

THESIS ABSTRACTS

“SAVONAROLA’S ARMY OF BOYS: AN INVESTIGATION INTO IDEOLOGIES OF GENDER AND AGE IN LATE FIFTEENTH-CENTURY FLORENCE.”

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Under the aegis of the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola, Florence in the 1490s saw an unprecedented elevation of young males into positions of spiritual power. This thesis examines how Savonarola achieved this through manipulation of existing constructions of age and gender.

Ideologies of male youth in this period were dichotomous. The ideal was the socialised, devout youth who deferred to his pedagogues. However, adolescence was also held to be a dangerously unstable and effeminate age, when humoral imbalance could lead to rule by the passions and sexual incontinence. Fifteenth-century Florentine youth confraternities embodied the city’s particular concern with the socialisation of boys and young men, and the desire to harness their spiritual potential for civic good. Unlike the adult *scuole*, entry was restricted by gender, and great emphasis was placed in statutes on guiding members away from the illicit pastimes to which their age inclined them. In the wider Florentine social context, however, disruptive conduct was often tolerated, even encouraged, as being appropriate for young men.

The youthful male body therefore encapsulated the struggle between God and the devil: holding the potential for either renewal and civic prosperity, or decline through sinfulness and effeminacy. Savonarola’s preaching had attributed the spiritual impoverishment of Florence in part to disruptions in the gender order, particularly boys’ passive participation in sodomy. In order to provide visible evidence of a break with the old regime, and regeneration under his authority, he rejected the organisation of the existing youth confraternities. The city’s boys were to play a new and more significant role in the bringing of the millennium, under the friar’s organisation. Florentine youth confraternities had reflected social constructions that inextricably linked age, gender and morality. Savonarola now harnessed these for his own ends.

This was most strikingly demonstrated at Carnival, previously a time of licensed misbehaviour. Instead of bawdy ballads, Savonarola’s *fanciulli* now sang laude and were likened to angels. Instead of obstructing people and extorting money, adolescents now cleared the processional route and collected alms. Instead of sporting revealing garb and effeminising flowing curls, they now wore sober dress and cropped hair. The boys’ carefully orchestrated masculinity was intended to signal the coming of a new spiritual era.

This manipulation of norms of age and gender was, however, resisted by those whose identities were partly defined in relation to young men. The city fathers, no longer able to assert their fitness to govern through contrast with unruly youth, refused to acknowledge the *fanciulli* in law. Men in their late twenties and thirties, the *giovani*, violently obstructed Savonarola's moralizing adolescents. As the friar's popularity waned, the *fanciulli* came to represent an unwanted overturning of the natural order: his attempt to redefine youthful masculinity had failed, and after his death the city returned to the confraternal structures with which it was familiar.

“FROM WAR TO PEACE:
ARCHERY AND CROSSBOW GUILDS IN FLANDERS 1300–1500.”

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This thesis engages with a broad range archival source from across Flanders to analyse poorly understood urban groups, the archery and crossbow guilds between 1300 and 1500. Though other civic groups have been studied, in particular jousts and chambers of rhetoric, no study has engaged with the most important, most visible and most enduring civic cultural bodies, the shooting guilds.

The first chapter traces the guilds' military origins and their continuing military service. They first appeared in civic records in the early fourteenth century, being paid for watching and defending their towns. In contrast to previous assumptions, this study shows that guilds remained militarily significant across the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. They served Louis of Male in 1356, John the Fearless in 1411, Philip the Good in 1436, Charles the Bold in 1474–75 and Maximilian in 1479. Though not as large as militias, they formed small but significant parts of larger hosts.

Guilds have often been described as “manned by master-craftsmen and officered by the town elite,”¹ but no study has proven their status. The second chapter addresses these assumptions through a prosopographical study of the members of the Bruges archery and crossbow guilds between 1438 and 1481. It finds that, although many guild officials were “elite” aldermen or mayors, many were craftsmen and no groups were excluded from guild society; knights of the Golden Fleece, rich patricians, artisans, even gardeners, were guild-brothers.

¹ H. Cools, D. Grummit and S. Gunn, *War, State, and Society in England and the Netherlands, 1477–1559* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 46–47.