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### Benadusi, Giovanna and Judith C. Brown, eds. *Medici Women: The Making of a Dynasty in Grand Ducal Tuscany*

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History and Republicanism” that Machiavelli throughout his career believed that only a government in which all citizens feel they have a role enjoys stability. In contrast, Guicciardini and Vettori were historians who denied significant moral differences between republics and monarchies and willingly worked with the Medici. In his “The Remembrance of Politics Past: Memory and Melancholia in Jacopo Nardi’s *Istorie della città di Firenze*,” Nicholas Baker describes the role of selective memory in the work of Jacopo Nardi. Illustrating the extent to which forgetting the past is as crucial as remembering, in the writing of the *Istorie* Baker diagnoses Nardi’s construction of the past as deeply affected by his emotional remembering following his exile from Florence. Edward Muir’s “Perilous Legacy of Civic Humanism in Seventeenth-Century Venice” traces the effect of the challenge of the papal interdict of 1606–07 to the autonomy of the Venetian church and liberty of the city on subsequent political thought. Muir analyzes the writings of Paolo Sarpi, Francesco Loredan, and Ferrante Pallavicino to show the extent to which the Venetian state allowed publication of unconventional religious speculation and violent anti-papal polemics.

Baker and Maxson have produced an excellent collection of essays replete with new approaches to learning and politics in the Renaissance.

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**Benadusi, Giovanna and Judith C. Brown, eds.**

***Medici Women: The Making of a Dynasty in Grand Ducal Tuscany.***

Essays and Studies 36. Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2015. Pp. 380 + 9 ill. ISBN 978-0-7727-2180-8 (paperback) \$45.95.

History has not been kind to the women of the Medici family and court. A long succession of historians (all male, of course), stretching from the eighteenth through the twentieth century, gave these women short shrift, actively maligning or, perhaps worse, dismissing them as irrelevant. This collection of essays restores the Medici women to their rightful place in history, and in doing so is an exercise in recuperative history. Yet it offers much more. This is no assembly of women worthies. Rather, the Medici women are placed in the context of court and family, scrutinized critically in light of their individual strengths and

weaknesses, and analyzed against the intersecting imperatives of gender and power.

Benadusi and Brown have collected ten essays focusing on nine Medici women: six wives and three daughters. Each chapter is accompanied by a portrait of the subject, looking appropriately formal and regal, and lending reflected glory to the dynasty. Four of the essays have been translated from Italian. One minor quibble is the inconsistent Anglicization of names, but this is indeed a small point. The scholarship in this collection is uniformly admirable. Every essay is accompanied by a bibliography that includes significant, neglected, or unknown primary sources. For example, Giulia Calvi bases much of her essay on Violante Beatrice of Bavaria on a long forgotten journal of her daily activities kept by her chamberlain.

Together the essays provide an intelligent analysis of the Medici women and their critical role in making and preserving the dynasty and developing the network of interlocking political and cultural relationships that underpinned European court society. The women themselves emerge as individuals, with clear interests, strengths, and experiences. Yet there is a commonality as well. They were without exception highly educated, multilingual, and adept at matters of state whether serving as regent for a husband or son, or influencing politics directly—as in the case of Anna Maria Luisa who, in the face of a dying dynasty, negotiated the agreement that preserved the Medici cultural patrimony for Florence. The *Patto di Famiglia* was so clear and enduring that, in the wake of World War Two, it served as evidence for the repatriation of pillaged Medici treasures. Yet, history has not been kind to Anna Maria Luisa who is traditionally dismissed as the last weak vestige of a dynasty.

The whole of European history in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was wound up in the relationships and strategic decisions of the Medici women. Whether foreign wives acculturated into the dynasty, or daughters sent out to wed foreign princes, these women were the foundation of a network of international relationships based on women. They negotiated behind the scenes, exercised power, educated the European elites, and patronized the artists and writers of the period. In their multifaceted education and their ability to assimilate into their husbands' court and culture, while still maintaining relationships with their natal family, the Medici women served as unofficial diplomats and ambassadors, promoting the Medici goals or presenting the issues of their

marital state to their Medici relatives. This was a delicate dance and it would seem that most of these Medici women were adept indeed.

The virtually seamless nature of this collection, with one essay flowing into the next from Eleonora di Toledo to Anna Maria Luisa, makes this an excellent overview for the two centuries of Medici rule. Yet, each essay is also a freestanding discussion of the individual woman. This outstanding volume will engage the scholar and expert, while also serving as an alternative introduction and overview for this significant period of European history.

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**Betteridge, Thomas.**

*Writing Faith and Telling Tales: Literature, Politics, and Religion in the Work of Thomas More.*

ReFormations: Medieval and Early Modern. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013. Pp. xi, 256. ISBN 978-0-268-02239-6 (paperback) \$38.

Few scholars would question Thomas More's significance to our understanding of the political and religious landscape of England in the early sixteenth century, yet though there may be general agreement on the fact of his importance, the nature of this importance remains the subject of some debate. Most frequently, critics and biographers draw upon his friendship with Erasmus, his links to other prominent European scholars and theologians, and *Utopia*, his most famous work, to depict More as intelligible primarily as an exponent of Continental humanism. Such portrayals overlap neatly with those offered by scholars of More's devotional and polemical writing, which view him as the last great English Catholic writer before Henry VIII's break from Rome. In each of these versions of More, however, something is undoubtedly lost by attempting to understand him primarily (or solely) in relation to his European and Classical influences. In *Writing Faith and Telling Tales*, Thomas Betteridge asks whether we might reconsider More's work as emerging from a medieval English tradition of writing on politics, philosophy, and religion. Aligning his study with recent work by James Simpson and Greg Walker, Betteridge argues that More's approach to questions of political and devotional theory and