

The mendicant orders' relationship to civic power is a particular focus of several essays. Paolo Evangelisti and Nicholas Scott Baker examine mendicants in the context of civic humanism and republicanism, and Laura Gaffuri's masterful essay provides a long view of the mendicants' marriage of biblical exegesis with political discourse, as well as a compelling close reading of Observant sermons in fifteenth-century Turin.

Among those essays not focused on religious topics, and despite the authors' explicit and careful rejection of traditional narratives of the "modern state," many implicit yet instructive echoes of the modern world may be found. Outstanding examples include Carlo Taviani's stimulating essay on the Casa San Giorgio, a private corporation that took over a number of state responsibilities for the Genoese despite the chagrin of some contemporaries; Elizabeth Horodowich's close reading of Marin Sanudo's extraordinary diaries for his take on news and its authoritative sources in fractious Venice; and Federica Cengarle's fascinating examination of statute law and juridical commentaries for evolving discussions of the balance of power between *dominus* and *populus* as political fortunes shifted decisively in favor of the former in Visconti Lombardy.

Each essay is furnished with its own list of works cited, keeping footnotes succinct. In-text quotations in Latin and Italian appear in the original first, with English translation in square brackets. This lends a slightly cluttered appearance to the text, but does allow for easy comparison of translation and original. Publishing considerations may have impacted the decision to forego images for the essays that rely on visual evidence. The essays in this volume complement one another well, and the geographic distribution of the essay topics makes the volume especially useful for comparative work. Gaffuri remarks that the complexity of the Sabaudian state challenges scholars with the need for "polycentric research perspectives and an almost microhistorical level of analysis" (192). Her statement could apply to any of the states examined in this volume, which worthily meets that dual challenge.

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*Murder in Renaissance Italy*. Trevor Dean and K. J. P. Lowe, eds.  
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This collection brings together established historians and art historians to shed light on the problem of murder in late medieval and early modern Italy. Interest in Italian legal and judicial history has been growing for some time. There is also a vocal debate on the nature of violence in early modern Europe and the reasons for its decline over time. This volume is a contribution to that literature and will be valuable to all students of the Italian early modern, and to historical criminologists, anthropologists, and historians of Europe interested in problems of violence and the law.

The book is divided into five parts, beginning with “Domestic Murder.” Here, domestic murder includes the killing of Abel by his brother, Cain, and its depiction in Renaissance public architecture (Scott Nethersole), vendetta and uxoricide in medieval Sicily (Henri Bresc), and a case of “daughter-killing” (really an honor killing) in the Roman countryside in the sixteenth century (Thomas V. Cohen). “Ordinary Murder” is analyzed in medieval Bologna by Trevor Dean, who classifies eight forms of homicide in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and by Sarah R. Blanshei, who argues that Bolognese homicides took place within a “culture of hatred” informed by Roth’s *American Homicide* (2009).

“Sensational Murder” focuses on heinously visible killings, such as the murder of Duke Alessandro de’ Medici (Stefano dall’Aglia) and a case of cannibalism in Milan (Silvio Leydi), and on the popular culture surrounding violence in Venice (Rosa Salzberg and Massimo Rospocher). “Unclassifiable murder” seems an odd designation for part 4, as only the murders disguised as suicides uncovered by Kate Lowe really fit the part. Murders among and of Jews (Anna Esposito) are judicially indistinguishable from “ordinary” killings, and Italian authorities worked assiduously to classify crimes of poisoning, as Alessandro Pastore shows in deconstructing stereotypes of the female poisoner.

“Professional Murder” deals with mass murder in the context of warfare (Stephen Bowd), with the state violence of public executions (Enrica Guerra), and with the apparent distaste that the public had for butchers, as possible murderers in the market square (C. D. Dickerson III). Taken together, the chapters in this volume depict the many fora in which medieval and Renaissance Italians thought about and encountered fatal violence.

The editors argue that “murder was normal in Renaissance Italy” (9), though the research put together here belies that. Indeed, we read of a society deeply concerned with the problem of violence, with elaborate social and judicial processes for its control and a strong fascination with its very abnormality. *Common* does not equal *normal*, and in making that equation the editors minimize those attempts to control violence and the experiences of the many Italians who, as Blanshei rightly notes, turned to violence in a society that otherwise denied many opportunities for social and political advancement. Moreover, much of the book explicitly deals with homicides that were not normal but outrageous.

This fascination with the abomination precludes sustained engagement with the quotidian judicial sources of early modern Italy. Dean’s and Blanshei’s trial records come from a medieval Bologna that predates the great changes wrought on that city by papal rule and judicial consolidation. Guerra does not treat the chronicles of executions produced by comforting confraternities, and does not cite Terpstra’s 2008 volume on the same. Pastore does, but mostly stays out of the Bolognese *processi* that produced those sentences. Cohen delves deeply into a single trial from Rome in exquisite fashion. With the exception of Esposito’s chapter on Jews, there is almost no attention to

violence between the various nationalities found on the Italian peninsula. Most chapters rely on print media, chronicles, and statutes, and the reader is often left with questions such as how many people were killed in early modern Italy, by whom, and why?

Still, we have here a multiperspectival analysis of fatal violence that makes clear how much it preyed on the minds of early modern Italians. The chapters on art history show that cultural prominence nicely, and the others make clear that violence was a consequence of endemic sociopolitical instability. This volume lays the groundwork for more-sustained research into the incidence and culture of violence in a society that still bears the burden of idealistic Renaissance periodization.

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*La Disfida di Barletta: Storia, fortuna, rappresentazione.* Fulvio Delle Donne and Victor Rivera Magos, eds.

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The Challenge of Barletta stands as a classic case of a minor event transformed into a lasting myth. During the Italian Wars, the Treaty of Granada (1500) divided the Kingdom of Naples between the French and Spanish, leaving the southern half of the kingdom to the Spanish and the northern to France. However, fighting soon resumed. In early 1503, Spanish cavaliers, including a large contingent of Italians, met with captains of the enemy French in Barletta. During the meeting, a Frenchman accused the Italians of being “traitors like the Spanish,” which led the Italians to challenge the French to combat. The most direct source about what happened comes from an eyewitness account reported in a letter written on the day of the combat (13 February 1503). Thirteen Italians met thirteen French cavaliers in a field near Andria. After jousting on horseback, the cavaliers dismounted and took up the fight on foot, which culminated in a resounding Italian victory. The surviving French were taken prisoner and transported to Barletta. The letter recounted that the Italians had fought *virilmente*. Using these bare facts, the mythmakers took over, echoing the heroic legends of champions dating back to Homer.

This collection leads readers through the shifting fogs of the myth. Fifteen prominent scholars explore the immediate historical context of the Challenge, literary myth-making from the sixteenth-century humanists to Massimo d’Azeglio’s novel *Ettore Fieramosca o la disfida di Barletta* (1833, English translation 1845), and the nationalist and fascist appropriations of the myth in post-Risorgimento politics, art, and film. Most of this cultural production was only vaguely related to the events of 1503. In fact, the Barlettani of the sixteenth century, more preoccupied with the siege of their city in 1528, did not leave any contemporary record of the event, even if now they celebrate it as a prized symbol of local identity.