunos documentos y cartas privadas que pertencecieron al segundo Duque de Gandía don Juan de Borja*, as due to a longstanding prejudice against Spanish sources and archives. He complains that, "Spanish documents are never taken into account.

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<sup>65</sup> Mallett 161.

<sup>66</sup> Hermann-Röttgen 175.

Foreign historians, save for honorable exceptions, generally warn against our country and that our style of documentation is more often than not full of errors of interpretation when it is not deliberately distorted in spirit and letter.”<sup>67</sup> He wrote at a time when historians were realizing the possibilities hidden in the Valencian archives and starting to push back against their condemnation, but even today these archives are underused.<sup>68</sup> This denigrating of Catholic Spanish sources is part of a broader teleological interpretation of European progress, and can be seen reflected in other historical fields of study.<sup>69</sup> While Spanish language histories on Cesare have been published at least as far back as Moret and Alesón in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the vast majority of them are not used by historians outside of the country and even Moret and Alesón are simply quoted from directly to briefly show “what happened” rather than analyzed more extensively. Sivera claims that foreigners from more powerful and largely Protestant countries such as Great Britain and Germany<sup>70</sup> denigrated Spanish archives and sources to the point that even Spanish historians have traditionally been reluctant to make use of them.<sup>71</sup> Again the Black Legend of Spain should be remembered, which served to distinguish Iberians from other Europeans, especially those from Protestant nations. Walter D. Mignolo writes that,

[...] England distinguished itself from the Spaniards, who, the English said, had Moorish blood and acted as barbarians in the New World. About two centuries after the Black Legend was told and retold, Immanuel Kant stated as a fact that Spaniards had a non-European origin: “The Spaniard’s bad side is that he does not learn from foreigners; that he does not travel in order to get acquainted with other nations; that he is centuries behind in the sciences. He resists any reform; he is proud of not having to work; he is of a romantic quality of spirit, as the bullfight shows; he is cruel, as the former auto-da-fé shows; *and he displays in his taste an origin that is partially non-European*” (Kant 1978, 231-32; emphasis added).<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> J. Sanchis y Sivera, *Algunos documentos y cartas privadas que pertencecieron al segundo Duque de Gandía don Juan de Borja: Notas para la historia de Alejandro VI* (Valencia: La Voz Valenciana, 1919), v.

<sup>68</sup> Gómez 285, 303. Gómez names Sivera as one of the pioneers in this exploration.

<sup>69</sup> Edward Behrend-Martínez. *Unfit for Marriage: Impotent Spouses on Trial in the Basque Region of Spain, 1650-1750* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2007), 3.

<sup>70</sup> Sivera 10.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid v.

<sup>72</sup> Greer et al 313.

This is a racial bias against Spaniards, which denigrates if not invalidates any scholarly work done in the peninsula from Iberian sources. Sivera further asserts that this bias goes beyond a reluctance to use Spanish sources to an unfair evaluation of the Borgia family by later historians. He writes that, “The train of thought that many authors have is strange, but when it comes to the Borgias in particular [accusations of nepotism are more heavily weighted] than with other personages. It occurred under Sixtus IV, Innocent VIII, Julius II and Leo X in similar proportions although no one criticizes them. The fact is that non-Spanish speakers are favored!”<sup>73</sup> While Sivera, himself Spanish, is making an argument in favor of using Spanish sources in order to explain the importance and originality of his book which analyses documents written to Juan Borgia or produced at his court in Gandía, it is also true that the criticism that has been laid on Alexander VI and his family is particularly notorious. At the same time it remains important to not create “an equally false white legend” of apology and excuse as some historians, Spanish and not, have done.<sup>74</sup>

Óscar Villarroel González’ *Los Borgia: Iglesia y poder entre los siglos xv y xvi* (2005) and Félix San Millán Carinaños’ *César Borgia y Viana (Navarra): (1507-2007)* (2007) are two recent examples of Spanish histories.<sup>75</sup> Villarroel’s text makes frequent reference back to the French Yriarte and the English Mallett, showing the European (if not global) nature of this discourse, even as he places a noticeably greater emphasis on the family’s history in Spain. He engages with the idea of ethnic or cultural differences as being a source of tension but is more careful and specific about how he classifies Cesare and others than most authors. Villarroel makes sure to not use ahistorical cultural or political constructions as other authors do when they generalize the different Iberian kingdoms into “Spain.” He also does not fall back into the oversimplification of a single “Spanish” identity, an overgeneralization that is especially problematic before the existence of Spain as we know it today. He is similarly very familiar with the details of the politics outside of Spain at the time and when he draws boundaries he is careful not to do so along ahistorical lines. Villarroel also dedicates a chapter to exploring the different

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid 35.

<sup>74</sup> Gómez 30.

<sup>75</sup> They are just two of many texts on the Borgias that are only available in Spanish and they both frequently made use of Spanish sources. Carinaños cited Villarroel as well.



ways people have used Cesare from his death into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as well as a final, short chapter which looks at the effect the Borgias had on the church and political situation in which they were moving in. In both of these chapters he is writing directly in response to other authors who have produced works on Cesare. For instance, Villarroel attacks the uncritical use of Burchard's book as problematic and claims that it leads to a misinterpretation of the very people historians claimed to study through its pages. He sees a "success of a mythic version"<sup>76</sup> of history because of the persistence of the older dark stories about Cesare and his family, the black legend which was never a part of the Spanish tradition in the same way,<sup>77</sup> as well as the repeated occurrence of apologist works which pull at another set of emotions.

Félix San Millán Carinaños interweaves discussion of this mythic version of history with a more careful look at the past, focused, like Moret and Alesón's *Annales*, on Cesare's interconnection with Viana. Carinaños wrote *Cesare Borgia y Viana* as part of Navarra's promotion of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Cesare's death in Viana as a culturally and historically important moment in their local history. Because it is bound up with issues of tourism and economics it is reflective of Cesare's continued popularity and contested identity. Carinaños writes about numerous different examples of Cesare's appearance in some form of popular culture up through 2007, the year *Cesare Borgia y Viana* was published, and he explains the circumstances surrounding its release as well. Unlike Villarroel, Carinaños does not engage in any particularly deep analysis of the political or cultural situation in the Italian Renaissance or early modern Spain, but he does encapsulate the relatively recent movement towards clarifying Cesare's connections to the present.

Carinaños wrote to promote tourism with cultural and economic effects for the present, and sought to capitalize upon the popularity of Cesare and his family in current media including, among others, the successful *Assassin's Creed* video game series and the Showtime television drama *The Borgias*. The family is used, as Cloulas suggests, to air various grievances against those in positions of power as well as against society in

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<sup>76</sup> Villarroel 339.

<sup>77</sup> Gómez 287.

general in more discreet forms.<sup>78</sup> In all of these pop culture reincarnations the narrative and analytical emphasis is on the rise and fall of the family in Italy instead of on the historiographical tradition that has developed over the years, and while they may not always be demons they are always decadent, ambitious, and proud. The frequent skimming over of the historiographical tradition puts them in a vacuum and enables them to become a target for modern grievances while sometimes offering back, for example, an equally modern critique of a society closed to foreigners and cultural outsiders. There is a core of a story that is continually repeated and examined from different angles as what it is used for changes. Cesare is a convenient slate to write upon, not blank, but with a leading line, a historical tradition that has changed perspectives often enough that it is possible to write on it front and back. From Machiavelli reminding his reader that he met with il Valentino to Sabatini preparing to face the court in his defense, historians have impressed upon their audiences that Cesare, as his epitaph said, lies in just a little earth. Even when focusing on the differences separating Renaissance Man from his descendants they keyed in on how nearly reachable he is—as Burckhardt said, this was the period of the birth of modern man—but still kept him in the grave and out of reach. The dead cannot speak or at least cannot be made to say anything new. Whatever words are spoken after their death belong not to them but to the texts produced about them and are therefore, like the discussion of the historiographical tradition in a biography, detached from the main story if not bluntly secondary to it.

The very recent 2013 biography, *The Borgias: The Hidden History* by G. J. Meyer, is perhaps reflective of a shift in scholarship to recognize the importance of placing the Borgia family in their broader European context. While Meyer only cites sources published or easily available in English, he emphasizes Borgia connections to families and institutions in the Italian Peninsula, Iberia, France, and the Holy Roman Empire. He is also unusual in starting chronologically and devoting several chapters to Calixtus III, including attention given to his time in the Kingdom of Aragón. Meyer also emphasizes the existence of a sensationalized legend and that there is “evidence that the Borgia story, when one pursues it far enough, turns out to be vastly different from what

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<sup>78</sup> Cloulas 334.

the world supposes.”<sup>79</sup> While he draws perhaps too extensively from the early twentieth historian De Roos at the expense of looking in detail at other sources and devotes too much attention to the thesis (also put forth by De Roos) that Alexander VI could not have fathered any of the children commonly ascribed to him, Meyer does make commendable strides towards placing the typical history of the Borgias in a pan-European context and making this information more readily accessible to a popular audience. The fact that his book was published through Bantam Books also suggests a shift in general perception of the family and era in general, including perhaps most importantly an increased awareness of and curiosity in trans-national connections. Meyer also begins his book with a prologue titled “One Whom All Did Fear,” a quote from Cesare’s epitaph, and a brief discussion of Cesare’s death in Viana.<sup>80</sup> This is the only example found as of this writing, other than Carinaños’ explicitly Viana-centric study, which uses the narrative of Cesare’s death in Viana to frame the events in a study of the Borgias, and again shows an interest in a broader contextualization of the family and emphasis on the importance of the events in Iberia.

This paper will use Spanish sources to explore the time Cesare spent in the Iberian Peninsula with an emphasis on Navarra in order to shed more light on this period than has been previously been available in English-language texts. Gómez argues that the future of historical study on this family will lie in the rediscovery of Spanish sources and analysis of the family’s connections with Valencia in particular.<sup>81</sup> Although within Spain there is a stronger historical tradition surrounding the Borgias in Valencia than in Navarra, Cesare plays an intriguing role in local Navarran history with its own historiographical tradition, as shown above. This paper will explore the facts around this period of his life and then around his body in death.

Cesare’s life and its commemoration serve as a valuable tool to examine the construction of meaning through historical, and historicized, memories. Therefore, an examination of him creates an opportunity to consider the legacy of the Renaissance in Europe, as well as the connection between local identities and broader, cultural processes.

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<sup>79</sup> G. J. Meyer, *The Borgias: The Hidden History* (Bantam Books, New York: 2013), xxvii.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid 1.

<sup>81</sup> Gómez 304.

Various debates about the past and its meaning for the present have led to different interpretations of Cesare both in Spain and beyond its borders. Therefore it is necessary to go further than to try to arrange the facts, such as they may be, in order. This paper will explore change over time in order to examine how history is used to create a sense of identity and community and how historical personages are in turn incorporated into the societies they help support. As White writes, to acknowledge a narrative as necessarily a kind of fiction-making “in no way detracts from the status of historical narratives as providing a kind of knowledge [...] such plot structures [are] one of the ways a culture has of making sense of both personal and public pasts.”<sup>82</sup> It is natural to want to make that past into a form we can understand and relate to and to say to it, "you were born in September of 1475, you lived and you fought and you died an inglorious and ironic death in Viana at the age of 32, largely broke and abandoned in this world, a metaphor for our own lust for temporal power, and if you stand just so and raise your chin to the light I will chisel you a pedestal and title you 'Hero.'"

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<sup>82</sup> White 195.

## Chapter 2

### Contested Memory, Regional Identity

An overview of the historiography surrounding the Borgias has made it apparent that each scholar has their own way of framing the family. Not only do these different strands of thought refer back to one another but also they take on different regionalized flavors, from which different meanings form. English-language texts most frequently frame them in relation to the Italian peninsula and focus on Pope Alexander VI and his immediate family. As might be expected, however, this is not the typical framing in his natal Spain. Spanish historiography in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries focuses, more than that of other countries or languages, on the *longue durée* and tends to go into greater detail about those more distant familial relations and the roles that they played in establishing Alexander VI in Rome and in carrying on the family name after his death. These sources also tend to make more use of Spanish archives and to be more emphatic about how the Borgias can be related not only to the Italian but also to the Iberian Peninsula as well. To this end, they emphasize the fact that Spain was not at the time a single country, but was rather a collection of kingdoms and territories, often joined together through marriage and inheritance. This crafts a more nuanced version of history than that often recreated in English-language historiography, which tends to oversimplify the larger pan-European political and cultural situation in order to present a streamlined biography or a microcosmic view of Rome or Italy.<sup>83</sup>

This is not to say that Spanish historiography ignores the trees for the forest. The individual members of the Borgia family have become part of Spain's pop culture and are markers of cultural identity, especially in the regions with closer historical ties to the family. Gandía, on the coast of Valencia, was a Borgia duchy. Both Juan Borgia, one of Alexander VI's sons, and the more famous Saint Francis Borgia, or San Francisco Borja, held the title of Duke of Gandía, and the building in which they lived is now open to the public as a museum. There is a hotel named after the family, statues of prominent family members, a church with an engraving explaining that it was built with funds

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<sup>83</sup> For example: Sivera, *Algunos documentos y cartas prvidadas*; Gómez, "Los Borja en Valencia;" and Villarroel, *Los Borgia*, discussed in more detail previously.

supplied by Alexander VI, and flags of the Borgia bull flying from apartment windows. This is all found in an otherwise nondescript, if slightly run down, small town. As Bradford puts it,

Italy is a land overcrowded with the ghosts of history; only the memories of men who built great monuments remain alive. Cesare, in his brief, frenzied years of power, had no time for immortality, and the terrible Valentino has faded into the rich tapestry of the past as if he had never been. It is in Navarre, where the ghosts of history are few and far between, that Cesare is still remembered as the hero of the fight for independence [...] Navarre is a country where the past is yesterday, and lost causes remain alive.<sup>84</sup>

When Cesare (or César, as he is known here<sup>85</sup>) arrived in Viana, what we see as the past was still his present and the cause he was entangled in was far from lost. It would be beneficial to examine the connection between César and Viana more closely, as the two had an influence on one another and on the ways in which their stories are told.

In 1507 Queen Isabel I la Católica of Castilla had recently died and the kingdom was in the hands of her daughter, Juana la Loca, and her son-in-law, the Habsburg prince Felipe I el Hermoso. Aragón, meanwhile, was still being ruled by Fernando II el Católico, who “had a direct claim to the throne of Navarre through his father’s first wife, Blanche of Navarre.”<sup>86</sup> Isabel had stipulated in her last testament that if Juana was unfit to rule power would revert to Fernando and he could rule as regent. It was to his advantage to have Juana declared unfit to rule, and before Isabel’s death, “Both parents may have already been aware of signs of mental instability in their daughter; they were

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<sup>84</sup> Bradford 301.

<sup>85</sup> On a related note, Villarroel traces the shift from “de Borja” to “Borgia,” and concludes that the change occurred with Rodrigo’s uncle, Alonso, when he moved permanently to Rome from Spain and Naples (38), and that, more specifically, the name “Borgia” appeared in connection with this branch of the Borja family when Alonso was elevated to the position of archbishop of Valencia but did not become the surname the family was known by in Spain as well until Rodrigo’s eldest son was made the Duke of Gandía (14). This was not only how surrounding (Spanish and Roman) contemporaries styled them, but how they styled themselves, showing the at times complex interplay between shifting political allegiance and cultural and linguistic heritage. César is the Spanish spelling of Caesar or Cesare and is the version this paper will use from here on out.

<sup>86</sup> Henry Kamen, *Empire: How Spain Became a World Power, 1492-1763* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003), 34.

also reluctant to let control of Castile pass into foreign hands.”<sup>87</sup> Juana’s husband Felipe, on the other hand, was at pains to prevent Fernando from becoming regent so that he could continue to rule as king.<sup>88</sup> This tussling for power spread to the court, whose members chose sides and formed factions. Henry Kamen argues that, “Aware of his weakening hold over a realm where many nobles resented the interference of ‘the old Catalan’, [Fernando] strengthened his hand elsewhere by marrying in March 1506 the king of France’s niece, Germaine de Foix.”<sup>89</sup> This gave him another direct connection with the Foix family of Navarra, which was itself experiencing dynastic strife.

Navarra was still a distinct and suzerain kingdom ruled by Queen Catalina de Foix and her husband don Juan III de Labrit and was part of the “web of vassalic relations that were constructed around the king [of France].”<sup>90</sup> Catalina was a close relative of the kings of both France and Aragón. Women could inherit the throne in Navarra, and in 1483, when Catalina was only thirteen, her older brother died and the crown passed to her, with her mother, Princess Magdalena, acting as regent.<sup>91</sup> The death of the king caused a struggle for power with don Juan de Foix, Catalina’s uncle, who argued that because part of the territories Catalina claimed lay in France and because she therefore recognized French suzerainty, she should also obey Salic Law. Since Salic Law prevented women from inheriting the throne, the crown should skip her and go to him, the next man in line. The Kingdom of Aragón supported Juan de Foix and was “the basis of the successful dynastic claims [by Foix] to [...] Navarre.”<sup>92</sup> Aragón was until the turn of the sixteenth century generally on good terms with Pope Alexander VI, who had “in

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<sup>87</sup> Henry Kamen, *Spain, 1469-1714: A Society of Conflict* (Edinburgh Gate: Pearson Education Limited, 2005), 4.

<sup>88</sup> For more information see Departamento de cultura, turismo y relaciones institucionales de Navarra (Comunidad Autónoma), *En los umbrales de España: la incorporación del Reino de Navarra a la monarquía hispana: XXXVII Semana de estudios medievales, Estella, 18-22 de julio de 2011* (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, Departamento de cultura, turismo y relaciones institucionales, 2012), 49-52.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid 102.

<sup>91</sup> There are other little connections between Catalina and César apart from her becoming his sister-in-law. Her mother was the Princess of Viana, the town César would be buried in, and she herself was the Duchess of Gandía before that territory became part of Aragón and was sold to first Pablo Luis and then Juan Borgia. (Moret 29.)

<sup>92</sup> Kamen *A Society of Conflict* 9.

1494 (a year when he needed Spain's help against the French) bestowed on [Isabel and Fernando] the title of *Los Reyes Católicos*” making its threats all the more powerful.<sup>93</sup> Although Alexandrine Rome's allegiance shifted to France and the Labrit family after 1499, this did not last long as Pope Julius II supported Aragón's political maneuvers towards Navarra as well. Showing a similar ability and willingness to use international tensions to strengthen the position of the papacy, Julius II issued a bull justifying an attack against France, which in 1512 was in blatant opposition to Rome, that was then used to rationalize the invasion of Navarra.<sup>94</sup> Navarra's rulers needed the legitimacy bestowed by the Vatican, and they lost it and were ultimately excommunicated and deposed of their throne by Julius II in 1512, losing standing in future Iberian history as in Aragón Fernando “reduced all alternatives to military alliance with him or against him [and] with the Church or against the Church.”<sup>95</sup>

During the period of political uncertainty after Catalina inherited the throne, the Count of Lerín tried to separate from Navarra but was brought temporarily back in line after the eventual coronation of Catalina and her husband, Juan de Labrit, in 1494. The Navarran monarchs also ruled over a half dozen other possessions and were only infrequently in the kingdom. This allowed internal unrest and fighting between the house of Beaumontés, who did not support alliance between the Foix and Albret families and who were backed by Aragón, and the house of Agramontés to continue.<sup>96</sup> Then, as in 1507, Navarra felt pressure from not only Aragón and Castilla but also France. The Count of Lerín was Fernando's brother-in-law and while Navarra had an agreement with Castilla they were not on friendly terms with Aragón, and the Navarran monarchs would be overthrown by the Duke of Alba on Fernando of Aragón's orders in 1512, losing the southern half of their territory to Aragón.<sup>97</sup> This period has been looked at as a *fracasa*, a failure, and as proof of the stagnation or backwards movement of Navarran society and

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid 37.

<sup>94</sup> Alfredo Floristán Imízcoz, *La monarquía española y el gobierno del Reino de Navarra, 1512-1808: comentarios de textos históricos* (Pamplona: Departamento de educación, cultura, y deporte del Gobierno de Navarra, 1991), 42.

<sup>95</sup> Floristán Imízcoz, *La monarquía española y el gobierno del Reino de Navarra*, 47.

<sup>96</sup> Rachel Bard, *Navarra: The Durable Kingdom* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1982), 78, 81.

<sup>97</sup> Moret 148, 257.



government, a point of view which has been challenged in more recent years by many papers and dissertations, the majority of which have been published by historians from the region, and more recently by full-length books as well, some of which assert that early modern Navarra was actually more egalitarian and progressive than other Iberian kingdoms.<sup>98</sup>

Regardless, in 1507 there was tension between Castilla, under Felipe I, and Aragón and again between Aragón and Navarra.<sup>99</sup> When César was sprung from imprisonment, it was by those who hoped to use him against Aragón and when he appeared in Navarra he was welcomed by his brother-in-law the king and made Captain General in order to put down the latest rebellion by the Count of Lerín, backed by Aragonese reinforcements.<sup>100</sup> After this task, César was supposed to escort Felipe I's son to his father, Maximilian I, the Holy Roman Emperor. The Holy Roman Emperor had his eyes on the Italian peninsula and it seems that he was considering hiring César as a general for an Italian campaign, a situation that would have potentially allowed him to regain his old holdings in the Romagna.<sup>101</sup> This was an international situation and César was regaining the spotlight as a figure of some transnational importance. His sudden death in March of 1507 removed him from that stage and secured the location of his pedestal in the comparatively removed Viana.

#### The History of Navarra

Although there has been a good deal of work done on the Borgias' connections with Valencia, there has been significantly less written about their relationship with Navarra. César was related to its royal family by marriage and the region commemorates his death in Viana, but there have been few historians who have studied César's connections with the kingdom. While there have been several historians, especially in

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<sup>98</sup> See Ana Zabalza Seguí, *Aldeas y campesinos en la Navarra Preperenaica (1550-1817)* (Pamplona: Departamento de educación y cultura del Gobierno de Navarra, 1994) for an example of a PhD dissertation presenting a new look on the region that was turned into a book as well as a discussion of the historiography of early modern Navarra.

<sup>99</sup> Bard 77.

<sup>100</sup> The king and queen of Navarra had previously petitioned against César's imprisonment, writing that "his prison has been unjust, painful, and in all ways contrary to public faith, and to the Rights of Men" (Ibid 134).

<sup>101</sup> Ibid 134-136.

Spain, who examined the relationship between the Borgia family and Valencia and who point out the importance of integrating these two historiographical traditions, it is also important to look at the role played by Navarra on the Borgia family and vice versa. Unlike in Valencia, where there are multiple members of the family who lived there for years at a time, César was the only one of his relatives to step foot or hold office in Navarra and a study of the connection between the kingdom and the family necessarily focuses in on him.

César died in battle a short walk outside of the walled city of Viana, which sprung up as one of the many urban centers along the Camino de Santiago, the famous pilgrimage route ending at Santiago de Compostela, the capital of Galicia in northwestern Spain. As Jean Passini noted, the Camino de Santiago attracted urban settlement and small cities sprung up along the route.<sup>102</sup> The itinerary of the Camino shifted as well in order to better funnel pilgrims through these urban centers, where they might make use of what the communities had to offer and so that these communities might benefit more fully in turn from their traffic.<sup>103</sup> Viana today expands beyond its old walls, but in the early modern period the city covered only 5.14 hectares, or 12 acres, of land. While it was larger than Santiago de Puente la Reina, at 2.36 hectares, which Passini points to as an example of a typical urban settlement on the Camino de Santiago, it was certainly much smaller than the capital city of Pamplona at 38.29 hectares.<sup>104</sup> It was not a large urban settlement even by early modern standards, but because of its location on the pilgrimage route, not as provincial as often assumed.

Viana, as mentioned above, is located in Navarra, which is today considered a *comunidad foral*, or autonomous community, in the País Vasco—the Basque region of northern Spain.<sup>105</sup> This region is perhaps best known for its political tensions, especially

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<sup>102</sup> Departamento de educación y cultura de Navarra (Comunidad Autónoma), *El Camino de Santiago y la articulación del espacio hispánico: XX Semana de Estudios Medievales, Estella, 26 a 30 de julio de 1993* (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 1994), 249.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid 251.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid 268.

<sup>105</sup> A look at the historiography of Navarra can be found in Álvaro Adot Lerga, *Juan de Albret y Catalina de Foix, o, La defense del estado navarro (1483-1517)* (Pamplona: Ona Industria Gráfica, 2005).

<sup>105</sup> Carinaños 25.

concerning the separatist group Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA). Not only in Navarra, but also in the País Vasco in general, “many Basques today feel no identity with either Spain or France, and want independence, or something close to it. Many other Basques are content to be French or Spanish citizens, and some of them feel deeply threatened by Basque nationalism.”<sup>106</sup> Like Catalonia, Navarra retains a greater degree of local control than other provinces in Spain, reflecting the historical reality that there was for a long time no single political Spain, even though there was a Spanish peninsula. As Peter Sahlins notes in his study on the Pyrenean borderland,

There was no legal concept of a “Spanish” nationality in Spain during the early modern period. There were “subjects” or “vassals” of the Spanish king (technically of the Count of Barcelona, or the King of Castile, or the Two Sicilies, and so forth). But the different political entities which made up Spain were composed of different “nationalities”: Navarese, Aragonese, Castilians, Catalans, Portuguese. [...]here was no national monarchy, and peripheral provinces were juridically different nations.<sup>107</sup>

Navarra was its own kingdom in the Iberian Peninsula in the 1500s. Even after it was divided up between France and Spain, it still boasted its own monarchy, merely one that was made up of vassals to the French and Spanish rulers and who did not fit the lingering stereotype of the Basques, or *vascos*, as backwater and untouched European aboriginals.<sup>108</sup> The emphasis on jurisdiction over territory that Sahlins describes can be seen in the document issued by the Duke of Alba in the name of the King of Aragon after defeating Juan de Labrit in 1512. It highlights the change in loyalty of individuals and groups to Aragón from Navarra as a result of the outcome of the war, rather than laying out new territorial boundaries.<sup>109</sup> As the emphasis in general and in this document in particular was on “jurisdiction over subjects, not over a delimited territory,”<sup>110</sup> Spain was able to create itself out of a chimera of different political entities. It was a composite monarchy, made up of what were essentially different kingdoms treated as distinct

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<sup>106</sup> Paddy Woodworth, *Basque Country: A Cultural History* (New York: Oxford Press, 2007), xvi.

<sup>107</sup> Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 113-114.

<sup>108</sup> Woodworth xv.

<sup>109</sup> Moret 257-259.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid 6.

political and cultural entities under the lordship of a single ruler.

Navarra, the oldest of the Iberian kingdoms, found itself fighting to remain politically independent from the larger kingdoms that surrounded it and especially from Aragón, which initially wanted to collect it as another territory under its rule. Daniel Becker notes that although Navarra had been defeated and conquered in battle, it “was treated as if it had become a part of Spain through dynastic union. All of Navarre’s medieval institutions were maintained as well as its separate legal system.”<sup>111</sup>

Furthermore, all of this happened under Castilian rather than Aragonese rule as although Aragón conquered it, Ferdinand decided to incorporate it as a territory of Castilla.

Ferdinand seemed to have “believed that the expansionist Castilians would be more likely to defend the kingdom from the claims of the Albret family or of the French than the more indifferent Aragonese,” causing this unusual reshuffling.<sup>112</sup> Navarra had remained in large part safe from Muslim conquest after the fall of the Visigoths in 711, losing only a relatively small portion of its territory in the south, helped by its mountainous terrain. However, it was unable to push southwards more than a little during the process of reconquista again in part because those same mountains locked it in and unlike Castilla and Aragón was not able to expand to the same extent and remained small, “a little more than 10,000 kilometers square”.<sup>113</sup> Hillgrath writes that, “The small kingdom of Navarre was the one Christian state of the peninsula which did not profit from the break-up of Almohad rule in al-Andalus. Navarre remained bottled up in the Pyrenees, sealed off by Castile and Aragon from expansion southwards.”<sup>114</sup> Navarra’s natural geographic protections had served it well initially but then kept it from dramatically expanding its territory, leading in part to the precarious position it was in upon César’s arrival in 1507 and which would crumble in 1512.

The environment of the region did more than provide natural boundaries for the

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<sup>111</sup> Daniel Charles Becker, “‘There Is No Harm In a Boy Talking to a Girl’: The Control of Sexuality and Marriage in Early Modern Navarre and Guipúzcoa.” (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 1997), 56.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Departamento de educación y cultura de Navarra (Comunidad Autónoma), *El Camino de Santiago y la articulación del espacio hispánico*, 130.

<sup>114</sup> J. N. Hillgrath. *The Spanish Kingdoms: 1250-1516*, vol. 1. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 18.

kingdom. The twelfth-century French pilgrim, Aymeric Picaud, described Navarra in general as “land of the Navarros, rich in bread, wine, milk, and livestock,”<sup>115</sup> but there was a linguistic and cultural difference between the southern and northern portions of the kingdom, which was paralleled by a difference in environments as “the pre-Pyrenean depression also marked the change in the plant domain.”<sup>116</sup> David Becker writes that,

Southern Navarre shares the dry, dusty feel of neighboring Aragon and Castile. Heading north, as the Pyrenees grow larger and the sea draws near, the landscape changes from yellow grasses and brown hills to the lush green mountains and misty valleys of Spain’s northern Atlantic coast. These environmental changes mirror the linguistic transition. During the sixteenth century, in [...] the northern two-thirds of Navarre, most people were Basque and spoke Euskera, as the Basques called their language. In the southern-most part of Navarre, people spoke Castilian, and that language was also the official language of both the diocesan and royal courts.<sup>117</sup>

The lower third of Navarra, which includes Viana, had more contact with Castilla than the region to the north at the start of the sixteenth century and Castilla was already making cultural and linguistic inroads. Henry Kamen notes that, “Though the rulers of Navarre were French in culture rather than Spanish, the kingdom since the late fifteenth century had been within the Castilian sphere of influence.”<sup>118</sup> This southern region of Castilian influence was called the Ribera, named for the banks of the Ebro, the major river flowing through the area. The Ebro provided increased opportunity for communication and trade, although it was of secondary importance in the international trade that flowed through Iberia along a primarily north and south route.<sup>119</sup> That said, the economy of the Ribera had for centuries been connected to “trade in Europe and, of

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<sup>115</sup> Departamento de educación y cultura de Navarra (Comunidad Autónoma), *Itinerarios medievales e identidad hispánica: XXVII Semana de Estudios Medievales, Estella, 17-21 de julio de 2001* (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, Departamento de Educación y Cultura, 2001), 413.

<sup>116</sup> Zabalza Segúin, *Aldeas y campesinos en la Navarra Preperenaica*, 21.

<sup>117</sup> Becker 35.

<sup>118</sup> Kamen, *Empire*, 34.

<sup>119</sup> Departamento de educación y cultura de Navarra (Comunidad Autónoma), *Itinerarios medievales e identidad hispánica*, 192.

course, in the economic region of the western Mediterranean,” making it an important water route through the kingdom.<sup>120</sup>

Becker notes that, “The area is flat and very dry, with some parts receiving only 200 to 400 millimeters of rain per year. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, because the Ebro provided opportunities for irrigation and because an abundance of sunny days allowed for good plant growth, this area had a varied, Mediterranean type of agriculture: grains, vines, and olives.”<sup>121</sup> Although the region does receive little rain, a common complaint from people living there today, it was not always as dry as Becker describes. In the early sixteenth century the land of the Ribera around Viana had not yet been drained and was quite marshy, and the patches of wetland in the gulches between the rolling hillocks were recognized as part of the local landscape and were given local names. The gulch César would be killed in is still remembered as *la Barranca Salida*, in reference to the salty water that it was once known for. Just as the northern two-thirds of the kingdom would be shaped by deforestation as its “forests were conquered by cultivation from very remote times,” or by the introduction of corn from the Americas and the population growth it supported, the landscape of the Ribera was also changed by human hands even as its society and culture were affected by outside influence.<sup>122</sup>

During this period, the Ribera was also more ecologically productive, growing wheat and rye, although more people lived in the Montaña, the mountainous region in the northern two-thirds of the country.<sup>123</sup> There they depended on common land to graze animals and while the monarchy asserted its right to control the land all throughout the kingdom, “it seems that in reality, royal control over this territory was weak, and local Basque farmers were still quite autonomous to regulate and enforce the use of common-pool resources,” giving them a great deal of local independence, expressed through all of Navarra by local “decision-making bodies” in which households, sometimes determined by Old Christian status, “sent a representative to these periodic assemblies to deliberate

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid 198.

<sup>121</sup> Becker 37.

<sup>122</sup> Zabalza Seguí 21.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid 37-38, 53.

on matters of public interest.”<sup>124</sup> In general, people in the Ribera lived clustered more tightly together and engaged in more intensive agriculture and less livestock herding, making them culturally more like their neighbors to the south. There was also a greater economic divide in the Ribera, and unlike in the north where the vast majority of peasants owned their own land and were able to live off of small family plots, people lived grouped together by necessity and many peasants were forced to work as day laborers.<sup>125</sup>

Plague did not threaten Navarra to the same extent as other parts of Europe due to its relative isolation and it had few famines in the early modern period. Instead it was stricken by war, leading to the estimate that “By the 1480’s, Navarre may have lost up to a third of the population that it had had in 1425 due to the warfare. The battles also led competing factions to squeeze taxes out of the peasant populations,”<sup>126</sup> as different groups vied for political control, a struggle which had been kicked off by an eleven year long civil war from 1450-1461 between the then-king don Juan II de Aragón, brother to King Alfonso V of Aragón and father of the future Fernando el Católico, and his heir to the throne of Navarra.<sup>127</sup> In fact, even before this civil war Navarra had been beset by political uncertainty as Juan II spent many years in Aragón commanding his brother’s troops and leaving the ruling of his own kingdom to his wife who “was designated governor and regent for life in the name of their son, Carlos, proclaimed successor and named Prince of Viana” before Juan II returned to Navarra to the start of civil war.<sup>128</sup> The total taxes collected in the kingdom in grains dropped by 65% between 1427 and 1501 and monetary taxes dropped by 19%.<sup>129</sup> This decline in taxes received reflects the continued “Lack of clarity as to the legitimate reign, the permanent ‘reasonable doubt’ about the same for at least two generations, [which was] a fundamental element [according to the historian Eloísa Ramírez Vaquero] in the fall of the prestige of the royal

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<sup>124</sup> Ismael Vaccario and Oriol Beltran, eds, *Social and Ecological History of the Pyrenees: State, Market, and Landscape* (Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2010), 31-32.

<sup>125</sup> Becker 52.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid 55.

<sup>127</sup> See Jesús María Usunáriz Garayoa, *Historia breve de Navarra* (Madrid: Sílex, 2006), 86-117 for more information on Navarra’s political history from Juan II de Aragón to 1512.

<sup>128</sup> Departamento de cultura, turismo y relaciones institucionales de Navarra (Comunidad Autónoma), *En los umbrales de España*, 52.

<sup>129</sup> Usunáriz Garayoa 99.

family and, indirectly, of the justification of the power of the noble factions.”<sup>130</sup> During the following Albret dynasty, the Navarran bourgeois would gain strength, reflecting a continued lack of strong royal control. Boissonnade critiques the Albret dynasty, writing that,

The autonomy of the hamlets, villages, towns, municipalities and valleys grew extraordinarily under the reign of these sovereigns who were tired, improperly seated, and above all impotent at the dangerous adventure of cutting back popular liberties. [... Because] of popular force, they were incessantly occupied in conceding, increasing or confirming the communities' privileges [...].<sup>131</sup>

If the fifteenth century was one of protracted civil war, the change to the Albret dynasty with Catalina's eventual marriage brought more change as power continued to be contested between local authorities and the central government. Political and economic uncertainty made life difficult for people in the Ribera where the Count of Lerín was fighting against the Navarran monarchs to the point that, taking into consideration the external pressures exerted on the kingdom, “The independence of the kingdom of Navarra had already been gravely compromised since the end of the fifteenth century.”<sup>132</sup>

After this drawn out civil war, the sixteenth century was heralded by the throne passing to Catalina, a young daughter instead of, as would happen ideally, to a grown son, causing her mother to rule as regent for many years. As before, this simultaneously disrupted the balance of power and encouraged rebellion and the creation of a disordered state while it fed into the mythology and narrative of a period of transition, marked by unusual events and a turning upside down of normalcy. As Natalie Zemon Davis discusses, “The female sex was thought the disorderly one par excellence in early modern Europe” and should be submissive to the orderly and superior man.<sup>133</sup> Women were not only considered disorderly and inferior in conduct but in physical nature as well. Liana

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<sup>130</sup> Departamento de cultura, turismo y relaciones institucionales de Navarra (Comunidad Autónoma), *En los umbrales de España*, 107.

<sup>131</sup> Prosper Boissonnade, trans. Tomás Yoldi Mina *La conquista de Nabarra en el panorama europeo, Vol 2* (Buenos Aires: Artes Gráficas Sebastián de Amorrortu e hijos, 1956), 87.

<sup>132</sup> Floristán Imízcoz, *La monarquía española y el gobierno del Reino de Navarra*, 18.

<sup>133</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 124.



de Girolami Cheney notes that, “The Italian Renaissance notion of women depended on the ancient perception and definition of *femina: imperfectionis mare* (woman: inferior male), which in vulgate texts was equivalent to the words *mulier* (wife) and *femina* (woman).”<sup>134</sup> Although Navarra was typical in that it allowed for the crown to pass to a daughter, it was still a decidedly unusual occurrence as she would be in line after any sons regardless of the order of birth. It also led to a struggle for succession, as Catalina’s uncle, Juan de Foix, tried to claim a right to the Navarran throne, although Catalina felt that he was a greater threat to her territories within France itself.<sup>135</sup> France did not allow women to rule and as noted the arguments against it were familiar outside of its borders, as “Long before Europeans were asserting flatly that the ‘inferiority’ of black Africans was innate, rather than the result, say, of climate, they were attributing female ‘inferiority’ to nature.”<sup>136</sup>

It was seen as unnatural for women to rule over men, an argument founded in religion as well as in medical theories of the capabilities and composure of the female body that stretched back to the Greeks. There are still very few works examining early modern female influences on politics in detail since, “If a wife or mistress is significant, her role tends then to be looked at anecdotally rather than analytically.”<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, the political role of the queen in many ways was crafted to emphasize the superiority of the king. Clarissa Campbell Orr writes that the images of the king and queen “suggest[ed] in idealized form the symbolic harmony of male and female, the potency and fertility of the ruling male, and the continuity of the dynasty.”<sup>138</sup> When events conspired to cause the crown to pass to a woman, as it did in Navarra, the effect was inevitably to emphasize the temporary disharmony as the queen would either rule on her own without a male counterpart or would threaten the patrilineal continuity of the dynasty through her marriage. As Cassandra Auble writes about the debate about female rule only a few decades after Catalina inherited the throne,

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<sup>134</sup> Liana de Girolami Cheney, “Caterina Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus,” in *The Emblematic Queen: Extra-Literary Representations of Early Modern Queenship*, ed. Debra Barrett-Graves (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 17.

<sup>135</sup> Adot Lerga 75.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid 125.

<sup>137</sup> Clarissa Campbell Orr, “Introduction,” *Queenship in Europe 1660-1815*, 1.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid 5.

In the early modern period, a patriarchal worldview that had built upon centuries of reservations of female rule and authority dominated attitudes about rulership. Simply put, a woman in power violated natural and divine law. More specifically, as sixteenth-century Protestant reformer John Knox claimed, women were incapable of effective rule, for “nature...doth paynt them further to be weake, fraile, impacient, feble and foolish: and experience has declared them to be unconstant, variable, cruell, and lacking the spirit of counsel and regiment.” Given such views on female rule, sovereign women who ruled in their own right faced challenges unknown to their male counterparts.<sup>139</sup>

However, if nature gave Catalina disorderly female characteristics such as frailty and inconstancy that argued against her inheritance, it also gave her undeniably royal blood and with it the legitimate claim to the throne.

The ambivalence over having Catalina inherit could be seen in the drawn out and frustrating search by her mother to find her an appropriate husband to become king, as he would inevitably have a greater political role than the woman becoming queen, even though Catalina was the one who would grant him his position as ruler of Navarra through her accepting him as her spouse. Proving this point, one story has it that Catalina publically chastised Juan, telling him that, “If you were Queen and I King, Navarra never would have been lost.”<sup>140</sup> This demonstrated the respect Moret and Alesón, who included this exchange in their *Annales* as proof of her strong and virtuous character, had for her. It also showed the greater power held by a king, even if he was not the one who inherited. Although Catalina was the one with blood ties to the throne, and although it was only through marriage that Juan became part of the monarchy, he was the one who dealt with threats like war to Navarra’s sovereignty and he was the one who held real political power. The cultural ambivalence over Catalina’s inheritance was also shown by the difficulties the regent and then the new rulers faced in confirming their authority in the face of rebellion and dissent. The kingdom César came to was one that could easily be read as liminal both in context to others and in context to its own history, affecting the role he played and how that role would later be evaluated and used.

In 1507 Navarra was an independent kingdom, but this would soon change when

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<sup>139</sup> Cassandra Auble, “Bejeweled Majesty: Queen Elizabeth I, Precious Stones, and Statecraft,” in *The Emblematic Queen*, 36.

<sup>140</sup> Moret 250.

“The dismemberment of the kingdom of Navarre began in 1512 with the Spanish conquest of a portion of the territory and ended in 1620 with the French annexation of Béarn.”<sup>141</sup> César’s actions in the Ribera need to be seen in the context of this overthrow and disintegration. Simply by taking on the role of Captain General of the Troops of Navarre a mere five years before 1512, César became one of the last heroes of the kingdom. This carries a different weight than if he were a hero of a state that is commonly accepted to have been the victor—if he were a hero of Castile, Aragón, or France. Navarre can be seen as a liminal space due to its division between France and Spain and the incomplete process of cultural assimilation into the two larger nations. It neither lost its identity as Navarre nor kept its jurisdictional sovereignty or territorial isolation. It became a suzerain state officially subordinated to Castilla. While the Navarran people were able to keep much of its own political and legal system, it was incorporated as a territory of the Castilian monarchy and the Navarran monarchs retained control of only Lower Navarre, the portion of the kingdom on the French side of the Pyrenees. Paddy Woodworth writes in his cultural history of the region that, “Whether that incorporation [of Navarre into Castile] was a ‘happy union’ or ‘aggression and conquest’ remains a matter of fierce debate in the Basque Country. Which side you take tends to depend on whether your politics are sympathetic to Basque or Spanish nationalism.”<sup>142</sup> Navarre is comparable to Catalonia or to Scotland within Great Britain, a state within a state, and as such complicates the ways in which identity is understood and in which historical memory of a nation is told.

It is not surprising that in many ways Navarre was similar to its neighboring kingdoms. Shortly after the Reconquista Isabel and Fernando infamously forced the Jewish community within their joint lands to either leave or convert. Catalina and Juan, the Navarran monarchs, similarly ordered the expulsion of Jews who refused to convert in 1498 and put forth contradictory statements about the *converso* population, as the converted Jewish community was called.<sup>143</sup> These sentiments continued to be held in later centuries, as shown by the *Annales de reyno de Navarra*, written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century,

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<sup>141</sup> Sahlins 30.

<sup>142</sup> Woodworth 216. It may be worth noting that the Universidad de Navarra electronically files sources on the event under the category “Conquista 1512.”

<sup>143</sup> Moret 80.

that discussed the event in question and agreed with the monarchs' stance that the local population should be welcoming to the *converso* community because without such attention they might easily backslide into heretical and dangerous practices. This approach emphasized the Christian teachings of forgiveness and allowed members of the majority community to applaud themselves for their moral superiority while still ultimately emphasizing the harsh "reality" that even though converted, the *conversos* could never be trusted and would always "prove" themselves to be outsiders. As Stuart Schwartz discusses in *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World*, the Iberian world was in many ways a shared cultural space, with shared ideas about faith and tolerance.<sup>144</sup> Although not the same as its neighboring kingdoms, there was a good deal of cultural overlap between them and Navarra, which included "common pride of being part of Spain, within the distinct kingdoms, as well as an empathy between the (Christian) populations of the other Iberian kingdoms" and ideas about community were certainly part of that continuity.<sup>145</sup>

There were other areas of connection and overlap between Navarra and the surrounding kingdoms as well. Although Navarra is part of the País Vasco and the Euskaran language is still used and taught today, it was not isolated from the non-Euskaran speaking world around it. Similarly, "Just as Catalan remained the lingua franca of rural society in the borderland [of the Cerdagne], so too could it coexist with the contextual adoption of national languages [such as] French or Castilian."<sup>146</sup> The Navarran monarchy was multilingual, as Latin was still of great international importance and they made alliances and treaties not only with Castile and Aragón but also with France as well. Both the Labrit and Foix families were French subjects; César would marry Juan de Labrit's sister, who was living at the royal court in France, as part of his political negotiations with the French king as Navarra was "largely French in its rulers and political attachments."<sup>147</sup> However, the French historian Prosper Boissonnade points

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<sup>144</sup> Stuart Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 243.

<sup>145</sup> Departamento de cultura, turismo y relaciones institucionales de Navarra (Comunidad Autónoma), *En los umbrales de España*, 13.

<sup>146</sup> Sahlins 166.

<sup>147</sup> Hillgarth, vol 1, vii-viii.

out that even though Navarra had strong family and political ties to France, the Albret monarchs also felt pressure from the French king who did not consistently support Catalina's claim to the throne of Navarra.<sup>148</sup> Vaquero argues that Navarra should actually be looked at as a French vassal state, not as a Spanish kingdom, because of the strength and importance of the ties of the Labrit-Foix dynasty to France and that Navarra's foreign policy should actually be considered part of France's process of nation building.<sup>149</sup> Meanwhile, Woodworth describes Navarra as "trans-Pyrenean," with a dozen passes making it so that "The kingdom thus formed a broad bridge, facing in two directions, towards the future nation states of France and Spain and giving it both a 'continental' and 'peninsular' character."<sup>150</sup> This trans-Pyrenean movement can most famously still be seen today in the Camino de Santiago, the pilgrimage route leading to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia. Becker also notes that, "[Spanish] Navarre also was allowed to maintain separate customs borders [after it was defeated in 1512], which proved lucrative because the kingdom kept relatively open borders with France and then sold French goods, illegally, to Castilians," showing a continuous fluidity in the region.<sup>151</sup>

It was not only the monarchy that intermingled with foreigners but also the region itself as Navarra was engaged in trade stretching back at least to the high Middle Ages when acted as a door between al-Andalus and Christian Europe. This trade "provided spices, silks, fine textiles and dyes from the Muslims, and provided furs, coarse textiles, and metals and weapons from the Europeans in exchange. This traffic of products was channeled across the Pyrenees, which gave a privileged position to the kingdoms of Navarra and Aragón."<sup>152</sup> Although Navarra did not expand into the south like other Spanish kingdoms, it was not isolated from the Muslim world and benefited from the flow of goods and peoples. There have been different viewpoints in the literature on the

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<sup>148</sup> Prosper Boissonnade, trans. Tomás Yoldi Mina *La conquista de Nabarra en el panorama europeo, Vol I* (Buenos Aires: Artes Gráficas Sebastián de Amorrortu e hijos, 1956), 9.

<sup>149</sup> Departamento de cultura, turismo y relaciones institucionales de Navarra (Comunidad Autónoma), *En los umbrales de España*, 95-126.

<sup>150</sup> Woodworth 216.

<sup>151</sup> Becker 56.

<sup>152</sup> Esperanza Aragonés Estella, "La moda medieval navarra: siglos xii, xiii y xiv," *Cuadernos de etnología y etnografía de Navarra* 74 (2011): 535.

kingdom, with historians disagreeing on the extent and influence of non-Christians living in Navarra. Recent Spanish sources, however, tend to agree that Navarra had small but notable non-Christian populations, especially in the Ribera where they were “concentrated above all in the urban centers—Tudela and Estella taking in a large part—, where they counted on the protection of the Crown” against violence and pogroms and helped in turn to fill the royal purse.<sup>153</sup> Navarra was not a wholly Christian kingdom, and in fact its Jewish and *mudejar* (Muslim) populations were very involved with both banking and international trade.<sup>154</sup> As occurred more generally across Europe, Jews became very visible in trade, even forming a kind of monopoly of trade in Navarra.<sup>155</sup> Similarly to other Iberian kingdoms, the non-Christian populations within Navarra played an important economic role. They were also forced to leave or, as the majority chose to do, convert in the years after the Reconquista, causing the Jewish percentage of the total population to drop from 7.5% to 3.5% between the middle of the fourteenth and the end of the fifteenth centuries, even though Navarra did not have the same history of military expansion as its neighbors.<sup>156</sup>

Although Navarra did not experience the same 700 year period of Muslim rule as much of the rest of the peninsula, they were not uninfluenced by the Convivencia, the “modus vivendi [that] was usually worked out between rulers and their multiethnic subjects, usually because it made good political and economic sense to do so,” of al-Andalus.<sup>157</sup> Even if they were not part of the Convivencia, they certainly still had a form of *convivencia*, or cohabitation, that would certainly have been influenced by their connections with the south, if only because the *mudejar* portion of their population came from there. Navarra also experienced a conservative backlash at the end of the fifteenth century similar to Castile and Aragón’s, when it was necessary to prove one’s Old Christian status to rise to the rank of *vecino*, or property-owner with voting rights and the

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<sup>153</sup> Usunáriz Garayoa 106-107.

<sup>154</sup> Aragonés Estella 535.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid; Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 42.

<sup>156</sup> Usunáriz Garayoa 106-107.

<sup>157</sup> Schwartz 44.

ability to hold public office.<sup>158</sup> This points to a cultural alliance or commonality with these other kingdoms, even though Navarra's history had not paralleled theirs and even though it was threatened and absorbed by them beginning at the start of the sixteenth century.

It is necessary to question this commonality, however, and to question how it came about. Alfredo Asiáin Ansorena writes in his article on the representation of the "other" in Navarra that there were four main minority groups in Navarra: Jews, *mudejars*, *agotes*, and Roma, all of whom were either not Christian or were suspected of not practicing properly.<sup>159</sup> Out of these four, only the Jewish and *mudejar* populations were expelled as part of the transformation of the Iberian Peninsula following the Reconquista. It follows that those were the other two large populations living in al-Andalus, and they were the minority groups being actively dealt with by the Reyes Católicos after their push down south to Granada. While Navarra was not absorbed into other kingdoms until 1512 and the first edict issued by its monarchy ordering the conversion or expulsion of the Jewish population was in 1498, this process of exclusion should be seen as part of Navarra's loss of sovereignty—after all, "1512 is not only a beginning or ending point. It should be looked at as being in the center of a process, in the middle of a political and social context."<sup>160</sup> As Ansorena explains, the Vatican threatened Navarra's rulers with excommunication if they failed to expel the Jewish population from their kingdom.<sup>161</sup> They had achieved recognition as the legitimate rulers of the kingdom only six years previously and their position would remain unstable.

While a monarchy with a stronger grasp on power might more easily negotiate with the Vatican or find a way around its orders, Catalina and Juan needed the legitimacy of Pope Alexander VI, who was himself from Valencia, then part of the Kingdom of Aragón (a good example of composite monarchy), and still deeply tied to that kingdom

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<sup>158</sup> Becker 46.

<sup>159</sup> Alfredo Asiáin Ansorena, "Símbolos y superposiciones culturales y religiosas sobre el 'otro excluido' en la literatura oral navarra." *Cuadernos de etnología y etnografía de Navarra* 74 (1999): 464.

<sup>160</sup> Departamento de cultura, turismo y relaciones institucionales de Navarra, *En los umbrales de España*, 10.

<sup>161</sup> Asiáin Ansorena 464.

through marriage and alliance and both ecclesiastical and ducal holdings.

Contemporarily, people saw a connection between Alexander VI and Aragón, as he

surround[ed] himself with Spanish servants [and e]ven the better part of the troops that made up the papal guard were Spanish, since their many parents went to Roma, even those from very far away, as well as many vagabonds in our lands who were disaffected to labor, in search of an unknown fortune. Poets, musicians, men of all classes, rich, poor, opportunists, thugs, actors, artists of doubtful ingenuity and no few eminent men took refuge in the papal city, hearing Spanish spoken in all parts, or more specifically, hearing Valencian, since the majority of the foreigners that invaded all of it were from Valencia or Cataluña.<sup>162</sup>

This created a very visible link between the Vatican and Aragón, one that would be reinforced through three marriages between the pope's children and the nobility of Valencia and Naples. Valencia, as stated, was part of Fernando's holdings, and Naples was ruled by a close relative of his, putting it securely within his sphere of influence. The first marriage, initially between Alexander VI's eldest son Pedro Luis and then, after his untimely death, Juan and María Enríquez y Luna was carried out at the same time that the Borgia family purchased the Duchy of Gandía in Valencia, further solidifying their prominence in the region. María's maternal great-grandfather was the famous Álvaro de Luna who had been a favorite and close advisor of Juan II, Isabel's older half-brother and the previous king of Castile. María's father, Enrique Enríquez de Quiñones, was also a member of the royal family and a close advisor to Fernando, emphasizing their connection with Aragón.

César would not marry into the Labrit family until 1499, and the subsequent marriage alliance had been unforeseen and apparently a rather last-minute arrangement after testing the waters for other possibilities, including a third marriage alliance between the Borgias and the Neapolitan Aragonese monarchy. Although this marriage would eventually lead to "flexibility in the relations between Rome and the House of Albret-Navarra-Foix"<sup>163</sup> as well as an "alliance between Louis XII and the Princes of Albret

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<sup>162</sup> Silvera 9-10. Silvera's book also contains many examples of letters written or dictated by Alexander VI to his sons as well as to the men who worked for him in Valencian.

<sup>163</sup> Adot Lerga 177.



[and] friendship between them and Pope Alexander VI,”<sup>164</sup> the relationship between Navarra and Alexadrine Rome had not always been so close. César’s previous appointment in 1491 as bishop of Navarra’s capital city of Pamplona had led to a “protest by the monarchs that formed part of the battle of wills that the different European kingdoms maintained with the papacy in order to control the power of the Church in their territories.”<sup>165</sup> The crown issued written commands to the clergy as well as the secular population to “not obey the orders of the new Bishop of Pamplona, named without the consent of the king and queen.”<sup>166</sup> It was seen as part of the political encroachment of Aragón as well as the Vatican because of the ties between the two and because “Fernando el Católico, for his part, meddled on this occasion in favor of [César] Borgia,” trying to convince the king and queen to accept the Vatican’s decision.<sup>167</sup> In fact, the man sent to the diocese of Pamplona in César’s place (the Borgias were not the only Church officials who practiced absenteeism), Martín Zapata, was “an agent of Fernando who served him on various international missions,” and there was no reason to believe he would act in Navarra’s best interests.<sup>168</sup> There was a clear pattern of Aragón with the support of the Vatican exerting its will on the politically unstable Navarra.<sup>169</sup>

This first edict can therefore be seen as an indirect act of pressure by Aragón on Navarra’s jurisdictional sovereignty using its old relationship with the Vatican to exert force on a weaker kingdom in a dynamic and shifting game of international politics. There was actually a substantial Jewish population in Italy under Alexander VI, due in large part to the expulsion carried out in Iberia, as “many of the expelled Hebrews of Spain took refuge in Roma, and could be heard just as frequently talking there in Castilian or Valencian as in Italian.”<sup>170</sup> The pressure from the Vatican exerted on Navarra could not be merely because of anti-Semitic sentiment, or a similar expulsion

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<sup>164</sup> Boissonnade, Vol 1, 9.

<sup>165</sup> Carinaños 25.

<sup>166</sup> Adot Lerga 116.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> This is also commented on about a slightly earlier period in the Italian conference paper by Massimo Miglio in Departamento de cultura, turismo y relaciones institucionales de Navarra, *En los umbrales de España*, 279-295.

<sup>170</sup> Silvera 10.

would have taken place in Italy as well. The fact that the expulsion of Jews was not enforced until 1521, when it was already divided up, suggests that the 1498 edict was strongly influenced by the political situation with Aragón as well. Similarly, there was no direct action taken against the *mudejar* population of Navarra by the government until 1516, bringing Navarran policy into line with the 1502 edict issued in Castilla.<sup>171</sup> This was a sharp change from previously, as *mudejars* had immigrated to Navarra from Aragón in earlier years, fleeing from the more oppressive situation they faced following the Reconquista, and forming localized enclaves unlike the other minority groups which could be found more widely distributed throughout the country.<sup>172</sup> It was only after Navarra was taken over that such extreme policies as expulsion were put into place, whereas before these minority groups had played important roles in Navarra's trade and economy and had a long history in the region, creating a situation similar to, if not as well known as, the Convivencia of the South.

Looking at reactions to the non-Christian population within kingdoms is one way to gauge ideas about community and belonging in the early modern world. There has been much written about responses to heretics and Jews in both medieval and early modern Europe, but less about the meaning of community when the population in concern is geographically (rather than religiously) in a space of transition and liminality. It is clearly applicable to compare the responses of Navarra and the joint kingdoms of the Reyes Católicos to their Jewish and *converso* communities. At the same time it is important to look for the strings being pulled behind the scenes and to try to understand whose orders were really the ones being given and what the local population thought about them. Even though the commands being issued might come from the central government in Castilla, it is not a sure bet that the Navarran population disagreed with them or saw them as illegitimate. Although they might see themselves as distinct and even at odds with one another, worldviews and information could be shared across borders that were both porous and far more relaxed than those of the nation-states of today, especially after Navarra had been incorporated into Castilla and Aragón. Even with the more strictly delimited borders and stronger centralized control of modern

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<sup>171</sup> Ansorena 464.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid 464, 466.

states a great degree of cultural overlap is to be expected. Ideas about the formation of the colonial or post-colonial other cannot be applied directly and without adjustment to the early modern world, even when the relationship in question seems at a glance to be comparable enough, but Edward Said had a point when he reined in more a drastic strawman discourse of the self and the other to argue that “No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about.”<sup>173</sup> It is reasonable to believe that Navarra would think about other populations through a broadly shared framework, even if they drew different conclusions and were acted upon by different kinds and amounts of external pressures.

At least by the seventeenth century, a hundred years after Navarra’s incorporation into Spain, it was common for its minority groups to “[suffer] three types of exclusion: *pseudobiological and behavioral exclusion*, *social exclusion* (the most important) that materialized in a physical exclusion, so to speak, from the nucleus of the population, and *religious exclusion*.”<sup>174</sup> Focusing in on the process of forced conversion and exclusion, Ansorena lists the kinds of language that are used to describe minority groups and what fears they point to. He comes up with three main ideas: “fear of robbery, assassination, or betrayal,” “fear of physical and moral contagion,” and “fear of witchcraft and magical practices.”<sup>175</sup> These are the same fears that were held by other Spanish kingdoms and are by no means unique to Navarra. They point to a common way of looking at community and outsiders because they are expressing the same shared anxieties. This list was created after a study of printed materials in Navarra in the 1600s, and it is reasonable to assume that it was influenced by Navarra’s political incorporation. Moret and Alesón’s *Annales* were also written after Navarra lost its status as a sovereign state, and their conclusions about the roles of minorities in Navarra may well say more about ideas about cultural or religious others in the eighteenth century than in the sixteenth. Ansorena

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<sup>173</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Random House, 1993), 336.

<sup>174</sup> Ansorena 467. Emphasis in original.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid 468.

asserts, however, that this “image of the ‘excluded other’”<sup>176</sup> does not belong to a single epoch or place, and Schwartz, in his study on the Iberian Atlantic world, writes that, “the societies of Spain, Portugal, and their colonies were intolerant by definition.”<sup>177</sup> While there may have been an increase in intolerance after 1512, the fact that the Navarran monarchs had to remind the local population to accept the *conversos* into their Christian community points to an already preexisting intolerance and a distinction between *cristianos viejos* and *nuevos*, or at least uncertainty about religious outsiders and a sense of self formed in opposition to them.

Commenting on this framework of comparison and self-identity that populations used to define themselves, Sahlins draws connections between the border region of the Cerdagne and the larger states that bordered it. He points out the similarities between the two kinds of spaces, writing that, “As more generally in early modern Europe, national identities were frequently defined by counter-identities,”<sup>178</sup> and that both the border and center populations formed a sense of identity through the process of contrasting themselves with others. If Navarra or the Cerdagne is a liminal space in contrast to the normalcy of the dominant kingdoms around it, however, it is important to remember that this is a construction that has been read onto it due to its eventual incorporation into Spain and France. While those living in Navarra at the start of the sixteenth century may have seen the writing on the wall, that writing was never indelible. History is of course not predetermined and when a particular space is marked out as liminal it is because we have chosen to interpret it as such. It is also important to keep in mind that, as liminal spaces are often contrasted with central or normalized ones, Navarra is frequently written about as a failed state, and the image of Catalina and Juan as failed monarchs is only recently being challenged in Spanish historiography. As Said writes, “centrality gives rise to semi-official narratives that authorize and provoke certain sequences of cause and effect, while at the same time preventing counter-narratives from emerging.”<sup>179</sup> Alesón wrote in the introduction to the fifth volume of the sixteenth century *Annales del Reino*

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid 463.

<sup>177</sup> Schwartz 12.

<sup>178</sup> Sahlins 107.

<sup>179</sup> Said 324.

*de Navarra* that he sought to “justify the conquest of his Catholic Majesty with other reasons and ancient rights: that for which we Navarrans should be very grateful.”<sup>180</sup> He goes on to write that this conquest had been “ordered without a doubt by [God’s] high providence.”<sup>181</sup> Although he defended Catalina and Juan, calling them not unfit to rule but merely unfortunate, and not worthy of the “regrettable infamy” that other historians had painted them with, he did not hesitate to applaud those who gained power at their expense.<sup>182</sup> In fact, he did not argue that they had not lost the kingdom but that this was not so much a loss as the predestined and predetermined path laid out for Navarra by God. They were useful not so much in their own right but because they were a necessary link to future progress. Moret and Alesón argued that if Juan de Labrit had not lost his military campaign to the Duke of Alba in Aragón’s service then Navarra would never have advanced down the path laid out for it.<sup>183</sup> The sequence of Foix to Labrit to Aragón and Spain was made to seem inevitable through the association between God and the monarch. As with the causal chain linking God, the unmoved mover, to all of creation, a progressive hierarchical order was established in which one ruler led naturally and inexorably to the next, none of them deviant from the proper way or history of things but each one step closer to centralization and enlightenment.

However, as Eloísa Ramírez Vaquero writes, this is because, standing on the other side of the conquest and looking back on 1512, we are influenced by later ideas about statehood and power.<sup>184</sup> It is important to remember that the idea of Navarra as a “failed state” is shaped by centuries of retelling Navarra’s story as well as the stories of the kingdoms around it. As William Cronon points out, “Whatever may be the perspective of the universe on the things going on around us, our human perspective is that we inhabit an endlessly storied world,” and we place our own storytelling frameworks over past events, writing histories that reflect our own blinders as much as what may have

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<sup>180</sup> Moret 2.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid 3.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid 2.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid 250.

<sup>184</sup> Departamento de cultura, turismo y relaciones institucionales de Navarra, *En los umbrales de España*, 98.

happened.<sup>185</sup> Similar to how different kingdoms may look at other populations through the same framework but reach varied conclusions, narrative perspective overlays the multitude of events as they take place as well as when people look back upon them, creating a myriad of interpretations.

### The Life of César

It is easy to say that there are many different interpretations of César and leave it at that. Most commonly the narrative framework that overlays a rendition of his life centers him in the Italian peninsula as the Cain to his brother's Abel, a worldly cardinal turned Machiavellian prince. His life has taken on the proportions of myth and part of the challenge in reframing it is in sifting through all of the stories that have accumulated around him after his death. Hermann-Röttgenn writes that,

César's life takes place between extremes and attracts narrative themes. The ascension of a brilliant general that is the talk of all of Europe and the dramatic fall of an exile; a cruel character, without scruples, and a marked sense of justice within the village; the marriage to a French princess, innumerable amorous adventures and, at the same time, the suffering of a discriminatory illness, syphilis: all of this offers the opportunity to stylize César, converting him into a positive or negative hero.<sup>186</sup>

A fairly standard retelling might include how he murdered his younger brother in a fit of incestuous jealousy, how he then abandoned the Church to take that brother's place as head of the papal troops, how he allied with France in order to conquer himself a state in the Italian peninsula, and how he eventually lost power and died, in a stroke of divine justice, alone and naked in a ditch in an inglorious and utterly provincial battle. His life has been compared to a Greek tragedy as well as to a Biblical cautionary tale. This is a story that is in many ways removed from the time it claims to take place in, and it could be challenged at every point. At the same time, however, it is still a history in that it is still a retelling of the past. Ignoring the questions of whether or not something actually, factually, occurred, this story raises the point that "Representation includes the audience:

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<sup>185</sup> William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History and Narrative," in *The History and Narrative Reader*, ed. G. Roberts (London: Routledge, 1964), 425.

<sup>186</sup> Hermann-Röttgenn 192-193.

the text includes the reading.”<sup>187</sup> It is important to look at the framework for representation and how they are both interpreted by the audience in order to understand what is really being said.

César’s connection to Navarra began in 1491 when he was made bishop of Pamplona at sixteen years of age. As stated above, this was a move in the chess game for control over the kingdom, as bishops and other high-ranking church dignitaries were more than mere preachers. They gained a substantial amount of wealth through their ecclesiastical holdings and could act as diplomats between the kingdoms they held office in and the Vatican or other countries. César’s position was taken as a threatening one by a Navarra concerned about Aragonese power and their own shaky legitimacy. César gave up his ecclesiastical offices when he renounced his position in the cardinalate but through a twist of fate quickly became tied once more to Navarra, this time through marriage to Charlotte de Albret, the king’s sister. This marriage was obviously political and had been suggested by the Navarran monarchs themselves, to both please the French king and assure their hold over their French territories would continue to be unchallenged, as well as to gain a closer connection to the Vatican and hopefully resolve the longstanding debate over who had the power to appoint bishops.<sup>188</sup> César this time was bound to the royal court itself instead of being an outsider of suspicious loyalties in a diocese he never visited. He was no longer seen as a clear threat and insult to the power of the ruling family, but rather as a potential ally.

Two early letters to César concerning his controversial appointment began his initial connection with Navarra in 1491. The first is a brief from Pope Innocent VIII to Pamplona, announcing his decision to make César bishop. He only fleetingly talks about the boy he is elevating and is more interested in stressing that Pamplona should accept the appointment graciously and without complaint, writing that “We do not doubt that you must be grateful for such a proposition [...] For that We exhort that all of you, with the same affection and cooperation, then put the solicitors of this same César in peaceful possession of the Church of Pamplona, in which you would greatly please the said Vice-

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<sup>187</sup> Greg Denning, *Mr Bligh’s Bad Language: Passion Power and Theatre on the Bounty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 298.

<sup>188</sup> Adot Lerga 165.

Chancellor [Rodrigo Borgia] and Us.”<sup>189</sup> Again, this is an example of the political nature of the Church, as is the conciliatory letter that César himself sent a day later to Pamplona in anticipated response to the uproar that his appointment would cause, in which he also stresses that he has the higher authority on his side. He tells the “magnificent honorable Lords and friends of the Councilmen and University of the City of Pamplona” that as “Catholics and obedient sons [they] are obligated to obey the Apostolic See and its mandates” and that in exchange “we will always be prepared to keep our promise in everything for the honor and wellbeing of [Pamplona] and of all of you in general and in particular.”<sup>190</sup> This anticipates the anger in Navarra at having their most important ecclesiastical position filled by an outsider, especially because the previous bishop had not only been from Navarra but had spent most of his time in the diocese. Later historians and biographers have pointed to César’s young age (he was barely 15 at the time of the appointment) as a reason for this trepidation and unrest, while ignoring or missing the broader political posturing that it represented. The fact that Juan and Catalina consistently contested later papal appointments to the diocese of Pamplona shows that their anger had more to do with international politics and issues of control than César’s age.

The earliest written description that still exists of César, barring these and other brief earlier comments that do little more than acknowledge his existence, comes from the ambassador of Ferrara who visited him in Rome in 1493, a year after his father was made pope. The ambassador wrote,

I met Cesare yesterday in the house in Trastevere; he was just on his way to the chase, dressed in a costume altogether worldly; that is, in silk—and armed. He has only the first tonsure like a simple priest. I conversed with him for a while as we rode along. I am on intimate terms with him. He possesses marked genius and a charming personality; he bears himself like a great prince; he is especially lively and merry, and fond of society. Being very modest, he presents a much better and more distinguished appearance than his brother, the Duke of Gandia, although the latter is also

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<sup>189</sup> Carinaños 195-196. As these lines indicate, César was never expected to actually spend time in his diocese. Although he was made bishop, the real work was then passed on to others on the family’s payroll. César’s father is mentioned specifically because at the time he held the position of Vice-Chancellor, making him effectively the second most powerful member of the Church behind the Pope.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid 197.



highly endowed. The archbishop [Cesare] never had any inclination for the priesthood. His benefices, however, bring him in more than sixteen thousand ducats annually. If the projected marriage takes place, his benefices will fall to another brother (Goffredo), who is about thirteen years old.<sup>191</sup>

This long and rather superficial description was part of the web of politicking between various well-placed men trying to see what favors and alliances they might expect to coax from one another. In this case, Alexander VI was in the process of convincing the cardinalate to agree to César's elevation to their status and the Duke of Ferrara hoped to ride this momentum and get his son Ippolito d'Este made cardinal at the same time, hence his interest in César's ecclesiastical standing and aspirations. This letter also pointed to the kind of wealthy lifestyle the elite members of the Church's hierarchy and their relatives experienced, living as a kind of nobility with money, land, and influence. The ambassador's description of César is more fitting of a "great prince" than a holy man, but this does not cause condemnation by the ambassador, even though Alexander VI would later be compared to the antichrist as part of the backlash against his politics.<sup>192</sup> Early modern Europe emphasized presentation and the taking on and acting of roles instead of holding onto a single core sense of introspective self. The language this letter uses betrays this idea: costume, bears, presents. This presentation (even down to the activity of going on a hunt), this bearing and costume, was a demonstration of competence and of the cultural values and worth that went along with the image of the young noble and there was a tradition of noble families working in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which required not only a good education but also the proper lineage. William Beik comments that, "The post of canon [which César also held] was essentially a sinecure that provided attractive positions for sons of well-to-do families. In some places, such as Lyon,

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<sup>191</sup> Gregorovius 36. While, as Hermann-Röttgen points out, Gregorovius' analysis often borders on the fantastical, his text is a convenient collection of primary and near-contemporary sources because of his extensive work in Italian archives and his belief in the veracity of the written word, as explained earlier. (Hermann-Röttgen 128.)

<sup>192</sup> As covered earlier, this was done most extensively by Johann Burchard, the papal Master of Ceremonies, in what has long been claimed to be a journal he kept of true events at the Vatican. Its heavy allusions to *Malleus Maleficarum* and ahistorical references have only been pointed out in the past few decades by historians like Hermann-Röttgen and Villarroel.

membership required a long noble pedigree.”<sup>193</sup> César had a degree in canon law and needed to demonstrate his noble bearing, especially as his family was still relatively new to the Italian political scene. His degree and noble role enabled him to enter the very political world of the Church, which influenced his later actions and how they were interpreted by following generations.

There is a tension between being a nobleman and being a servant of the Church to many more modern readers and scholars, who fixate on the perceived hypocrisy of being the son of the Pope, taking a cue from Burckhardt who called César the “great, permanent, and increasing danger” to the Church.<sup>194</sup> As stated above, however, nobility was almost a prerequisite to obtaining the higher positions within the Church. These men were still considered nobility and were expected to uphold the cultural values of their class. Therefore, “If masculinity was a complicated affair for laymen in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it must have been even more difficult for the higher-ranking clergy, many of whom were noble and actively participated in the noble culture that demanded a sexualized masculinity as a prerequisite for power.”<sup>195</sup> These men were in positions of great authority and power and were required to act the part in a culture where they were both supposed to be sexually chaste and sexually virile. On the one hand, “Illegitimate children of the clergy were technically categorized as *sacrilegos* and carried the heaviest stigma of all illegitimate children. They should have been the hardest to legitimate and the most socially shunned,” but on the other it was not at all uncommon for the clergy to have children and in some cases stable families with their mistresses.<sup>196</sup> Coolidge points to Alexander VI as an example of a man who legitimized his children in spite of his religious vows.<sup>197</sup> In spite of the drama that acknowledging and legitimizing César and his siblings would have caused, “mistresses and illegitimate children could be beneficial to noblemen for a variety of reasons, and it was often in a nobleman’s best interests to recognize and support his illegitimate children,” both because they would have reinforced

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<sup>193</sup> William Beik, *A Social and Cultural History of Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 171.

<sup>194</sup> Burckhardt, *History of the Civilization of the Renaissance*, 41.

<sup>195</sup> Coolidge 78.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

Alexander VI's masculinity and, therefore, authority and because they could then be used like other noble children to expand the family's connections and power. As Coolridge argues, "The practice of having long-term mistresses and recognizing and supporting their offspring could create dynasties (a very masculine thing to do)."<sup>198</sup> Papal bulls were issued declaring César to be Alexander VI's legitimate son, even though he could have been declared the legitimate son of his mother and her own husband, pointing to the importance of having children to prove one's masculinity. Not only was it masculine, but it was part and parcel of the politics of noble families, serving as a reminder that the Borgias should be looked at not as errant members of the Church but as nobility with ties to the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the power that brought.

It is necessary to shift the interpretation of César from that of an illegitimate priest who left the Church for a military and secular career to that of a Renaissance noble who, as the second son, naturally was pushed towards employment within the ecclesiastical hierarchy but then later changed careers.<sup>199</sup> He was the subject of multiple papal bulls legitimizing his birth, as were his siblings, keeping in line with the noble strategy of "sidestepp[ing] the dangers of marrying their mistresses and thus investing them with the legal powers and rights of a wife by simply legitimizing their offspring."<sup>200</sup> In César's case, it was impossible for his parents to marry but not for him to reap the benefits of being legitimized. He received inheritance rights and, more importantly, recognition as the son of a powerful family. The early modern Mediterranean structured family along patrilineal lines, so an acknowledged connection to the father was necessary for the child's future well-being and privilege. This is further hinted at by the fact that there was an Italian word, *consorteria*, meaning "a group of kinsmen tracing descent in the male line from a common ancestor."<sup>201</sup> Therefore, Alexander VI made a point to go by his maternal surname of Borja or Borgia rather than his paternal surname of Lançol in order

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid 72.

<sup>199</sup> A parallel example is given in *Los Annales*. "Colòna, como Hijo segundo de su Casa, se havia visto obligado à seguir la Profession Ecclesiastica, aunque amaba mas la Guerra..." (Moret 173).

<sup>200</sup> Coolridge 70.

<sup>201</sup> Francis William Kent, *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence: The Family Life of the Capponi, Ginori, and Rucellai* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 6.

to pretend to a more direct patrilineal connection to his maternal uncle, Pope Callixtus III. This can be related to how others at this time might make occasional exceptions in order to maintain the *consorteria* and the legitimacy it bestowed.<sup>202</sup> Similarly, Lucrezia had a child out of wedlock, papal bulls were issued declaring his father to be either César or Alexander VI himself, a fact that has caused much later confusion and the common assertion in histories on the Borgias that the baby was the product of incest, when in reality it should be seen as a strategy for making yet another illegitimate child a legally and socially recognized member of the family.<sup>203</sup> As Francis Kent points out in *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence*,

The public and formal badges of membership of a *consorteria* were its surname and its coat of arms: by their use men linked themselves to the past and established themselves as part of the family continuum and community. [...] Possession of an established surname was a sign of antiquity, of honorable ancestry. It established a man's right to share in his family's political patrimony [...] and social position.<sup>204</sup>

The name of Borgia legitimized its members' position and authority, just as the granting of papal bulls legally legitimized Alexander VI's children and grandchildren.

If "Secrecy was a sign of guilt in early modern Spain," then Alexander VI felt completely at ease with the family he created and proudly arranged around himself.<sup>205</sup> Having a family out of wedlock did not hurt him during his life, although it has often been used to attack him as well as his children in death. Similarly, Coolridge points to Cardinal Pedro Gonzalez de Mendoza who had multiple children of his own but without "hamper[ing] his spectacular career in the Catholic Church in any way, suggesting that proved masculinity was an important factor in retaining power in early modern Spain."<sup>206</sup> Alexander VI certainly made good use of his virile masculinity in demonstrating his power and authority, as he made a point of promoting his sons to important positions as well as staging very "socially approved and expensive marriage[s]" for all of his children,

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid 7.

<sup>203</sup> This child was also named Rodrigo, further legitimizing him by linking him to an important member of the family (Ibid 255).

<sup>204</sup> Ibid 254.

<sup>205</sup> Coolridge 77.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid 79.

which was also “a marker of status, nobility, and thus masculinity.”<sup>207</sup> Alexander VI acted as the powerful nobleman that he was and this hereditary status should be remembered when writing about César as well, as clearly it was seen and understood by contemporaries like the ambassador of Ferrara or Machiavelli who styled César as “Prince.”

The connection between father and son has been a point of contention for later scholars, but the relationship between brother and brother was discussed in detail earlier. The comparison is frequently made in historical fiction as well as in many supposedly scholarly works between César and the biblical Cain. Guicciardini, the author of the popular first history of the family in the sixteenth century, “adopted, in all aspects, the celebrated history of the fratricide of Cain and Abel.”<sup>208</sup> This again emphasized the ideal of what a member of the Church should be instead of the political reality in order to make a cutting statement as well as to create a family drama in which César was guilty of killing his younger brother, Juan, in competition for their father’s affections and in order to take either his military career or his mistress, who has been cast as either their sister-in-law, Sancia, or Lucrezia. These supposed motivations were sufficiently scandalous, especially for a man of the cloth, to give this story a long life. The reality is, as Hermann-Röttgen points out, that César was nowhere near to being a suspect in Juan’s murder for a full nine months after the event, although popular history claims that all of Rome knew about his involvement immediately, and that the idea of it being fratricide was not popularized until about 1500, by people who were not on good terms with the family.<sup>209</sup> César was likely involved in the murder of Alfonso d’Aragon, his Neapolitan brother-in-law, “whose open hostility” against him gives support to the idea that his “assassination was carried out by [César’s] order,”<sup>210</sup> which started the first rumors that he had something to do with Juan’s death as well. As Beik points out, early modern Europe is known for its emphasis on honor and its violent defense, and “for many nobles, violence was an accepted way of life and revenge a natural counterpart to their concern for honor. Life among the nobility was a constant dialogue in which one’s place and

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid 75.

<sup>208</sup> Hermann-Röttgen 61.

<sup>209</sup> Hermann-Röttgen 60; Sivera 48.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

reputation were tested by encounters of all sorts.”<sup>211</sup> “Open hostility” between two brothers-in-law combined with deteriorating political relations between their natal families could lead to bloodshed, but there were no serious reports of anger between César and Juan (in fact, one of the few surviving letters written or dictated by César was sent to Juan in Gandía and it is generally considered quite affectionate and brotherly, if a little condescending).<sup>212</sup> There were, however, many rumors of jealousy created to explain the murder after the fact. Their sexualized nature cause them to say more about prescribed gender roles and the demonization of women than about the brothers themselves. Sancia, and especially Lucrezia, took on the role in texts published after 1501 of the incestuous whore who corrupted the men around them.<sup>213</sup> Furthermore, it seems that Juan was the victim in a different struggle for familial honor with the powerful Roman families of either the Sforzas or the Orsinis.<sup>214</sup> Both of these families had long been influential in the Italian Peninsula, unlike the Borgias who were still relative newcomers, and it can be assumed that they, like many others, did not appreciate the intrusion.

The Sforzas and the Borgias had been on poor terms for several years and Alexander VI had committed a grievous slight against their honor when he sought an annulment for his daughter Lucrezia’s marriage to Giovanni Sforza. Lucrezia had married into the Sforza clan shortly after Alexander VI became pope as part of his plan to consolidate power in the Italian Peninsula, but it rapidly became apparent that the marriage was not an ideal one and that it would be politically expedient to find her a new husband. An excuse needed to be given to dissolve the union, and it was declared that the marriage had never been consummated because her husband was impotent, a frequently used tactic for dissolving unsatisfactory marriages. As Edward Behrend-Martínez writes, “[m]ale authority, even male honor, was contingent on male sexual potency,” making this a particularly frustrating claim.<sup>215</sup> As Edward Behrend-Martínez

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<sup>211</sup> Beik 276.

<sup>212</sup> Hermann-Röttgen 61; Sivera 48-49.

<sup>213</sup> Hermann-Röttgen 61. Vannozza, César’s mother, was also sexualized in this way and used to explain her lover and sons’ supposed behavior.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid 60.

<sup>215</sup> Behrend-Martínez xii.

writes, “Potency, like masculinity, was always in doubt and had to be proved when it was impugned publically.”<sup>216</sup> In anger, Giovanni spread the rumor that Alexander VI wanted to keep his daughter to himself. The Ferrarese ambassador wrote that Giovanni had complained “that he had known his wife an infinity of times, but that the Pope had taken her from him for no other purpose than to sleep with her himself,” defending his honor by turning a claim of sexual impotence to one of sexual deviance and starting the rumors of incest that persist in biographies and works of fiction about Lucrezia to this day.<sup>217</sup> In the end Giovanni was unwilling to demonstrate his capabilities before witnesses, a rather drastic but not unheard of step, and was forced by higher-ranking members of his own family to concede to the humiliating annulment even though a man declared impotent by the Church lost the right to remarry.<sup>218</sup>

The Orsini family had reason to retaliate against the Borgias as well, especially against Juan, who had led his father’s military campaign against their holdings. Bradford writes that “As soon as the hue and cry against the Sforzas died down, the Orsinis began to be mentioned in connection with the affair, and references to the Pope’s suspicions of them recur with increasing frequency during the following months. As early as 8 August the Florentine government received the news that ‘the Orsinis were nervous of the Pope,’” although it is worth noting as well that Florence was not on particularly friendly terms with the Orsinis.<sup>219</sup> Bradford also cites a Venetian source from the same time as saying that “This Pope plotted to ruin the Orsinis because the Orsinis for sure caused the death of his son the Duke of Gandía,” and points out that, unlike Florence, the Orsinis were popular in Venice.<sup>220</sup> Whether the blame should fall on the Orsinis or the Sforzas, it has been well-documented that no serious claims were levied against César in connection with his brother’s death until much later and that they were simply retellings of the well-known Biblical story and used to pass moral judgment on the family. This would not be the last time César would be connected with Biblical symbolism and allegory to make a

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid 22.

<sup>217</sup> Bradford 70.

<sup>218</sup> Behrend-Martínez 11, 13.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid 66.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

statement, but it is the best known and set the ground for the later stories that cropped up around him and his death.

The next major touchstone in a typical retelling of César's life explains how he gave up the red in order to start a secular career and relishes the unmasking of the general from behind the façade of the holy man. As mentioned above, however, César had long been carrying himself as a member of the nobility, which in fact caused no surprise since that was the class making up the upper echelons of the Church. The Medici, who were breaking into the cardinalate at the same time, used it to legitimate their relatively new power and de facto nobility, and as a way to get away from their merchant roots. It was surprising that César made this change in careers so late in the game, because an appointment to the cardinalate represented years of work and brought with it great wealth, and he was in fact the first person to give it up, which lent itself to the idea of him as a damned soul or a man without God. It would also later fuel the myth of how he murdered his brother because he took the position of *gonfaloniere*, or captain general of the papal troops, which Juan had previously held.<sup>221</sup> It was also at this time that Alexandrian policy shifted in its relationship with France. King Charles VIII, who had called for reform of the Church and invaded Rome on his way to an unsuccessful attempt to press his right to inherit Naples, died in 1498 and was succeeded by Louis XII. Louis XII was much more willing to bargain with the Church in order to get an annulment for his marriage to the future saint Joan of France so that he could remarry Anne of Brittany. As part of this politicking, César married Charlotte d'Albret, or de Labrit, the sister-in-law of Juan de Labrit, King of Navarra.

Historians have long stressed César's connections with Valencia, noting that his family spoke Valencian among themselves and that his father made it a point to surround them with other Valencians.<sup>222</sup> This was commonly recognized and occasionally expanded upon by contemporaries as well as later writers to mean a connection with the Iberian peninsula as a whole, as when it was recorded that when Alexander VI marched

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<sup>221</sup> Juan's time as *gonfaloniere* was marked by more embarrassment than success, but it was not uncommon for this position to go to relatives of the Pope, who were seen as more trustworthy with an army. Julius II gave the position to his own nephew as well.

<sup>222</sup> Sivera 35. See also Sivera for many examples of letters written or dictated by Alexander VI in Valencian, or in Latin with Valencian words mixed in.



in triumph through Rome as part of the ceremonies following his ascent to the papacy the streets rang with trumpets and the cry, “Spain, Spain.”<sup>223</sup> As Villarroel writes, “the Borgias, a family of Valencian origin, came to take hold of much of the power in Italy, although there were seen for much of this time as foreigners (they were called *gli catalani*, without a doubt because of the language that they shared with the merchants that were so well-known in the Mediterranean).”<sup>224</sup> This association with Spain in general and Valencia or Catalonia in particular was also commented on by other nobles and diplomats in Rome, who complained that, “ten papacies would not be sufficient to satisfy” the influx of Spaniards<sup>225</sup> and that, at the earlier election of Calixtus III, Alexander VI’s uncle “the Catalans are in command.”<sup>226</sup> By the time César left Rome for France, however, the Catalans were not in command—or at least King Ferdinand, “the Old Catalan” who ruled over Catalonia as well as Aragón, was not. Alexander VI had shifted his political strategies away from Aragón and the other territories it controlled after three marriages to minor members of the house. César’s diplomatic journey to France marked a turning point in Alexandrian politics and the match he struck was not one approved of by Aragón, in marked contrast to when the king had pushed to have him made Bishop of Pamplona. The tendency of English-language histories of the Borgias to overlook the complexities of Iberian politics at this time writes a different, simplified history, in which César abandoned his father’s Spain for France. This can lead to confusion when a broader view of Iberian history is brought in.

For example, this historiography often makes the odd assumption that César’s best-known general, Michele, or Michelotto, de Corella, was an old school friend from the University of Pisa, perhaps in order to explain his famous loyalty to César, even when placed under torture by Julius II. Michelotto could also be called Miguel, as Corella is a town in Spain, but not in Valencia as might be assumed given the emphasis on the many Valencians that some Romans complained about making up the Borgia court. If Miguel was therefore Spanish, he must also, following the train of thought about a break from Spain to ally with France, have been picked up by the family when César was still a

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<sup>223</sup> Villarroel 113.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid 16.

<sup>225</sup> Gregorovius 30.

<sup>226</sup> Mallett 86.

cardinal, if not before. However, Corella is located a few hours drive from Viana, in Navarra, where prior to the increasing influence of Castilian culture, surnames were strictly location-based and were not patrilineal but would in fact change to reflect a new generation born in a different area.<sup>227</sup> Miguel may therefore very likely have been one of the generals placed under César's command as part of the negotiations he conducted in France, since they included a marriage alliance with Navarra. The complete lack of acknowledgement of the location of Corella in the Iberian Peninsula and the role it might play in such a popular element of the typical framing of César's history points to the necessity to shift attention to Navarra and to the ways in which it interacted with the family and broader politics in general.

While César can be written about in connection with Navarra from 1491 when he became Bishop of Pamplona, a true alliance was not made between the Borgias and the Labrits until César married Carlotta de Labrit in 1498. This marriage was itself caught up in complicated webs of international politics, as it was, as previously mentioned, just one part of the bargain struck between Pope Alexander VI and King Louis XII of France. The other details of this deal include permission for Louis XII to leave Queen Joan in order to marry Anne of Brittany, the creation of an additional French cardinal, and Louis XII's making César the Duke of Valentino and a member of the Order of Saint Michael. César's nickname of *il Valentino* comes from his association with both Valencia and his new dukedom of Valence, located roughly equidistant between Lyon and Avignon. Princess Carlotta resided at the French court as one of the ladies in waiting to the queen and Navarra had itself had "star[red] in the war between Castile-Aragón and France, which was being waged as part of the battle between the political powers in Europe for the countryside of the Italian Peninsula," and which César was soon to enter into with French backing.<sup>228</sup> A marriage between Navarra and the pope's son fit nicely into the political agenda between the Vatican and France. It also strengthened bonds between Navarra and France, easing political pressure on the small Pyrenean kingdom.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Becker 39.

<sup>228</sup> Carinaños 25-26.

<sup>229</sup> Boissonnade, Vol 1, 11.

César's military campaign in the Romagna and the political stratagems of his father that it went along with was a "[fight] for power and the good of their adopted land and of the powerful State-institution [sic] that it belonged to."<sup>230</sup> The Borgias were a family with origins in the Iberian Peninsula, but while Alexander VI at least certainly appeared to feel some connection to Valencia, making a point to surround his family with trustworthy Valencians and speaking to his children in his native tongue even in public, their political loyalty lay ultimately not with the joint kingdoms of Aragón and Castile, but with themselves and the Vatican, which was itself a powerful and wealthy political entity. Villarroel sees the Italianization of the name Borja to Borgia as not only intentional but also as a sign that the "family [entered] into a scope of power very distinct from that which it had until then moved within."<sup>231</sup> With this jump from provincial to international importance, the family also

looked to the aggrandizement of the Church and the defense of its interests, as a means by which to aggrandize their own family, which acted as knight of the church and at its service. [...] Neither Alfonso V de Aragón, nor his brother Juan II, nor Juan's son, Fernando II de Aragón y V de Castilla, alongside his wife Isabel la Católica, could count on the loyalty of the Borgias in the defense of their own political interests. They defended the interests of the Church and did not hesitate to confront the various Hispanic kings to defend them. Them and the other European political powers, kings of France, dukes of Milan, emperors...<sup>232</sup>

This attitude was the result of a worldview that saw the Church as its own sovereign state and its most important family as the equivalent of its ruling nobles. It should not be particularly surprising that Alexander VI changed his alliances with an eye to the potential benefits to Rome as the political climate continued to heat up or that César would marry with Navarra if doing so would help to secure French military backing in the reclamation and consolidation of the Papal States, a project which would give wealth in the form of taxes and resources as well as increased prestige to the Church.

The Borgias' recent appearance in the Italian Peninsula was cause for suspicion and anxiety by their contemporaries who were not sure where their loyalties truly fell or how they would be affected by their desire to strengthen the position of their own family

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<sup>230</sup> Villarroel 16.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid 14.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid 16.

members among the elite in the Italian and Iberian peninsulas. This can be seen in the constant name-calling of *catalani*, *barbaroi*, and *marrani*—Cataláns, barbarians, and swine, an anti-Semitic slur that also meant converted Jew and was a direct reference to the conversions taking place in Iberia.<sup>233</sup> Machiavelli wrote to Florence during a diplomatic stay in the Vatican that Julius II complained that “He did not wish to see [in the art of the Vatican] the face of his old enemy Alexander VI all the time; he called him a Marrano, a Jew and one of the circumcised.”<sup>234</sup> The French cardinal Balue was also reported to have called Rodrigo “Jew, Moor, Marrano, whore’s son.”<sup>235</sup> Whether these exact moments of vitriol took place as claimed or were made up by diplomats and ambassadors writing home, the kinds of insults levied at the Borgias often made reference to their Iberian heritage and therefore spoke to a xenophobic fear within the Italian population. At the same time, however, it was acknowledged even in insult that the pope and his family likely looked to promote their own interests through the Church as any Italian family might be expected to do. The anonymous note left stuck to the door of the Vatican’s library proclaimed the Borgias to be “More irksome than famine, Frenchman or Spaniard,”<sup>236</sup> clearly differentiating them from the various Spanish monarchs while still voicing dissatisfaction with their policies. A connection might be made and suspicions might be voiced over the Borgias’ recent migration and any possible lingering influence (political or pseudo-biological) but it was still understood that they were not actually bound to Valencia or any other Spanish kingdom and that they might act as any other noble family with its own state. Alexander VI himself put it very well: “Though we are Spanish by birth and show ourselves French by policy, we are still Italians; our seat is in Italy; here we have to live as [does] also our duke.”<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> Paul Strathern, *The Artist, the Philosopher, and the Warrior: The Intersecting Lives of da Vinci, Machiavelli, and Borgia, and the World they Shaped* (New York: Random House Publishing, 2009), 64.

<sup>234</sup> Rachel Erlanger, *Lucrezia Borgia: A Biography* (Oregon: Hawthorne Books, 1978), 234.

<sup>235</sup> Cloulas 57.

<sup>236</sup> Cloulas 83

<sup>237</sup> Mandell Creighton, *A History of the Papacy from the Great Schism to the Sack of Rome, Vol. 5* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1897), 67.

This kind of xenophobic condemnation was not intended for only Alexander VI, but for his children as well. Another anonymous note called out to people to “Kill the bull who is laying waste the frontiers of Italy, tear out the monstrous beast’s horns. Avenging Tiber, drown the calves in your fast flowing waves!”<sup>238</sup> The importance of patrilineal connections also emphasized the special bond between fathers and sons as seen here, to the point that one Florentine could write that “the son is a mirror and image, in which the father after his death almost remains alive for a long time.”<sup>239</sup> As Kent asserts about families in Renaissance Florence, “the son in a real sense replaced his father,” a sentiment that can be expanded to the region in general and to show why ideas about Alexander VI’s belonging or lack thereof can be expanded onto César as well.<sup>240</sup> Expanding on this idea also points to the problems with the question posed by later historians of whether father controlled son or son controlled father, a question that assumes many of the rumors around the family to be true and seeks therefore to push the blame away from one member or the other, especially after Lucrezia’s transformation from corrupting force to naïve girl. However, because son and father were seen by their culture to be so closely connected, it was also “assumed that such close relatives had common political interests because they lived together or had done so recently. Indeed, shared domestic and political concerns could be almost impossible to disentangle,” as Kent points out.<sup>241</sup>

Historians have argued over whether César (and Alexander VI) was trying to make himself a state to rule or trying to return territory to the Church, but this misses the point. These two goals are not mutually exclusive. Similarly, Bentley notes in his discussion on Quattrocento Italian humanists that there was,

[...] no single explanation accounts for the humanists’ activities as social and political animals. The humanists did not act purely as patriots, nor as mercenary intellectuals. Only a complex web of motives—dynastic loyalties, professional opportunities, cultural interests, personal desires, financial considerations, and perhaps others as yet unidentified—can

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<sup>238</sup> Erlanger 115.

<sup>239</sup> Kent 46.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid 47. This connection is shored up by the “remaking” of Pedro Luis in Juan as touched on briefly above, another way of making connections between the living and the dead of a family as discussed in Kent 46-47.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid 78.

explain a humanist's decision to seek a certain opportunity, accept a certain post, or fulfill his duties in a certain way.<sup>242</sup>

It is overly simplistic to assume national or pseudo-biological influence behind behavior or to try to differentiate between the political public and the familial private, as is done when the question is posed if Alexander VI was working for a political goal or to further his family's position. Not only does assuming the eminence of modern methods of framing based around the nation overlook the myriad of other reasons that might account for actions taken, but also in this case in particular it anachronistically reads the development of the modern nation back onto the early modern period. Creating a state and returning land to the Church were effectively the same thing, especially as the position of gonfaloniere was not expected to be automatically rescinded once the current pope died.

Niccolò Machiavelli noted that César understood the importance of relying on soldiers working directly for him, rather than using soldiers hired out from other powers and that although he began his military campaign with French troops he soon “decided to depend no longer on the arms and forces of others.”<sup>243</sup> He also wrote that when César “had taken the Romagna, and finding it to have been governed by impotent rulers who would have sooner plundered their subjects than governed them [...] he decided that, if he wanted to pacify it and make it obedient to its sovereign's power, it would be necessary to give them a good government.”<sup>244</sup> As explained previously, Machiavelli's *The Prince* should be understood as a “poetic idealization” of many military leaders, César among them.<sup>245</sup> Machiavelli was not concerned with writing a history that was accurate to the events as they really happened, but rather with creating a treatise on how an ideal leader should behave. He does point out several things that César did in fact do, however, and it is true by all accounts that it was difficult for Julius II to get all of César's holdings to switch their loyalties or to surrender to his forces, even after César had been captured and was being held under house arrest. After

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<sup>242</sup> Bentley 137.

<sup>243</sup> Machiavelli 30.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid 31.

<sup>245</sup> Hermann-Röttgen 15.

Alexander VI's death, César hoped to retain his position as gonfaloniere, and with loyal soldiers and generally pacified local populations it was not an unrealistic hope. The creation of a state for himself and for his patron the Church went hand in hand.

César was unable to retain his post and after Julius II's rapid rise to power, he was forced to give up his territories in the Romagna and was sent into exile through the cooperation of the Vatican and Aragón. First locked up in Chinchilla, in Valencia, César was then transferred to the stronghold at Medina del Campo, which was considered more secure in part because it was far removed from his family's old homeland. As with other aspects of a retelling of his family's history, his eventual escape from Medina del Campo makes sense only when looked at with an understanding of Iberian politics at the time. César was seen as a valuable hostage because of the potential military threat he posed were he to be released, much like the Turkish Prince Djem had been at the end of the fifteenth century. As explained earlier, it was also because of this anticipated danger that Castile, no longer joined with Aragón, broke César from the fortress and hurried him up north, to his in-laws' kingdom of Navarra. Furthermore, Philippe had a direct blood connection with Maximillion and Navarra was during this period on very good diplomatic terms with the Holy Roman Empire as well. From a broader European perspective, César was a pawn in the Holy Roman Emperor's plans against France and the Italian Peninsula.<sup>246</sup>

César was made captain general of the troops of Navarra because of his military success in Italy and was enlisted to put down a rebellion by the Aragonese-backed Count of Lerín, whose actions were part of a larger struggle for sovereignty and control in the region, as demonstrated previously. César would not have been seen as part of the Navarran community in the same way that he was accused to have been one of the *catalani*, as again it should be remembered that Iberia was made up of distinct regions and societies. Unlike with Valencia, César had no familial or linguistic connection to Navarra to fall back upon. César did have a leg up towards acceptance, however, because he was married to the king's sister, making him a part of the local monarchy and because whatever his future goals in Italy or the Holy Roman Empire might have been, he was

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<sup>246</sup> Adot Lerga 198.

immediately acting on the part of that same monarchy against an effectively invading force, one which had been challenging Navarran sovereignty for many years. With the early modern understanding of systems of patronage and emphasis on “jurisdiction over subjects”, César was essentially a Navarran citizen since he worked for the Navarran monarchy, even if he was still seen as a newcomer at best to the kingdom.<sup>247</sup> This worked to bring him more into the communal fold, at least after death, when he no longer posed a threat. As Peter Sahlins writes,

National identity is a social constructed and continuous process of defining “friend” and “enemy,” a logical extension of the process of maintaining boundaries between “us” and “them” within more local communities. National identities constructed on the basis of such an oppositional structure do not depend on the existence of any objective linguistic or cultural differentiation but on the subjective experience of difference. In this sense, national identity, like ethnic or communal identity, is contingent and relational: it is defined by the social or territorial boundaries drawn to distinguish the collective self and its implicit negation, the other.<sup>248</sup>

The kind of identity that was being created in Navarra was one based on exclusion—as Edward Muir put it, “The ‘public’ was a private club.”<sup>249</sup> The de facto state of war between Navarra and Aragón created a distinct sense of the Navarran self in opposition to the Aragonese other and when César came into the battle on the side of Navarra, he was granted at least partial entryway into the private club of Navarran identity and identification.

Viana, the town César stayed in and which he has become most associated with, has a series of local stories about César’s death and the events immediately surrounding it that display a contradictory set of ideas about whether or not he was a member of the community. There was said to have been a storm the night of the eleventh, stretching into the early morning hours of the twelfth. It was in these poor weather conditions and over rough and marshy terrain that César was killed as he rode out of Viana to retaliate against reinforcements that had been snuck to the nearby castle he was besieging. According to Moret and Alesón, he was said to have offered as a challenge to the

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<sup>247</sup> Sahlins 6.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid 270-271.

<sup>249</sup> Edward Muir, “The 2001 Josephine Waters Bennett Lecture: The Idea of Community in Renaissance Italy,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 55 (2002): 13.



opposing forces, “¿Donde está este condecillo?”—“Where is this little count?” and threatened to kill not only him and his men but even the dogs and cats that followed the supply line.<sup>250</sup> He was then killed in battle against three other mounted knights, although some traditions place the number fantastically higher and some claim that it was an African man who struck the final blow. Generally, the fatal wound was said to have been from a lance that pierced him through the side, which corresponds with the injuries present on the skeleton identified as his. After his death, his assailants stripped him and took his possessions, not yet knowing that they would have been better served keeping him alive and as a hostage. The King of Navarra was quickly notified and the body was returned and given a state funeral in the Church of Santa María in Viana.

As Hermann-Röttgen discusses, this story is a very ambivalent one.<sup>251</sup> Catholicism placed great importance on dying a “good death,” and it is unclear if César’s played by anything like the right rules. The outline of a good death was explained in the well-known book *Ars Moriendi*, which described how “the dying person was able to choose between good and evil on the deathbed.”<sup>252</sup> This was an extension of the idea that a person had to choose between the two during everyday life and the ultimate choice, good or evil, would be apparent by how they ultimately passed on. Furthermore, Elisabeth A. Castelli writes that martyrdom, the epitome of a good death,

is not simply an action. Martyrdom requires audience (whether real or fictive), retelling, interpretation, and world-and meaning-making activity. [...] Martyrdom always implies a broader narrative that invokes notions of justice and the right ordering of the cosmos. By turning the chaos and meaninglessness of violence into martyrdom, one reasserts the priority and superiority of an imagined or longed-for order and a privileged and idealized system of meaning.<sup>253</sup>

The questions over how to interpret the events of that stormy early morning were ones about the interpretation of César’s life and how that life related to a sense of self-identity for the people who chose to participate in its viewing.

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<sup>250</sup> Moret 138.

<sup>251</sup> Hermann-Röttgen 237.

<sup>252</sup> Erik R. Seeman, *Death in the New World: Cross-Cultural Encounters, 1492-1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 33.

<sup>253</sup> Elisabeth A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 34.

On the one hand, César died in battle defending his lord's territory and honor, but on the other his body was humiliatingly looted and left naked in the wilderness. He was tricked and angered into a fight instead of entering it with an even temper, but he had been acting as a good general by pulling his men back that night and out of the storm. Even the blow that killed him struck him from neither the front (as it would a hero) nor the back (as it would a coward), but from the side. The argument over how many soldiers it took to kill him (and whether the deed was done by a white European or an African) also reflects the contested nature of his death. The problem was that "death must not contradict the general assessment of life since, otherwise, the last memory would be a misleading image. For all historical figures, and probably also literary ones, one tries to establish this unity of life and death."<sup>254</sup> Deaths are important, not only from a Catholic point of view as they indicate the fate of the deceased's soul, but from a memory- or history-making perspective as well. Ideally the kind of death one receives should line up with one's overall trajectory in life. It is an unsatisfying story if the villain dies a valued death or the hero an ignoble one. To die is still to conduct an action, and it affects what kind of person one is seen as. In this case, there was another tension alongside the question of hero or villain that his many biographers have taken up over the centuries. How César died and how his memory or ghost continued to act after death affected whether or not he was a member of the Navarran community and, moreover, how that community represented itself.

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<sup>254</sup> Seeman 236.

### Chapter 3

#### A Ghost in Viana

As a historical figure, César Borgia does not belong only to the years 1475-1507. He has entered into the realm of shared memory and so lives beyond the date of his death. His history in Viana is not in the moment of his death, but in the continual retellings of his presence. This is not an event unique to Viana or to César; people make histories everywhere they go and these histories are peopled with heroes and villains whom we keep alive in spirit and memory, using their presence for our own purposes and incorporating them into our understandings of the corners of the world they stand on. César is just one example among many, but his presence in Viana is perhaps all the more interesting for its relative intimacy and seclusion. While he appears on pamphlets and fliers advertising the town's local history to tourists and pilgrims walking the Camino de Santiago, his death in Navarra remains very much a "footnote of history," not resigned to the dustbin but certainly not focused on in any of the institution's hallowed traditions. In the biography of the Borgias or the history of Navarra, César's death in Viana remains an isolated and remote event, something worthy of only a little ink, just as Moret and Alesón recounted in their *Annales* that he lay in but a little earth.

César's death and continued presence in Viana are worth further examination because of how they provide a case study for the ways in which historical memory can be used on a broader scale. They provide an example, with its own unique twists and turns that can be deconstructed and used to help shed light on other similar occurrences. César was by no means the only person whose history has helped to shape a region or who has been transformed in death by the community to which he is tied. There are plenty of other examples within Navarra itself. The most famous might be Saint Francis Xavier, who became associated most closely with Navarra after his canonization because of how he could be used to help support the power structure within the region and how he could be incorporated into already preexisting patterns of behavior and belief.<sup>255</sup> This chapter

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<sup>255</sup> See Ricardo Fernández Gracia, *San Francisco Javier, Patrono de Navarra: Fiesta, religiosidad e iconografía* (Pamplona: Departamento de cultura y turismo del Gobierno de Navarra, 2006) for more information on Saint Francis Xavier and his creation as the patron saint of Navarra.

will examine how César has been used by Viana in similar ways over the past five hundred years.

There are very few works that discuss César's presence in Viana in more than a few lines and none that interrogate how he has shaped local identity apart from occasionally acknowledging the connection between his memory and the town. The Navarran historian Félix San Millan Carinaños' *César Borgia y Viana (Navarra): (1507-2007)* is by far the most extensive book published on César's time in Navarra both in life and in death, but refrains from much analysis of the structures of community or identity that César interacted with. Other books on either the Borgias or Navarra make only a brief mention of his death in Viana if they discuss it at all. Biographies occasionally put forth theories behind how or why he died, listing everything from suicide to syphilis as the true culprits, and histories of Navarra mention César's connection to the Labrit-Foix ruling household but do not look further at how César and Viana have become intertwined over the years. Historians largely confine their discussion of him to the couple of weeks he spent in Navarra and write about his life and death as merely a thing that once happened, not as something that both continued and continues to influence the region. In grammatical terms, César's death has been written about in the simple past, but not in the past continuous.

#### How Viana Shaped César

Viana, however, has come up with a different history of César, in both written and oral texts. That is not to say that there is and has been a single agreed upon history of César in Viana, as that is blatantly not the case and cannot be in any community or group of individuals. Rather, César's death and the meaning of it have been argued about since it occurred in 1507. As Maurice Halbwachs wrote in *The Collective Memory*,

While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember. [...] I would readily acknowledge that each memory is a viewpoint on the collective memory, that this viewpoint changes as my position changes, that this position itself changes as my relationships to other milieus change. Therefore, it is not surprising that everyone does not draw on the same part of this common instrument.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> Jeffrey K Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, eds, *The Collective Memory Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 142.

It is not only possible but a fact that although members of a community share a basic set of ideas about their collective history, they do not agree on the interpretation of that history. Furthermore, “The French historian Pierre Nora has shown that what steers the memory of the group is neither a ‘collective soul’ nor an ‘objective mind,’ but a society with its signs and symbols. Through these shared symbols, the individual participates in a common memory and a common identity.”<sup>257</sup> César has been used as a symbol through which Viana as a society has shaped its “common memory and common identity,” and these have changed over the five centuries since his death through the ways in which individual members of that community have interacted with it. His death has been made and remade innumerable times just as Greg Denning argued about the death of William Gooch—“by the selective transformations of events and experiences into public cultural forms of narrative.”<sup>258</sup> To follow Denning’s “artificial curiosity” about the making of history farther, “On the *Daedalus* the stories of what happened on the shore were translated into stories of what ‘really’ happened,” and in both Viana and the world around it, stories about what happened that stormy pre-dawn were set against one another and new meanings and embellishments were created as the time between the moment of death and the speaker’s present was collapsed to make “today’s experience make sense of yesterday’s.”<sup>259</sup>

It is important to keep in mind that the argument over “what ‘really’ happened” was not only between different collective memories, but between collective and historical memory, to borrow again from Habwachs, with the caveat that historical memory is not neutral. Collective memory, the kind that in Viana created a local narrative of César, is “a matter of how minds work together in society, how their operations are not simply mediated by social arrangements but are in fact structured by them.”<sup>260</sup> Three main points Halbwachs makes about collective memory that align with the kind of remembering Viana was doing with César are that:

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<sup>257</sup> Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 122.

<sup>258</sup> Denning 19.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid 19, 20.

<sup>260</sup> Olick 18.

- Collective memory ensures the uniqueness and continuity of a group, whereas historical memory tries to neutralize the dimensions of affect and identity.
- Collective memories, just like the groups with which they are linked, always exist in the plural, whereas historical memory, which provides a universal framework for many histories, exists in the singular.
- Collective memory tries to preclude change, whereas historical memory actually specializes in change.<sup>261</sup>

Historians from outside the community would provide external readings of César that more closely resembled an attempt to rewrite historical memory and to superimpose his vindication on Viana, as this chapter will discuss in more detail. Although these versions might be similar to one of the multiple collective memories, they were resisted both because they required a shift in interpretation from some and because they did not give Viana a special role but looked at much of the population askance as uneducated and misinformed. As part of the reincorporation of the eventual burial of César on sacred ground in 1953, a collective memory of César was celebrated that, unlike external historical memory, emphasized the role of the community and made the assertion that it was no novel scholarly rewriting of César's history but that it had always been present in the town, at least in some form. This continual jockeying for supremacy between not only collective memories but historical memory as well did not stop once César died and was laid to rest, but continued as to define César meant to shape Viana's "common memory and common identity."

History, in the sense of a conscious narration of the past, was already being remade within hours of César's death. As Assmann puts it, "we define ourselves through that which collectively we remember and forget."<sup>262</sup> The Count of Lerín and his men first killed César not knowing who he was and then, upon learning his identity sent word to César's brother-in-law, the King of Navarra, changing the history from just another death in a period of violent political strife to the defining moment of that particular battle. Even though the count and the king were on opposing sides of the battle, César's body was returned like how he would have been ransomed back in life and given an honorable funeral in an abrupt about face from the earlier history of his death which saw him

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<sup>261</sup> Assmann 121.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid 53-54.

stripped of his clothes and armor and left abandoned in la Barranca Salida. Moret and Alesón's *Annales del Reyno de Navarra* recounts how King Juan III of Navarra was notified of the event on his way to Pamplona and changed course to retrieve the body and lay it to rest in an elaborate sepulcher in the Church of Santa María.<sup>263</sup> Moret and Alesón also note the importance of a good death as something that was commonly seen to show the quality of life lived, an idea which was discussed in more detail in the previous chapter.<sup>264</sup> César's death, however, has been written repeatedly, as pointed to by even this brief retelling of the events as put down in the *Annales* in which it changed from an ignoble and anonymous casualty to honorable and honored service in the name of King and family. Each rewriting of his death serves to shift the interpretation of his life and the meaning of his history. Viana has had motive to write César particular kinds of deaths given its unique claim to the event and its own liminal position in the writing of grand historical narratives.

What might be commonly accepted as a "standard" retelling of César's life was given earlier in this paper, and the local historian Félix San Millan Carinaños similarly discusses and compares different versions of César's death. The core history he puts down is a relatively straightforward one and has become part of popular memory and is repeated today in local literature and performances. According to this most basic story, César was participating in the siege on the castle of Viana as the Captain General of the Troops of Navarra and pulled his soldiers back from where they were making a blockade to shelter inside the city during a storm. The opposing forces took advantage of this and when César found out he angrily rushed out of Viana. His horse reared and he cursed in front of the statue of the Virgin Mary that stood above la Solana, the main gate in the city's walls. Still in a fury he descended on the Count of Lerín's men and became somehow separated from his own. He was then out numbered and killed in la Barranca Salida. This basic story of César's death is still retold in Viana as well as in any biographies that go into more detail.<sup>265</sup> There are clear signs, however, that even this most rudimentary retelling has been elaborated upon over the years, most obviously in

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<sup>263</sup> Moret 139.

<sup>264</sup> Ibid 89.

<sup>265</sup> Not only is this the bare bones of what San Millan Carinaños has to say, I was also told this story while I was in Viana in March of 2012.

the detail of César's horse rearing and his blaspheming in front of the Virgin. A horse refusing to go out through the city gates was seen as a bad omen and in literature as foreshadowing of death and Carinaños points out that the statue of the Virgin Mary itself dates from a later century.<sup>266</sup> While it is unclear where these details came from, they were already present in the rendition of César's death put forth by Moret and Aléson in the seventeenth century.

Clearly Viana created new histories of César's death, but to what end? Burke poses the question, "Why do myths attach themselves to some individuals (living or dead) and not to others?"<sup>267</sup> He answers himself, writing that

the central element in the explanation of this mythogenesis is the perception (conscious or unconscious) of a 'fit' in some respect or respects between a particular individual and a current stereotype of a hero or villain—ruler, saint, witch, or whatever. This 'fit' strikes people's imaginations and stories about that individual being to circulate, orally in the first instance. In the course of this oral circulation, the ordinary mechanisms of distortion studied by social psychologists, such as 'levelling' and 'sharpening,' come into play. These mechanisms assist the assimilation of the life of the particular individual to a particular stereotype from the repertoire of stereotypes present in the social memory of a given culture.<sup>268</sup>

Using Burke's analysis to examine César and Viana, it is clear that although new histories proliferated, and the dominant version changed as the years passed, they all served to create in César a symbolic or mythological figure to serve the needs of the community. César's death, as stated above, has been an ambivalent one, and it is perhaps this ambivalence that has enabled it to be used for different purposes. After all, "memory is the secret agent at the very heart of history and power, just as it is the defining element of personal and collective identity."<sup>269</sup> There is always something at stake when it comes to writing the past. In March of 1507 César was buried within Santa María in a service that the king himself attended. This death clearly demonstrated the ties of loyalty between Viana and the monarchy at a time of open revolt in the kingdom. It reinforced the history of Viana as being friendly to the crown, even though César was there because

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<sup>266</sup> Carinaños 49.

<sup>267</sup> Olick 190.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Assmann 55.



the castle above the town was being held by opposing forces. César's presence was used to write a history in which the people of Viana were loyal to the crown over their local lord to the point that their sacred ground became home for a man who would otherwise be a foreigner.

This is a history that has been continued in one form or another to this day. César's current grave in front of the church in Viana as well as his bust in another corner of the town both declare him to be Captain General of the Troops of Navarra. This emphasizes his connection to the crown and, in doing so, underscores Viana's loyalty. Carinaños also points out that in the history of how César's body was collected by the king for burial in the church, the king himself wrapped his body in "a cloak of fine scarlet cloth (the color of kings)," driving this connection home.<sup>270</sup> Viana has written a history in which César is decidedly a member of Navarra's elite, ignoring his recent arrival in the kingdom and perhaps more compelling claims to membership in the elite communities of the Vatican, Aragón, or France—none of which were on the best of terms with Navarra at the time. At the end of the fifteenth century, even relations with France were strained, although not blatantly hostile. By emphasizing César's connection to the Navarran monarchs, Viana can identify with the Navarran monarchs and kingdom instead of with the rapacious Aragón of 1507 or the modern Madrid-centric Spain of today. This is one way that César has been used by Viana, both in the past and today. Furthermore, Marguerite A. Tassi writes that, "A memorial of an individual might be understood, too, as the last material and symbolic element of a death ritual, providing closure to a life and an interpretive visual program through which to view the person."<sup>271</sup> This emphasis was an identification that was solidified through culturally recognized processes that not only tied Viana to César through the commemoration of the historical moment of his death, but that gave an interpretation to his life.

César no longer lies within Santa María and his tomb has been destroyed. There are several written descriptions of what it looked like, although only one was written by someone who had visited the tomb and read the inscription for himself. Antonio de

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<sup>270</sup> Carinaños 52.

<sup>271</sup> Marguerite A. Tassi, "Martyrdom and Memory: Elizabeth Curle's Portrait of Mary, Queen of Scots," in *The Emblematic Queen*, 112.

Guevara, bishop of Mondoñedo, said that in 1523, less than twenty years after César's death, "coming to France by way of Navarra, I went to hear mass one morning in a little church in a place called Viana, not far from Logroño, and I saw an epitaph on the tomb of the Duke Valentín, which I did not write down [...]."<sup>272</sup> Guevara went on to cite the epitaph as best as he can from memory, which Carinaños suspects was slightly corrupted since he changes style halfway through.<sup>273</sup> Guevara's account of the inscription has been altered and edited to give better flow by later authors and historians but the gist is the same as that put down by Alesón and Moret in their weighty and officially-sanctioned *Annales*, which has become the most prominent and most frequently repeated version even though they never saw the tomb, just as their account of César riding out to battle and cursing in front of the Virgin has endured. The epitaph in the *Annales* differs only slightly in word choice in an apparent attempt to fix the syllabic pattern while maintaining the same meaning and runs as follows:

Aqui yace en poca tierra  
 El que toda le temia:  
 El que la paz, y la guerra  
 En su mano le tenia.  
 Oh tu que vàs à buscar  
 Dignas cosas de loar,  
 Si tu loas lo mas digno,  
 Aqui parè tu camìno:  
 No cures de màs andar.<sup>274</sup>

In roughly translated prose it reads, "Here lies in a little earth he who everyone feared, he who held peace and war in his hand. Oh, you who go in search of worthy things to praise, if you would praise the worthiest then your path stops here and you do not need to go any farther." The one interesting difference between Guevara's recollection and the version put down by Moret and Alesón is that Guevara wrote that César held peace and war not in his hand but for all of the world, emphasizing an international rather than provincial role.<sup>275</sup> This sense of broader importance is still maintained in the *Annales*,

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid 75.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid 77.

<sup>274</sup> Moret 140.

<sup>275</sup> Carinaños 75.

although not as strongly. Both accounts, but especially Guevara's, use César to connect Viana to Navarra's politics and wars and the broader European world.

There were other accounts of César's epitaph published apart from Guevara's and Moret and Aléson's, even if the *Annales* was clearly basing its version off of the 1523 one. A version that carried the same basic meaning was published in 1514 in the *Cancionero general*, a collection of poems and songs compiled by Hernando del Castillo, that again contained references to both war and pilgrimage, emotively tying César twice over to Navarra. A similar account was published in 1608 that also generally agreed with what was said.<sup>276</sup> It seems that all the early versions of César's epitaph agreed on the whole with what history the town of Viana was trying to make out of his death. From the perspective of the outside world, at least, this version of history remained stable and desirable. Viana used César to emphasize its local connection to both war and religion, two things that have often been used to create a sense of community and belonging.

As has been explained above, Viana tied César to itself through war by emphasizing his martial role. By doing so, Viana also used César as the idealized image of the fallen noble warrior to show the strength of their connection with the Navarran monarchy. What is interesting is not that the power of this history has waxed and waned over the centuries but that it is still visible at all. Upper Navarra, the portion of the kingdom to the south of the Pyrenees that includes Viana, was conquered by Aragonese forces and incorporated into Castile in 1512. All of the written accounts of César's epitaph, however, come from after that date. While it is probable that the inscription itself was made earlier, the fact that it was allowed to remain and that it was recorded by not only visitors to the region but by authors and historians from the area without condemnation suggests if nothing else a certain tacit agreement with its message. It was written in Castilian, which by 1507 was commonly spoken throughout the Ribera, indicating a broader intended audience, even considering that many people at the time were not literate. As Peter Burke points out about the early modern period in *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, "Latin was used by so many kinds of people for so many purposes in this period that texts in that language do not allow us to make an accurate assessment of the group for whom the messages were intended. A clearer impression of

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid 76-77.

the main target audiences may be obtained from translations into various vernaculars.”<sup>277</sup> César’s epitaph was written in Castilian rather than Latin or even French, the language of the Navarran monarchy, indicating the desire to reach a wider local (or even invading) audience. Given the ways in which the epitaph uses César to assert Viana’s loyalty to the monarchy as well as its geographical position on the Camino de Santiago and belonging to that religious community and tradition, it makes sense that it was a message intended for a broader population.

By referring to an unknown reader who came in intentional search for “worthy things to praise,” the epitaph makes a connection between César’s body and a holy relic, especially considering that Santa María lies on the Camino de Santiago. The verb “to praise” (*loar*) has religious undertones, and is used, for example, in the *Cantigas de Santa María* for those verses that rather than telling anecdotes of the Virgin’s grace or power simply sing her praises. This verb was used in the version by Moret and Alesón as well as the initial account by Guevara. The 1608 rendition, which was written after the tomb and epitaph were destroyed, used the verb “to note” (*notar*) instead, weakening the image of pilgrimage although not erasing it completely as it still referred to a reader who had gone specifically in a search of such a grave. Regardless of the version used, it seems clear that the original played upon the idea of pilgrimage in order to underscore César’s worth and importance and, therefore, raise Viana’s stature. This early history of César created a tradition in which he bestowed the power of religion as well as of the monarchy onto Viana. His death, in this tradition, can be qualified as “good” even though the initial hours he passed in it were humiliating. In the process of redeeming César’s death, Viana put it to use strengthening its own moral and political authority.

César’s death was written again between 1523 and 1549, when his tomb was expelled from Santa María.<sup>278</sup> Although it is unclear when exactly his body was removed, the local historian Félix Carinaños San Millan has been able to narrow it down to these years by looking at the official reports of the construction on the church. During this period the church was undergoing renovations and its current façade was erected. It is clear from the records that the tomb was within the church at the start of this

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<sup>277</sup> Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, 163.

<sup>278</sup> Carinaños 84.

construction but was gone by the end of it as some of the work done on the interior overlaps with where it had stood. It is similarly unclear under whose orders the tomb was removed from the church, as the bishops assigned to the diocese habitually ignored it.<sup>279</sup> One theory runs that it was at the command of the same Bishop Guevara who had copied down the epitaph when he was traveling through the area. His father had been bishop of the neighboring La Rioja diocese but lost his holdings and eventually died in imprisonment under Alexander VI, César's father. He certainly would have had reason to disapprove of the connection made between César and the church and not belonging to the community himself would not have had anything to gain by keeping Viana tied to a sacred tradition or authority through a specific historical individual. One way or another, César's tomb and epitaph were destroyed and his body was reburied in the main street near the base of the stairs leading up to the church, so that he would be denied a Christian burial on holy ground and would be walked over by both people and animals.

If the previous revision of the state funeral had accorded César a good death, this move was clearly to rewrite it as a bad one. Viana did not, however, forget the death altogether but rather continued to use César as an evolving part of their local history even as the outside scholarly community assumed his body and memory were irreversibly lost. Even biographies of the Borgias from the second half of the twentieth century assert that César has been literally scattered and lost to the winds of time. By doing so they relegate his memory to a shadow or a fiction rather than a part of the Vianese cultural landscape. Even if they were aware of the monuments that have been erected to him in Viana, by overlooking or ignoring the centuries of continued local knowledge of the near exact location of his physical remains they turned a blind eye to lived local experience and understanding, writing instead as outsiders for outsiders and reliant only on sanctified external sources, much like how J. Sanchis y Sivera complained in his 1919 text that numerous Spanish archival sources had been overlooked due to the assumption that Catholic Spain was incapable of accurately recording information. This history of César and Viana listens to the church official, whether physically distant from the diocese or in charge of a separate one altogether, and claims his history is the relevant one for the population, although it would be better said that it only corresponds with a portion of

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

Viana's collective memories. Even the histories created by the king or by the count of Lerín were histories written by outsiders and they imposed their own connections between the man and the town.

Local history continued to remember César even after the official ordered his body to be removed from the church and buried under the street. He intended to damn César's soul and memory through the manipulation of his physical remains, inverting the cultural understanding of resurrection to bring César out of the grave and grant him a new death.<sup>280</sup> By moving the body out of sacred ground he was denying him a Christian burial and by removing him from the church he was denying him a noble one. Nobles were often buried inside churches, a practice made exclusive in part because of how expensive it was due to the limited real estate. As Cornelia Soldat writes on her study of noble sepulchral monuments in early modern Russia, a noble "who was buried in a visible location strengthened his clan's symbolical position in the state," making the choice of gravesites a political and self-serving one.<sup>281</sup> Soldat also discusses how nobles often chose prominent sites of burial in order to tie themselves to the prestige of the space as well as to underscore or create a connection to the historical events or persons associated with those locations.<sup>282</sup> The choice of where one was buried was a conscious one that sought to send a message in death about the importance of the deceased and their connections.

Moving César's body was an attempt to strip him of what Aleida Assmann describes as Fame or *fama*, a kind of memory that "is a secular form of self-immortalization, and [that] has a great deal to do with the image that a person creates of himself."<sup>283</sup> The chosen site of burial had encouraged the accrual of fame to César's memory, as had the memorial service that accompanied it. The fame that the official attempted to strip away was created or at least supported by the Navarran monarchy as César had married into the family and was in the employ of the king who attended his

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<sup>280</sup> Assmann 161.

<sup>281</sup> Cornelia Soldat, "Sepulchral Monuments as a Means of Communicating Social and Political Power of Nobles in Early Modern Russian" in *Contested Spaces of Nobility*, 114.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid 118.

<sup>283</sup> Assmann 23.

funeral. Placing César in the local graveyard would have taken away this *fama* as “A grave gives support to the private memories of the family, but a monument reaches out to a far wider community—a polis, or even a nation.”<sup>284</sup> Moving the body to the street was a step beyond merely moving it to the communal burial ground, where it would have been effectively washed bare of the high honor of being laid to rest in the church but allowed to maintain its dignity as a member of the Christian community. It was an action that sought to symbolically condemn César to hell, even though the bishop who ordered the body buried in the street was not understood to have the power to actually determine the fate of a soul after death. No earthly authority had that power, as Samuel Edgerton, Jr. discusses, writing that,

During more spiritual times, capital punishment was never understood as an irrevocable sentence, annihilating a human life, perhaps an innocent human life, forever. Rather, the executioner was thought of as remanding the condemned man’s case to a higher “appeals court” in heaven, where God, not the secular judge, determined the fate of his immortal soul.<sup>285</sup>

Symbolically sentencing César to hell, moreover, assumes he is part of the same broader community as a soul that has the capability to be condemned, just as putting his body into the graveyard would have acknowledged the need to demarcate social hierarchy. He is still under the jurisdiction of the Church, here acting through one of its bishops. Attempting to send a soul to hell inevitably indicates a soul that can be saved.

Similarly, the act of writing a history that declares César not a member of the community keeps him within the community’s consciousness and history. It is important to note that although César’s initial tomb was destroyed and his body was degradingly moved, his name and image were not scoured from Viana’s remembered history. Additionally, his body was not subjected to any physical debasement other than being reburied in the street and in stories of the event it is the action of a single official, not those of the community at large, that led to this decision. This points to a certain ambivalence over his role in the community. Furthermore, Halbwachs writes that, “In any case since social memory erodes at the edges as individual members, especially older

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<sup>284</sup> Ibid 33.

<sup>285</sup> Samuel Y. Edgerton, Jr. *Pictures and Punishment: Art and Criminal Prosecution during the Florentine Renaissance* (London: Cornell University Press, 1985), 15.

ones, become isolated or die, it is constantly transformed along with the group itself.”<sup>286</sup> The view of César in Viana did shift over time, incorporating the idea of him as someone worthy only of being walked over, but it did not fully erase all older histories and it did not lead to the forgetting of César altogether, as the community did not change uniformly. Similarly, “Krzysztof Pomian has pointed out that waste need not be the last phase in an object’s ‘use life’ after losing its function and dropping out of practical circulation, the object is neutralized, can take on new significance, and can acquire the new status of meaningful sign.”<sup>287</sup> César’s role and significance changed over time, made all the easier by the fact that he was not forgotten and fully discarded, but remained a present part of Viana’s cultural geography.

Although the desire to condemn César had been taken to heart by many of its members, that desire encouraged his remembrance, unlike in other places where he served less of a symbolic purpose and could be more easily forgotten under new layers of cobblestone and time. As Assmann describes, “new forms of memory are reconstructed within a transgenerational framework, and on an institutional level, within a deliberate policy of remembering or forgetting.”<sup>288</sup> In this case, the apparent policy of forgetting was really one of remembering, as multiple generations were reminded why it was that César was to be denigrated and stripped of marker and tomb. This action can easily be read to mean an effacing of his name and person altogether. There is an intrinsic tension in this history. By naming something as the other against which the self may be defined, the possibility is unintentionally opened up that it may be (re)incorporated into the community. This is similar to how people who erred against communal norms might be publically humiliated through various ritual acts, temporarily marking them out as in the wrong, without removing them entirely from society and leaving open the option for reintegration. As Edgerton writes, “The clear message to the ridiculed culprit was that he must suffer his once good name to be tarnished and have his entire clan dragged into degradation—that is, if he did not repent and accept his humiliating insult as deserved but

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<sup>286</sup> Olick 144.

<sup>287</sup> Assmann 14.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid 6.



redeeming Christian penance.”<sup>289</sup> The dishonorable situation was punishment for wrongdoing but was understood as only a temporary aberration that would serve to cleanse the individual and allow for full reincorporation into the community.

There have been many striking examples of César’s reincorporation. For example, attempts were made in the 1980s to have the body dug up once more and reburied within the church, but these were ultimately denied due to a prior ruling by the Vatican that only churchmen at the rank of bishop or higher could be buried within the walls of a church. Although supporters of the motion, including at least one church official, argued that it would only be returning a body to where it once lay, César had given up his ecclesiastical standing before his death and the request was denied. Webs of histories intersect. César was long used by Viana to nod to its religious heritage. The Church did not need to emphasize a tie to a largely unknown town at the foot of the Pyrenees. Even before the attempt to have César reburied within the church was put down, plans for the relocation had already had to change. The initial design of César’s new resting place would have included the epitaph in the version cited by Guevara which emphasized aspects of pilgrimage as well as César’s connection to the Navarran monarchy but was rejected because it would have placed his body in a niche in the wall, hidden behind iron bars. As one of the men involved in the project explained, this would have been appropriate for a religious relic but not for a secular tomb.<sup>290</sup> That the idea of writing a history that included a visual representation of César as a sacred relic could even be seriously floated is remarkable both in the context of the prior treatment of his remains and of the popularized black legend that still surrounds him and his family in other historiographical traditions. The design was made in full awareness that it would be visible to people outside of the immediate community, as the committee included tourism as one of the reasons for moving César back into Santa María.<sup>291</sup> Just as the initial epitaph was written with startling rhetoric for a broad audience that would have included foreign members, the rejected tomb was designed to send a message to an

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<sup>289</sup> Edgerton 91.

<sup>290</sup> Carinaños 173.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid 172.

international population and would have challenged many preconceived notions through its iconography.

As Aleida Assmann writes, “you need to lose something before you can become fully conscious of it.”<sup>292</sup> If Navarra had not been politically threatened and eventually subsumed into the surrounding kingdoms there would have been no need for its citizens to assert their belonging so vehemently. It is possible that without the removal of the body and its attempted erasure from history, César would not have the same relation to Navarra or Viana as he does today. If he had been left in Santa María he would have remained as a reminder of the town’s connection to the Camino and to the lost monarchy. This in and of itself would be significant as we can see with hindsight the development of a sense of Basque nationalism in the region and that the tomb could have been a physical reminder of a pre-Castilian legacy. The body was removed, however, and buried in the street where it was twice excavated and finally laid to rest just outside the church, on sacred ground once more. During this process, César became more closely identified with the town of Viana and its people. It was asserted that César died on land that although outside the city walls still fell under Viana’s jurisdiction and that, furthermore, he was initially buried in its church. This was important not out of a sense of scholastic accuracy but because as a city or community of any consequence, Viana “needed to be endowed with certain advantages that included favorable transport conditions and symbolic importance. The most important sources of such symbolic significance were the localization of myths and the burial places of heroes.”<sup>293</sup> When outside experts challenged the version of history that explained why César came to rest under the street, local history was spurred into offering both a rebuttal and a new championing of César that emphasized the primacy of their claim to him. Assmann discusses how “Historical scrutiny and philology thus became crucial weapons in the struggle against rival constructions of tradition,” which can be seen paralleled in this particular case.<sup>294</sup> The local historian Carinaños repeatedly comments testily on all the other places that had claimed to hold his body at one point or another and indicates that those people who kept

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<sup>292</sup> Assmann 1.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid 290.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid 43.

the memory alive of where César could really be found were true members of Viana, unlike the outside doctors, historians, and antiquarians who came in search.

This scholastic squabble could not have occurred if where César had died and been buried had still been common knowledge outside of Viana. When César's body was first exhumed in 1885, it was found by tapping into local knowledge. As Yriarte recalled, the body was found exactly where it was claimed to lie, "passed in legend from fathers to sons among the inhabitants of Viana."<sup>295</sup> By holding itself up as the final resting place and as the keepers of memory, Viana laid a strong claim to César, one which might not have been as keenly felt if the body had never been lost at all and if the claim had not needed to be reasserted over so many years. As J. Ángel Sesma Muñoz discusses in his essay, "The Creation of Historical Memory: An Interesting Selection of the Past," the creation of history can be both conscious and unconscious, made either through repetition and daily life or through the deliberate choice to make the dead useful to the present. Either way can incorporate historical figures into "a collective memory governed by emerging social groups for their own ends."<sup>296</sup> In preparation for César's reburial outside of the church in 1953, the then-mayor of Viana published an edict declaring that

César Borgia, Generalissimo of the Papal Troops and Generalissimo [of the Troops of Navarra], Spanish by birth and by blood, of exceptional civil and military merits, member of a family of wise, virtuous, and saintly men, unjustly slandered and vindicated by a purifying historical investigation, gave his life for Navarra on the fields of Viana, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March of 1507 and has been our neighbor buried in our city since then.<sup>297</sup>

By 1953 César was claimed as not only captain general, but also as neighbor.

To be a neighbor, and this was a theme that proliferated during the burial ceremonies that year and then again during later commemorations, one must not only be no longer an outsider but also a proper member of the community. The word implies familiarity as well as belonging, and it seems to be an odd title to endow on someone who only lived in the community for a couple of weeks—and had a proper tomb in it for less than twenty years. Clearly the removal of César's body from the church did not halt this

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<sup>295</sup> Carinaños 94.

<sup>296</sup> Instituto de estudios riojanos de La Rioja 13.

<sup>297</sup> Carinaños 150.

process of acclimation. Burying César in the street did not remove him from the community or its history. Moret and Alesón's *Annales* were published in the eighteenth century but they still made a point of noting, some two hundred years later, how local history still spoke of César's actions leading up to his death. Indeed, César's death seems to have been a notable part of local memory from an early date, as Florencio Idote, the director of the General Archive of Navarra, commented that it is mentioned frequently in the records from the sixteenth century "from the mouth of the people of [Viana], with regular and exacting testimony."<sup>298</sup> Charles Yriarte, who wrote a biography on César in the nineteenth century after visiting Italy and Navarra, also commented on the persistence of César's presence in local memory. He wrote that even "The muleteer who passes [...] stops to tell us the history of Borgia," emphasizing César's importance several centuries later not to high culture or ivory tower scholarship but to a popular understanding of local history and identity.<sup>299</sup> Viana's familiarity with César to the extent that passerby on the street were able to pause in their work to explain his historical connection to the town indicates that, if nothing else, César and his death still held something of value to the community. Viana itself was not as utterly backwater as biographies often make it out to be, perhaps in order to create a narrative contrast against Rome, but was actually one of the more important urban centers in Navarra. It was a principedom, held in 1507 by the Navarran monarchs, and the head of the surrounding diocese; Santa María was technically a cathedral. There were other prominent political or religious figures with strong ties to Viana and other strong claims for persistent commemoration.

It was important for Viana to keep César alive in death, to continue to use his memory and, because he could be used to reinforce positive connections and ideas about the community, to eventually move him back more firmly into a position of inclusion and community membership. César could have been kept alive as a memory and still remain condemned to eternal denigration. He could have been left in the street for the muleteer to curse and ride his cart over. His role became more ambiguous, however, because Viana was able to fashion different histories for him in order to write different histories for itself as well. From relatively early in death, at least from when his horse began to

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<sup>298</sup> Ibid 52.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid 49.

rear and he began to curse, César was used as a parable. Many different histories were written about César, all playing off the same basic archetype of the character. Not all of them were successful. However, as Halbwach argues, “Stating when a collective remembrance has disappeared and whether it has definitely left group consciousness is difficult, especially since its recovery only requires its preservation in some limited portion of the social body.”<sup>300</sup> Some were unable to integrate themselves into the community and did not resonate with its members but others remained latent, or perhaps just not as visible alongside a more vocal recollection. The policing of the borders of society takes place on an ideological level as well as on a more strictly physical one. When César was thrown out of Santa María, it was an attempt to put him outside of the group of members of the community. Ultimately he was reincorporated both formally, as when the mayor declared him a neighbor, and informally, as this declaration was not rejected but rather came to be widely seen as reflective of reality, if perhaps somewhat hyperbolic. There were other attempts in between these years to change César’s role in the community, however, that were not as accepted. They were seen, perhaps like the decision to remove César’s original tomb, as imposed upon the community by an external figure and not reflective of internal sentiment.

In 1885 César’s remains were dug up but then almost immediately reburied. The French historian Charles Yriarte, who wrote a well-known biography of César, was at the center of the incident and a contemporary argument over whether the local Spanish government or French council had been pushing for the dig. Carinaños contests that local documentation shows that Yriarte had been behind it and that neither the local landowner nor the mayor who had been pointed to as the masterminds behind the excavation and the causes for any damage done to the skeleton were in the town during the dig. Furthermore, he argues that Yriarte himself had not been in Viana and therefore his supposed eyewitness account of Spanish manhandling of the bones was falsified.<sup>301</sup> It seems that rumors about César’s skeleton being destroyed and lost to posterity stem from Yriarte’s account, as other biographers often cite his work, although local witnesses to the dig agree that the body was barely touched and never moved from the ground, much

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<sup>300</sup> Olick 144.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid 100-101.

less destroyed through acts of ineptitude or malice. It is common to see assertions that César's skull, as Yriarte described it, turned to dust at the rough handling it received by the Vianese workers that uncovered it. This was a jab at the assumed incompetence of local workers and authority figures, and Yriarte's account parallels other rewritings by external experts that denigrate the validity of the local histories and traditions they sought out in the first place. One way or another, César's skeleton was decades later reburied outside the church, skull and all.

In 1935 Victoriano Juaristi Sagarzazu, a prominent public figure and surgeon from San Sebastián in the neighboring province of Gipuzkoa (Guipuscoa) unveiled a monument to César in front of the town hall opposite the church of Santa María, following up in many ways on the actions taken by Yriarte fifty years earlier. The monument, which was designed to look like a sepulcher with a statue of César lying on top holding a dagger with a fox at his feet with the phrase "Caesar or Nothing" written in Latin, was surrounded by fierce debate and destroyed a year later. As Alan McNairn writes, "With portraits of heroes and martyrs it is not a matter of whether the image is a likeness but whether the audience believes it to be."<sup>302</sup> Regardless of whether Juaristi's monument was historically accurate or not, it was not locally accurate. It did not make much of César's connection with Viana in particular but rather emphasized his foreignness with its Latin and reference to his Machiavellian title of Prince of Foxes. Politically, the monument was broadly associated with republican-nationalism and it was understood to be an attempt to "convert [César] into a symbol of Navarran patriotism."<sup>303</sup> This was a politically turbulent time in Spain in general, and although the mayor supported it, "Without a doubt, during the Second Republic there was not a single republican or nationalist councilman in Viana. [...] Of the ten councilmen, nine held the candidacy of the traditionalists and the tenth was independent," making Juaristi's monument very divisive and its position outside the town hall a questionable choice for many.<sup>304</sup> César became intertwined with broader Spanish politics as his image as linking Viana to a powerful and noble past was applauded by republican-nationalists who

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<sup>302</sup> Alan McNairn, *Behold the Hero: General Wolfe and the Arts in the Eighteenth Century* (Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 202.

<sup>303</sup> Carinaños 127.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

supported a vindication of his historical role but disdained by the traditionalists, who were more prominent in Viana. This is a simplified account and it is worth noting that Juaristi was also very interested in “restoring” the figure of Roldán, or Roland le preux, one of Charlemagne’s knights. As shown by his actions in Viana, he was interested not only in publishing works about these figures but also in erecting monuments to them.

This was a very public and political desire, one that would naturally have aroused debate because of how monuments present very visible interpretations of history. Juaristi complained that because of his work with Roldán in particular he had to contend with “the taunts of friends and injurious attacks of enemies, including those of the violent Basque nationalists that, ignoring my Euskarian surname and the care that I have continually demonstrated through words and works to the true worthy people of my village, fought me because I seemed to glorify the memory of a victorious invader.”<sup>305</sup> Basque separationists generally sided with the Republican-Nationalists over the Traditionalists at this point (and they would soon claim César as a symbol of Navarran independence), but there was room for multiple and overlapping alliances. The version of history that Juaristi proposed sought to turn César into a patriotic symbol, but for a contested vision of Navarra and of Spain. As Assmann discusses,

The realization of political ends requires a vision, and revolutionary force requires a potent myth. According to this scheme, the present is described as a negative interim between a great past and an equally great future, the link between them being memory and hope. Memory becomes a political force maintaining norms that run counter to the present, and this energy will overcome the evils of the present and bring in the new age.<sup>306</sup>

César became contested because his ambivalent collective histories could be made into different symbols serving different political ends. The argument, to paraphrase José Antonio Caballero Lopez in his essay on historical memory, was not over whether or not César (or Roldán, for that matter) had existed, but over how he should be remembered and used.<sup>307</sup> “Over centuries [...] myths were used in Spain like in other European nations in the formation of a patriotic imagination whose fundamental characteristics

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<sup>305</sup> Carinaños 109-110.

<sup>306</sup> Assmann 159.

<sup>307</sup> Instituto de estudios riojanos de La Rioja 34.

were an antiquity and national identity,” Caballero Lopez writes.<sup>308</sup> César’s history was so hotly contested because it could be used to legitimate different ideas about the present community. As Woodsworth saliently noted, “Archaeology is politics in this corner of the world.”<sup>309</sup>

In 1944 César’s body was exhumed again, this time at Juaristi’s urging, as he wanted to study his remains to determine if they truly belonged to him or not and whether the local accounts of César’s death matched with injuries to the skeleton. Again, intimate local knowledge of the cultural geography of Viana was necessary, as the street had been paved over and the bottom two steps of leading up to the church were hidden in the cement, confusing the initial attempt to uncover the grave. It is also worth noting, as Burke does, that “It is often said that history is written by the victors. It might also be said that history is forgotten by the victors. They can afford to forget, while the losers are unable to accept what happened and are condemned to brood over it, relive it, and reflect how different it might have been.”<sup>310</sup> When César ceased to be important to the rest of Europe, Viana continued to keep his memory alive. Similarly, those who were sympathetic to narratives of Navarran independence picked up César as a marker of identity and of a specific retelling of history.<sup>311</sup> The small team that came together to oversee the dig and to examine the skeleton came to the conclusion that the bones were of a man between the ages of 25 and 45, of the appropriate height and buried for the right length of time, with injuries corresponding to those César was supposed to have sustained in his escape from Media del Campo and in la Barranca Salida. As they reported, “We have no doubt that we have located the remains of César Borgia.”<sup>312</sup> The skeleton remained unburied until 1953, spending much of that time lying in a wooden chest in the town hall. At the time the dig was carried out, Juaristi lamented to a journalist who had been under the impression otherwise that, “the same there [in Viana] as in the rest of the province, without taking into account that he lost his life defending the Navarran

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid 59.

<sup>309</sup> Woodsworth vii.

<sup>310</sup> Olick 190-191.

<sup>311</sup> Carinaños 147-148.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid 143.



monarchy, César Borgia is always considered to be a bad man.”<sup>313</sup> A priest and landowner in Viana supported this claim and argued that, “Viana is not interested in anything that relates to such a person, who in a circumstantial way and fighting against Fernando el Católico, died uttering blasphemies.”<sup>314</sup> As hinted at here, opposition to this writing of history seemed to stem in great part from strong Catholic sentiment, similar to the earlier resistance from the traditionalists.<sup>315</sup>

The 1953 assertion that César had been a neighbor to all in the city since his burial seems farfetched in light of the anger against Juaristi’s monument and his desire to study the body. Although Juaristi came from outside of the immediate community, he sought to elevate the ties Viana had earlier asserted through César and his death to external power structures. The extreme political disunity of the first half of the twentieth century in Spain made it perhaps impossible for consensus to be reached in Viana about any representation or use of the past. A local claim to the body was voiced against Juaristi’s desire to scientifically examine the bones not because the two histories were not in opposition about the belief that the body was César’s but because many people disapproved of the kind of vindication Juaristi was proposing. Rewriting César’s history would necessarily create a new role for him and change the way he was used and if the new history was less favorable to Viana and its interests, like how the initial accounts of César’s excavation had portrayed the local workers and officials as boorish and incompetent, then it would be doomed to local failure. When the mayor later asserted in 1953 that César had “always” been a neighbor and member of the community, he was incorporating the republican-nationalist sense of the past into Viana’s political and social identity as much as vindicating Viana’s connection with César. Similarly, one of the other speakers at the burial explained that the people of the community did not need to “be afraid of César; we have walked on him gently, we have done so carefully, with care, like a nudge from a friend.”<sup>316</sup> This was a ceremony of reincorporation, both into the hallowed grounds of the Christian church and into the broader community of Viana.

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<sup>313</sup> Ibid 141.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid 146.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid 132.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid 153.

Carinaños asserted that it was the movement towards tourism that allowed this reincorporation to take place.<sup>317</sup> Tourism provided a very real monetary incentive for the local authority figures to support a new examination of César's history and to rewrite his death, and a change in consensus certainly seems to have been solidly in place in the 1980s as the country moved away from the Franco period and as Viana was able to reap the economic benefits of a local celebrity. If claims that César was a neighbor had still been questioned in 1953 they were broadly accepted a generation later as seen in the proliferation of cultural activities that gave at least a nod to César. However, reincorporation also needed to tap into already present ideas about César for it to be presented as a possibility at all. Public opinion cannot do an about face instantaneously, and the very fact that there was a debate in the 1950s over how to present César—and how the broader public understood his role in their history—showed that there were longstanding competing ideas in Viana. The burial gave an official reading, what Sesma Muñoz would call a conscious one, and it incorporated the people of the town as active participants on equal footing with this newly affirmed member. It ultimately succeeded because it rang true. While before César had been lain to rest in Santa María as someone worthy to praise and as a way to reach out to the monarchy and the Church, and then discarded under the street to serve as a banished Other to define the community against, now he was called a member of the community and an invitation for outsiders to come to and celebrate Viana's own population and own communal historical legacy. Just as McNairn argued about General Wolfe in Canada, César could be written as “an affirmation of the existence of a genuine and heroic history which proved the antiquity and confirmed [their] virtuous future,” giving Viana a reason to rehabilitate his memory.<sup>318</sup> By making César a neighbor, Viana could do more than use him as a link to external greatness. To celebrate his history would be to uphold their own.

Although it would be easy to point to 1953 as the crucial turning point in César's representation in Viana, to do so would create too neat of a narrative. There was a great amount of resistance in Viana to the kind of rehabilitation of César that Juaristi wanted to carry out and local oral tradition certainly included details such as blasphemy that

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<sup>317</sup> Ibid 157.

<sup>318</sup> McNairn 240.

validated the decision to remove César's body from the church and to bury it under the street. At the same time, however, shifts in cultural opinion or in the meaning and use of cultural symbols take time to appear and to set. As Assmann writes,

Living memory thus gives way to a cultural memory [as opposed to scholarship] that is underpinned by media—by material carriers such as memorials, monuments, museums, and archives. While individual recollections spontaneously fade and die with their former owners, new forms of memory are reconstructed within a transgenerational framework, and on an institutional level, within a deliberate policy of remembering or forgetting.<sup>319</sup>

Changes in César's history took place through intentional attempts at rewriting and in arguing over which tradition held the most merit. Therefore the "new memory" championed in the 1953 burial, which looked back to the initial entombment inside Santa María and pushed against the tradition put forth by the orders to remove César to the street, was a cultural movement to rewrite the story of not only César, but Viana as well. As such, it was hotly contested as any debate over representation would be, and could not have appeared spontaneously but must have come from some strands of longer tradition. As Halbwachs writes,

Viewed as a whole from afar and, especially, viewed from without by the spectator who never belonged to the groups he observes, the facts may allow such an arrangement into successive and distinct configurations, each period having a beginning, middle, and end. But just as history is interested in differences and contrasts, and highlights the diverse features of a group by concentrating them in an individual, it similarly attributes to an individual of a few years changes that in reality took much longer.<sup>320</sup>

The strands of collective memory are not at a glance as obvious as the forthright assertions that no one in Viana appreciated the shift and that everyone in the broader Navarran community disliked César, but they are nonetheless present.

In the midst of the controversy over Juaristi's monument the town held a contest to create a mock epitaph for César. A priest from the nearby Bargota entered five variations on the same theme, caricaturing César from different angles and presenting

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<sup>319</sup> Assmann 6.

<sup>320</sup> Olick 144.

five different interpretations of his history.<sup>321</sup> For the joke to work, people had to be familiar with the different representations, showing an awareness of different local histories. While the entry, like the overall mood of the contest, leans towards the disparaging, it hints at the ambiguity surrounding César and the reason why his general representation was able to change once more in Viana. Carlos Laliena Corbera suggests that it is this ambiguity itself that allows historical persons like César to stay with us for so long. He also discusses the importance of a core story keeping to a narrative arc that encourages remembrance and interpretation.<sup>322</sup> As with the different accounts of César's death, the interpretation of his role in the town was ambivalent and could be changed in order to better promote Viana's interests, while still holding to enough of a framework that they were all clearly in conversation with one another. As these interests changed over the centuries, so did César's history. The priest who wrote the mock epitaph seemed to have presented the whole thing tongue in cheek and disagreed with the negativity surrounding the desire to vindicate César. He also published an article in the *Diario de la Rioja* with a couplet that said, "To Don César Borgia in Viana / they raised a monument; / the Vianese, very generous, / thought to erect him... one hundred!"<sup>323</sup> There was awareness even at the time of the multiplicity of collective histories and the absence of any one version in Viana of who César was or what his role should be.

#### How César Shaped Viana

It is impossible to miss César's impact on Viana before even passing the old city walls. Driving up the road that leads both to the old town and the newer development outside of it, one passes a roundabout decorated with a statue like many others in Spain. Where one might expect to see a horse and rider, however, stands the date 1507 in tall red numbers and below it a large plaque at a slight angle so that the drivers and passengers might get a glimpse of the copy of César's signature and know before even entering Viana proper the town's connection to a slice of international history. If one were to park and get out of the car, one would quickly find César's grave and a bust dedicated to him located on a bilingual map for tourists or pilgrims helpfully posted outside the main gate

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<sup>321</sup> Carinaños 134-136.

<sup>322</sup> Instituto de estudios riojanos de La Rioja 70.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid 132.

in the old walls. There is a restaurant as well as an inn bearing his surname in the town, both with reviews online for prudent travellers looking in advance for a place to eat or stay. If one were to also go to the town's official tourism page on the Reyno de Navarra's government website, the second of the two pictures of the town is of a pilgrim standing just outside the closed doors of the Church of Santa María, César's tomb at his feet. This picture is frequently included in national Spanish news articles about the town that need an image to show its readers what the place they are talking about looks like. In a very real and palpable way César has become the face of Viana. Running an internet search with an English search engine on the town, perhaps in order to get these reviews or driving directions or news stories, a blurb will appear to the right of one's results with an either a map of the region or the crest of Navarra and the succinct quote: "Viana is a town and municipality located in the province and autonomous community of Navarre, northern Spain. Cesare Borgia is buried there."

César's connection with Viana in both life and death has been discussed in this essay with an eye to tracing out the "what really happened" alongside how people reacted to it. Many of the accounts examined came from Félix San Millán Carinaños' *César Borgia y Viana*, but there are several other documents collected in his book that have not been previously written about in this essay because they seemed to stray too far from any realistic understanding of what could have possibly occurred into the realm of fiction or myth. Rather than ignoring this considerable collection altogether, these accounts will be examined here in greater detail and hopefully to better affect than would have been possible if they were included in the earlier narratives of César and Viana. While it is perhaps true that they belong to a different category of narrative, they are also illuminating in their own way and might reach closer to the question of why and how did César remain part of a local history and sense of identity for so long. They also elaborate on a connection between person and place beyond that imposed by outsider visitors to or scholars of the town. While there are obvious ties between César and Viana, these were not exclusively made by outsiders for outsiders, although they certainly play into narratives of tourism. They have also been spontaneous, hereditary, and with a specifically local message, even as they might draw the attention of passersby. In 1998 the journalist Luis Carandell came through the region and "immediately realized that, for

the people of Viana, Borgia, or better said, Borja, because he was of a Valencian family, is a local hero,” and noted that after Miguel Induráin, one of the Navarran men who had worked on the bust, had won the Tour de France and the Giro de Italia, César had been celebratorily dressed in the champion’s yellow and pink jerseys.<sup>324</sup>

*César Borgia y Viana* contains several accounts of what might be termed ghost stories that deal with César as a vocal and active presence in the town after his death in 1507. His characterization changes in these stories over the years and while some were written for entertainment purposes, others appear to have been felt as more true or at least within the realm of possible truth. Even those stories that seem to be more self-consciously fabricated tap back into a cultural narrative and communal history. As they were created by people within the community they cannot be removed from it or assumed to be without its influence and shared frameworks. They also, as creations from within the community, speak back to Viana through a shared system of symbols. Furthermore, as Assmann writes, “The truthfulness of memory can consist in the distortion of facts because, like exaggeration, memory records moods and feelings that cannot be described in terms of facts. Consequently, memories, even if they are manifestly false, may reveal a truth on another level.”<sup>325</sup> Clifford Geertz also discusses how metaphor is often understood to be by definition false but that “it might in fact draw its power from its capacity to grasp, formulate, and communicate social realities that elude the tempered language of science, that it may mediate more complex meanings than its literal reading suggests,”<sup>326</sup>. In this sense it matters less whether or not César literally spoke from beyond the grave and more that people said he did.

Carinaños describes several stories that seem to have started circulating after the creation of Juaristi’s monument, although he leaves it unclear as to whether they existed earlier in an altered form. The first, shared by the women of the town who remember having to walk past the monument as children after school or work at the nunnery, next to where today a bust of César stands on a pedestal, states that if one were to touch César’s head he would rise up and give chase. The second also involves women who, adults

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<sup>324</sup> Carinaños 167.

<sup>325</sup> Assmann 265.

<sup>326</sup> Geertz 210.

when Juraristi's monument stood in Viana, would tell their children not to be bad or they would summon "the man who lived under the door of the town hall" instead of the typical Spanish threat to call for the coco.<sup>327</sup> In both of these stories César was evoked as a threat and a warning to vulnerable members of the community, serving as a reason for young girls to hurry home in the afternoon or evening and for children to obey their mothers. In this way César served to promote the stability of the community and to help ensure that its members followed its rules and did not transgress their roles by challenging power structures or social norms. In a third story an individual admitted that he had damaged the monument when it still stood because he had seen César kill a nun, again using César to reinforce norms about acceptable behavior. In this extreme example, punishment is given for violence or disrespect towards a nun, who stands at the meeting point between woman and religious authority figure, aligning her with Mary in a cultural reference back to the story of how César blasphemed in front of her statue above la Solana. Some of the tension between Eva and Ave, the Spanish term for the idea of the Virgin and Whore, is hinted at here, and the story ends with a man stepping in to violently defend the social structure. As odd as this story might seem at first, it is in the same vein as those which emphasize the authority of the mother and exhort girls not to dawdle and be distracted on their way between the nunnery and home, two places of feminine cloister and sanctuary, lest they be accosted by strange men. The usefulness of such stories also gives lie to the priest quoted earlier who asserted during the preparation for César's burial in 1953 that, "Viana is not interested in anything that relates to such a person, who in a circumstantial way and fighting against Fernando el Católico, died uttering blasphemies."<sup>328</sup> Interest was clearly present, even if César was believed to have a bad death as the priest explained.

These stories also made specific reference to the location associated with César at the point of their telling, the space outside the town hall where Juaristi's monument was located. Assmann writes, "Even if places themselves have no innate faculty of memory, they are of prime importance for the construction of cultural memory. Not only do they stabilize and authenticate the latter by giving it a concrete setting, but they also embody

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<sup>327</sup> Carinaños 182.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid 146.

continuity, because they outlast the relatively short spans of individuals, eras, and even cultures and their artifacts.”<sup>329</sup> César, though his association with a specific place in Viana, was part of the cultural landscape that people interacted in, explaining why stories like these did not make it into the histories intended for an external audience. They would not have served any purpose for someone who was not a member of the community and who had their own stories that reinforced their social structure and authenticated their own physical landscape by tying it to the cultural one. César was like a peg on the wall for people to hang the weave of their social fabric on, helping to support it because he was able to connect it to a shared history. The specific places in Viana that César was associated with changed over the years as his body was shuttled about. While his remains were not actually in the monument in front of the town hall, he was still immediately associated with it because his body was removed and out of sight, especially in comparison to what was a large and very controversial structure made in his image. The monument stood in for his actual remains.

An earlier story about César, recounted by the nineteenth century author Francisco Navarro Villoslada, told how César’s sepulcher in Santa María used to “let out terrible shrieks during the night, emitted from hell by César. The voices stopped when they put him in the street.”<sup>330</sup> As Armando Maggi writes in *In the Company of Demons: Unnatural Beings, Love, and Identity in the Italian Renaissance*, stories about ghosts or spirits are stories about memory. “They [spirits] are shadows, visible veils that linger among us as remembrances.”<sup>331</sup> Villoslada’s story, described by Carinaños as an urban legend, was about how people remembered César and made use of that memory. It was repeated by other authors including Tomaso Tomasi, although Villoslada is notable both for being from Viana and for being so prominent. César is again associated firmly with his physical body and resting place and the actions ascribed to him are very physical as well. It is not clear how long this story had circulated throughout Viana, but there do not seem to be any versions of a screaming tomb while César was still laid to rest inside the church. He was not left there very long, of course, and it is possible that such stories had

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<sup>329</sup> Assmann 282.

<sup>330</sup> Carinaños 182.

<sup>331</sup> Armando Maggi, *In the Company of Demons: Unnatural Beings, Love, and Identity in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 142.



existed but had not been recorded or given enough time to sink deeply into local consciousness. At the same time, it is also possible that such stories about the suffering César experienced in hell did not exist until after he was condemned on the earthly realm by having his body removed from sacred ground. The creation of a new death would have required a new interpretation of history to support it. This was especially so as the earlier death that saw César placed in Santa María had been supported by religious and secular authorities and used to emphasize Viana's important connections and role. Once César was removed from the church he began to have screamed, creating a new version of Viana's own past.

Carinaños also included several stories that discussed why the body should not be excavated from the street. Although the ones he included in his book circulated closer in time to the stories about the monument, they included similar symbols to the story recounted by Villoslada and perhaps indicate that the tale he recalled was still part of Viana's cultural memory. The five-part mock epitaph produced for a local contest mentioned earlier is one example, and the fact that it was supposed to be relatable and humorous suggests that these stories were a well-known part of Viana's local culture. In these epitaphs, five versions of César corresponding to different interpretations of his history speak and address the audience. In the first one, César protests the moving of his body, complaining that, "A very famous doctor / in sculpture and history, / with notorious tenacity / disturbed my sweet rest [...]"<sup>332</sup> This is similar to the story submitted to the Navarran newspaper at around the same time by an anonymous author who identified himself as being from Viana. The author wrote that,

There is even someone who assures us that, passing one of these nights at the place where César is buried, he heard moaning devils and then a clear and audible voice that called to him and said: "It is me, César, he who is buried at the feet of these little stairs," and that, striking up an animated conversation, he obtained the following story. [...]  
[César] responded that, "This good man [Juaristi] has a great interest in the verification of my skeleton and, like a good doctor, in entertaining himself with anatomical study, in counting my bones, finding my age, sex, etc., and that if he gets authorization for this he leads me to ruin and for so little, because for me the ruin is that they would even touch me, since my bones would become dust at the slightest contact."

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<sup>332</sup> Carinaños 132.

And entrusting to me that his intention was always to defend just causes and that he was not guided by ambition like others supposed, he became quiet as the dead.<sup>333</sup>

In both stories César speaks from beneath the street and protests being disturbed. These stories back up the assertion during the burial in 1953 that there was at least one version of history in Viana in which César resided peacefully among the living as their neighbor. Unlike the stories before and immediately after where César is portrayed as violent and tormented, here César is calm and humanized even when he is accompanied by the sounds of hell.

The presence of these stories about César speaks peacefully from under the street in the middle of the other narratives suggest that instead of a cut and dried switching back and forth between specific collective memories of César there were multiple at play at any given moment, as discussed previously and as Halbwachs argues is the case with collective memories in general, just as Denning talks about everyone writing their own account of the past. It also suggests that as different versions of César's history gained greater acceptance they were able to exert greater influence over local identity. César can be said to have influenced Viana through his actions in life, arriving in the town as the Captain General of the Troops of Navarra during a period of political turmoil, and then also to have helped to shape Viana in death through the use of his image and history. History cannot be wielded and enforced by any single person, however. Juaristi, as much as he wanted to, could not push a version of César and the past on Viana and even people who agreed with his general tone did not agree with his actions, as shown by the concern about the exhumation voiced by César in these stories. César's interactions with members of Viana's community were more complicated than that, and as a symbol and part of the cultural landscape understanding of his story could not quickly change, even when presented with researched external evidence. The fact that the statue of the Virgin Mary did not exist in 1507 did not prevent César from swearing before it. The lack of primary sources confirming any otherworldly screams coming from his tomb in Santa María did not make it so it did not happen. Likewise, the impossibility for the dead to speak did not prevent him from complaining about the movement to dig up his grave. As

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<sup>333</sup> Ibid 84-85.

Moshe Sluhovsky puts it in *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, and Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism*, “Asking whether the events ‘really’ unfolded as they were recorded is a *question mal posée*.”<sup>334</sup> The kinds of evidence that Juaristi and others were presenting were not relevant to the kinds of narratives that César was a part of in Viana.

It was beneficial for Viana to take a closer look at the narratives that wrote César as benign or even heroic as work, pushed for in large part by men outside of the immediate community, was undertaken on his memory and body. As Assmann writes about the treatment of the dead in general, “piety has another important function: it placates the dead and ameliorates any danger associated with their return.”<sup>335</sup> At the level of the individual, viewing César as nonthreatening can eliminate fear about his character and ghost and might reduce anxiety about the archeological and historical projects in the city. At a communal level, it can create a public and historical face for Viana to identify with and point to. While a community could rally behind a common enemy as well, if that image of the Other is shown to external eyes, then there would still be no portrayal of the Self to tie the community to. Assmann writes that, “Society itself created institutions to preserve memories, and it acted both as patron and as guarantor of its own memory, setting itself up as the judge of which names should live and which should die. Quite often the posthumous bestowal of fame has had a compensatory element: what may have been scorned by a person’s contemporaries is honored by subsequent generations.”<sup>336</sup> The ghosts that are allowed to exist are those that help to preserve the community’s sense of history, which necessarily will be examined from the outside as well. Even if a ghost was at some point held up as a negative example, by being held up it remains within this sense of communal history and can possibly become a positive example as well, to show an external observer what the community is instead of only what it is not.

When César spoke from under the street in Viana he was rejecting the new version of his history that was being suggested from outside the community. César can

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<sup>334</sup> Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, and Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 35.

<sup>335</sup> Assmann 28.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid 37.

be claimed to be an actor even though he died in 1507 because in his role as symbol he represented a version of the past, one that was being pushed against by the external historical memory. The particular writing of history that spoke from under the street was a shared vision of the past that proclaimed certain things to be true about the community and defended these truths against other writings with their own interpretations and their own truths. Just as each relationship between living neighbors is written and rewritten and just as Homi Bhabha posits a borderland between each individual, so too is each version of the past understood slightly differently. The César under the street, or in front of the town hall, is both one and a multiplicity of individuals in the same way that each person is seen differently by everyone they come into contact with. By keeping César's memory alive and continuing to incorporate it into the cultural landscape, Viana made César a member of the community and as much a neighbor as anyone else. In the structure of interpretation and belonging César was treated according to the same rules and patterns as anyone else. He played a role in the community, even when that role was most frequently interpreted to be a warning as to what would happen to anyone who transgressed its norms. He was shaped by the community's understanding of itself and he was ultimately acknowledged and reincorporated as a full member once he was able to play a positive role as well as a negative one.

Not only did César act as a member of the community because his memory and history obeyed similar rules of interpretation as did the actual people living in Viana, but he participated in the process of inclusion and exclusion in the town as well. César's changing roles in Viana all had to do with supporting the community. His memory lived on in the town because it continued to participate in the necessarily repeating act of incorporating certain people into the community and rejecting others. Even in the history that condemned him to hell, César was still of use to the community. By holding him up as a warning, Viana policed the borders of acceptable behavior in an attempt to maintain stability. As stated earlier, even though he was excluded from the community of saved souls, he was not pushed out of Viana's understanding of itself and its history. The door was always implicitly open for a proper reincorporation. While on the one hand it can certainly be said that César remained in Viana's local consciousness because of actions taken by the townspeople, it should also be noted that if César had not lent himself to

communal or public memory making then he would have been forgotten, or as forgotten as anyone in any other grave. Even if he did not literally continue to breathe after March of 1507, he lived on as a symbolic member of Viana's continually rewritten history. As part of the cultural landscape he became seen in specific areas of the physical landscape as well, just like one might look at the house next door and see it as belonging to their neighbor.

Therefore the recognition of César in certain cultural roles was a signifier of the recognition of the shared cultural landscape that made up a sense of communal identity in Viana. Cruselles Gómez discusses a similar process of recognition by communal identities, citing the Catalan Joan Fuster as exclaiming that, "the Borgias were swine, but they were our swine."<sup>337</sup> Similarly, it is common in Navarra as in much of Catholic Europe for small towns to be associated with particular saints and martyrs. These figures become the face of the community in a way, a figure with whom the people can identify if not themselves with then their sense of communal identity. These figures often have special days and celebrations, just as the day of César's death is commemorated in Viana, and their ties to the community are emphasized and passed down to later generations through the writing and rewriting of collective memory. Although, as stated above, everyone writes their own history, a sense of group belonging comes from inhabiting a shared cultural landscape. Just as other historical figures can be interpreted in different ways depending on which group one is a member of, contemporary figures can be read in different ways. How one writes their history determines one's own position as well. Is the woman walking down the street stranger, neighbor, or friend? What role she plays changes your relationship to her as well as to others. By arguing about and coming to, several times, very generalized consensuses about what César's role was in the community, Viana was continuing the process of policing its borders. Was César demon, hero, or neighbor? Changing the answer to that question meant changing the cultural landscape that he was a part of, which was always a contested act when carried out on any broader scale. By asserting a version in which César's historical

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<sup>337</sup> Cruselles Gómez 305.

presence served some purpose for the community, Viana was not only tying himself to them but also themselves to him. César was not only incorporated into the cultural landscape, but that landscape was also changed to include him.

Since César was a member of the community in death and since he was used to help delimitate an understanding of what that community was, César as metaphor and symbol held not *la paz y la guerra* but inclusion and exclusion in his hand. This was the history that Viana wrote for him repeatedly, going so far as to engrave their connection to him at the road leading into the town, on his grave, and on his pedestal. When any one version of César the ghost spoke in death to passerby how he was understood helped to determine if that person was neighbor or stranger. In effect, since César inhabited each cultural landscape superimposed over the community by each person within it, to agree or disagree with his appearance and role was to validate or denigrate the landscape on a small scale many times over. This action would be just one step in the equation of belonging, ultimately carried out on an individual scale and with the end results varying very slightly from person to person although a broad title—Self, Other—might eventually be given.

## Chapter 4

### Conclusion

César Borgia has had a long and contested historiography and his depiction runs the gamut from hero to literal demon. Historians as well known in the field of the Italian Renaissance as Jacob Burkhardt have written about him, and the black legend that surrounds his family was already being put onto paper before his death in 1507 in what has traditionally been seen in an ironically provincial and ignoble battle. Much of this legend has been shown to be fictional by later historians, but it continues to linger and to influence not only popular culture but historical works as well. Most dramatically, German historians have pointed out that the famous diary written by the Master of Ceremonies at Pope Alexander VI's court was based off of *Malleus Malificarum*, contemporarily already a well known book on demonology, and was intended as a piece of propaganda against the pope. This is very frequently commented upon in the recent Spanish-language historiography of the Borgias, but ignored if not unknown in the English. Spanish histories and archival sources have also been rarely used. Spanish historiography, however, stresses not only the importance of the Spanish archives, but also a more international awareness of events. This better situates César's death in the politics of the Kingdom of Navarra and also encourages a more critical look at the English-language tradition as well as at several of the older keystone texts that overlooked Iberian politics in favor of a more simplified narrative that focused almost exclusively on Italy.

This resituating sheds new light on César as well as on his family and encourages the closer examination of particular regions within modern Spain. Much work is being done by Spanish historians today on the Borgias' connections with Catalonia and Valencia, as the family came to Italy from the eastern coast and maintained many connections to the region, but considerably less work has been done on César's connection with Navarra although he was brother-in-law to the king, was made Captain General of its troops, and died in service to the crown. Examining César's connection with Navarra necessitates taking a closer look at the kingdom in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as well, something made more challenging by the lack of work done on it in English in general. Incorporating Navarra into an understanding of Spanish or

Iberian history has the benefit of creating a more complete picture. Spanish history both inside and outside of Spain tends to focus on Castile and Aragón in a linear and progressevist vision of the peninsular. Incorporating Navarra complicates the narrative and encourages new ways of framing Iberian history.

This paper makes use of Spanish archival and scholarly sources in order to bring more evidence to light in the English-language tradition about César, his family, and his relation to Navarra. It also makes an initial foray into the realm of oral tradition and folklore in order to pose new questions about César's meaning in Navarra and Viana as well as to ask if these questions are applicable to historical studies of other times and places. It encourages the rebuttal of the black legend of the Borgias and hopes to present in its place a more nuanced look at both the tradition and the persons it concerns. While understanding the Spanish-language historiography, as well as the dynastic history of early modern Navarra, is a challenge, it is one that bears fruit. Engaging this tradition is to discover a series of different perspectives on an old story. It brings new understandings on both the large and small scale, not only clarifying international connections but also providing glimpses through letters and other archival sources of much more personal ties and bonds.

This is not to say that the Spanish-language historiographical tradition is without flaws. César has been used in Spain in general and Navarra in particular towards various political ends, both nationalist and separationist. The creation of César as a ghost in Viana, as discussed in Chapter 3, is problematic as well because of how it distorts the past for the needs of the present. This is common to the histories we all write, whether in those particular to Viana or in the much popularized "black legend." To extrapolate upon Ernest Gellner, the historical personage lives life twice: once in and for themselves and then again for us.<sup>338</sup> It is important to try to avoid biases in the creating of histories and therefore to both be aware of many different accounts of the past as well as to step back from them as best as possible, even if we are unable to ever fully extricate ourselves from them.

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<sup>338</sup> David Kaplan, "The Darker Side of the 'Original Affluent Society,'" *Journal of Anthropological Research* 56 (2000): 302.



If we must make César a ghost, and every so-called great man draws spectral breath, then it should be one that gives new insight and perspective on the past as well as the present with an awareness of how we are engaged with our sources and their own contextual histories. In life as in death every individual exists within a broader framework than may be initially visible at a glance and we should seek out the macro to give meaning to the micro. We should go beyond biography to find the life in death and the ways in which people as ideas continue on for centuries. Above all this paper is an attempt to pull from the vastness of the past one more history in our endlessly storied world and to show how pervasively our ghosts walk among us.

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