

Patrick Lantschner, *The Logic of Political Conflict in Medieval Cities: Italy and the Southern Low Countries, 1370–1440*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. xii + 275pp. 4 maps. 7 tables. Bibliography. £65.00 hbk.
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In this brilliant book, Patrick Lantschner offers new insight into urban revolts in the later Middle Ages. However chaotic urban conflict may appear to have been, Lantschner convincingly argues that it had a logic of its own. He shows that conflicts were no aberrations, but rather integral parts of the interactional repertoires of the established political order in cities. This order was polycentric because several semi-autonomous institutions co-existed within the urban space, such as craft guilds, parishes, factions and comparable collective associations. Changing economic and social circumstances occasionally made these institutions clash, but the intensity and frequency of these conflicts depended on the exact nature of the 'political system', the specific patterns of conflict which were ingrained in the urban political organization. Lantschner distinguishes three such systems in the cities under scrutiny around 1400. First, he sees 'volatile systems' at work in Liège and Bologna, characterized by continuous and generally unbounded fluctuations in the relationships between the different urban institutions. Numerous revolts and intra-urban warfare were the result of the shifting processes of negotiation and the constant transformation of political coalitions in both towns. Less violent revolts took place in Florence and Tournai, which Lantschner names 'constitutional systems of conflict'. Bargaining played an important role in these cities, in which the creation and manipulation of assemblies and commissions was at stake. The 'contained systems' of Lille and Verona, however, left few possibilities for potential insurgents to engage realistically in urban warfare. Petitioning and collective action rarely led to violent confrontation in these cities because they lacked strong pre-existing guilds, parishes and parties. In the other towns under scrutiny, in contrast, such resourceful associations encouraged conflict, though in Florence and Tournai high levels of negotiation were maintained through constitutional bargaining between rival factions. In Liège and Bologna, a spiral of repression and a tradition of military aggression led to a more violent history. Weak states exacerbated the political fragmentation of these cities and a lack of strong central power encouraged the formation of insurgent coalitions which sought to gain control. In short, the local institutional setting, custom and tradition, and the relationship between the cities and the central authorities, were all determining factors in the history of urban conflict.

Lantschner's argument is convincing, not least because of the richness of his book. The comprehensive consultation of numerous chronicles, judicial documents, petitions and charters provided Lantschner with many examples of social upheaval. Some of them were known before (such as the revolt of the *Hédroits* in Liège, the *Ciompi* of Florence or the numerous factional conflicts in Bologna) but he also digs up wonderful new material that has hitherto not been studied. His critical reading of sources in Latin, Dutch, French, German and Italian demonstrates that also less spectacular types of conflict deserve scrutiny. For instance, the petitions of the craft guilds in Lille in the 1410s and the 1412 rebellion of the Maffei and the da Quinto families in Verona demonstrate that commoners and artisans voiced their grievances through a number of peaceful channels and by

means of low-level resistance. Historians mostly ignore these less violent conflicts, because the more spectacular events in urban history are more plentifully attested in the sources. Lantschner's careful analysis of daily conflicts should, however, encourage scholars to focus on the varied nature of conflict because it can tell us more about the political reality of citizens than their violent tribulations do. In addition, Lantschner's laudable methodology to compare the history of cities on a fundamental basis will hopefully stimulate urban historians to contrast the history of cities more than they do today. In addition, the stimulating conclusion of the book, comparing coeval conflict in the Middle East, Europe and Japan, seems a fruitful incentive for further research.

Two critical remarks can be made. First, Lantschner explains the scarcity of revolt in the city of Lille by, among other reasons, the fact that it was governed by the 'more streamlined state' of Burgundy (p. 92). It is true that the opportunities for office-holding or manipulating judicial channels offered alternative routes to address discontent in this city, though the same can be said of other cities in the county of Flanders which were ruled by the duke of Burgundy. Also, in Ghent and Bruges, governmental institutions were available to citizens, and yet frequent revolts broke out in these cities. So it would seem that the strength of associational life and the political autonomy of the craft guilds are even more crucial to the concentration of urban conflict than Lantschner gave them credit for. Second, such differences demonstrate that the author has avoided a discussion. While clearly showing that the local context is crucial to explain the different patterns of conflict, he fails to examine why precisely the local context varied so much. An in-depth investigation of the origins of the three above-mentioned political systems obviously lay outside the scope of the book, but there can be no doubt that the reasons for their existence are to be found in their twelfth- and thirteenth-century history. We can therefore only hope that Lantschner's analysis will provoke other historians to study the 'earlier' political development of cities in particular and urban history in general from a similar comparative perspective.

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Amy Appleford, *Learning to Die in London, 1380–1540*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015. 320pp. Bibliography. £42.50 hbk and Ebook.

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Amy Appleford's *Learning to Die in London, 1380–1540* is a valuable contribution to our understanding of lay devotional culture on the eve of the Reformation and further demonstrates the prominence of religious literature in the spiritual lives of literate lay Londoners. Indeed, the current strength of revisionist ideas in literary scholarship is starting to realize what Norman Tanner once described as a 'left-wing orthodoxy' in the pre-Reformation church. The fifteenth century was a period in which the spiritual ambition of lay readers was satisfied by an increasingly diverse and sophisticated range of vernacular religious writings, many of which blurred the lines between clerical and secular practice and authority. Recent scholarship includes Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh's co-edited *After*