

*Princely Citizen: Lorenzo de' Medici and Renaissance Florence.* Francis W. Kent. Ed. Carolyn James. Late Medieval and Early Modern Studies 24. Turnhout: Brepols, 2013. viii + 370 pp. €80.

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There are biographies of Lorenzo de' Medici (1449–92) to suit an admittedly limited range of tastes: hagiographical ones that emphasize his miraculous survival when his brother Giuliano was murdered by the Pazzi conspirators in 1478; popular ones that create or sustain the myth of a Laurentian golden age; and political ones that fail to excite the interest of any readers determined to think of Lorenzo as a poet and cultural patron, rather than as a political player who ruthlessly subverted Florence's republican constitution and operated his own diplomatic network. The publication of Lorenzo's *Lettere*, in the edition begun by Riccardo Fubini and Nicolai Rubinstein, surely invites potential biographers to tell an exceptionally detailed version of his relatively short but crowded life. Francis W. Kent was keen to accept that challenge, bringing to it his own lengthy experience of researching the lives of Lorenzo and his Florentine contemporaries. As his editor Carolyn James explains, the biography was to be a retirement project, but Kent was diagnosed with cancer in 2008, so an alternative plan was devised in order to create an impression of what his biography of Lorenzo might have been like. This volume is the result. It brings together fourteen of Kent's published essays, arranging them so that material relating to Lorenzo's early life and close family precedes that concerned with his mature career, and it supplements those essays with a hitherto-unpublished piece on the death of Lorenzo and on his clients' resulting sense of their world being turned upside down. Kent died in 2010, the final chapter of Lorenzo's life having been related in this final text.

There is some repetition of details because, until those final months, Kent never wrote with a collection of essays as his ultimate objective. Some turns of phrase vary little from essay to essay. James could do nothing about that, but she has intervened to standardize the footnotes, so that the archive known as MAP (Medici Avanti il Principato) in Michael Mallett and Nicholas Mann's *Lorenzo the Magnificent: Culture and Politics* (1996), where Kent's essay "The Young Lorenzo" first appeared, has now become MaP. She has also assembled an impressive bibliography and added a useful index. All of this goes as far as any editor could proceed toward creating the impression of a unified biography where none actually existed. A variorum reprint this is not.

If the essays are rearranged in chronological order of original publication, then Lorenzo first appears as little more than a figure in rural and urban landscapes, for the earliest of them (published 1979–83) chart his purchase of the villa at Poggio a Caiano, his patronage of the convent at Florence's Porta San Gallo, and his support among the nonelite "lads from the Canto della Macina." Then there was the glut of conferences in 1992 to mark the 500th anniversary of Lorenzo's death. Kent was a stalwart of those events, so duly appeared in the resulting volumes. His interest at that stage was in Lorenzo as a sociopolitical patron, as "maestro della bottega" and an "amico degli uomini da bene." Conferences on Florence

and the Medici became something of an industry, and Kent continued to oblige, as he did for a *convegno* on the history of the duomo, supplying the Laurentian chapter of that saga. When left to his own devices, it seems, Kent chose to write about Lorenzo's relationships with women, particularly with his mother, Lucrezia Tornabuoni, with the nuns who shared her piety, or with his mistresses, who presumably did not. If so minded, one might choose to map Kent's evolving interests onto his own biography, which would include relating his essay "Prato and Lorenzo de' Medici" to his role at Monash University's teaching and research center in that city. On the other hand, a collection such as this says something rather more interesting about recent (and current) academic culture, about working up papers for each successive conference, moving from relatively quick result to relatively quick result, and racking up numbers of publications to meet institutional requirements for each periodic research-assessment exercise. In such a culture a full-scale biography such as Kent's on Lorenzo can easily be lost.

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