Luca Boschetto. Società e cultura a Firenze al tempo del Concilio: Eugenio IV tra curiali, mercanti e umanisti (1434–1443).

Libri, carte, immagini 4. Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2012. xviii + 648 pp. €84. ISBN: 978-88-6372-251-2.

Throughout the mid-1430s and early 1440s, the Venetian-born pope Eugenius IV (Gabriel Condulmer) spent just under six years residing in Florence's Santa Maria Novella. Apart from the pope's immediate *familia*, many functions of papal government were relocated to Florence, presenting an obvious opportunity for an examination of this prolonged encounter between two of Quattrocento Italy's most important protagonists. It is somewhat surprising, then, that until recently the last extended scholarly analyses of these events came in the mid-twentieth century with Joseph Gill's biographical study of Eugenius, and his account of the short-lived Council of Florence. Luca Boschetto's expansive monograph seeks to remedy this gap in our knowledge by bringing together an impressive range of archival, printed, and historiographical sources.

Boschetto's study consists of two parts, both of which contain six chapters. Beginning with Eugenius's daring flight from Rome in 1434, the first part — "Cronache della corte papale a Firenze" — deals discursively with the historical developments of the period. From Eugenius's escape, the text chronologically proceeds through the arrival of the curia in Florence, the return from exile of Cosimo de' Medici, the pope's brief stays in Bologna and Ferrara in 1438/39, the convocation of the council, and the period of the second sojourn in Florence. It ends with Eugenius's return to Rome in 1443.

Part 2, "Cultura e società al tempo del Concilio," returns to several of these events, but as the subheading suggests, its analysis is focused more on the visible impacts of the coming together of papal and Florentine society and culture. It is this more conceptually focused part that the scholar will find most satisfying when it comes to considering the impact Eugenius and his court had on the city, and in turn, how the city impacted him. The first two chapters examine the economic and social impacts of housing the pope, his court, and his papal government. The third returns to Cosimo by exploring his correspondence with the curia, contrasting it with a similar link between the curia and members of the Strozzi family. While it is somewhat surprising that Cosimo is afforded almost two full chapters, his role in the unfolding historical narrative of the first part is unavoidable, and in any case, the letters provide an interesting perspective on Medici hegemony in its formative years.

The final three chapters of the second part are particularly fruitful for those seeking to place Eugenius within the broader context of Florentine culture of the period. Exploring the ideas, institutions, and key figures that characterized Florence in the 1430s and 40s, Boschetto conducts a thorough analysis of the cultural interaction that took place between the city and its papal guests. The most salient feature of these closing chapters is the impact of the *umanisti*, and the author makes some interesting claims about their effect on Eugenius, a pope who is generally not

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considered in the scholarly discourses on papal humanism. Boschetto disputes this exclusion, claiming that to ignore humanism as an influence is to misunderstand a significant element of Eugenius as pontiff.

There are many things to recommend this monograph, the most obvious being the sheer breadth of material Boschetto manages to assemble coherently when constructing his narrative. Running to over 500 pages, *Società e Cultura* is long, yet the author never lacks the evidence required to support his points, the result of obviously painstaking research in the archives of Florence, Rome, Pisa, and Siena. Nor does Boschetto limit himself to a particular genre of evidence, and the skillful augmentation of archival work with an imposing bibliography of printed and secondary sources produces a study that is at once broad in scope, but accessible and logical in its execution. Importantly, Boschetto has seen fit to include an appendix that reproduces for the first time a critical Latin edition of the agreement signed between the city and the papacy in July 1434.

While anglophile readers might perhaps be wary that conceptual issues are not tackled until the second part of the study, the first six chapters are crucial in building toward this discussion simply because much of the material has lain untouched since the middle of the twentieth century. Boschetto brings new light and a fresh perspective to events that scholars might hitherto have assumed were well understood. To be sure, there is further work to be done on this period, and there are many themes upon which scholars will no doubt wish to conduct more-focused analyses; for this, Boschetto's impressive achievements in *Società e Cultura* will prove to be a valuable foundation.

LUKE BANCROFT Monash University