

Caroline Callard. *Le prince et la république: histoire, pouvoir et société dans la Florence des Médicis au XVII^e siècle.* Paris: Presses de l' Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2007. 458 pp. EUR 30 (paper), ISBN 978-2-84050-516-7.



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History under the Medici

Caroline Callard frames this book as an answer to the question of why the distinguished tradition of Florentine historiography exemplified by Machiavelli and Guicciardini appears to die out after the reign of the first grand duke and builder of the Florentine state, Cosimo I. Between Scipione Ammirato, the last emulator of the tradition, and Jacopo Riguccio Galluzzi, writing at the end of the eighteenth century, there seems to be a gap, at least in regard to the writing of histories chiefly about Florence. Yet, in Callard's view, the phenomenon is not to be attributed, as Eric Cochrane once did, to a peninsula-wide historiographical *âcrisis* of content (i.e., an absence of events worthy of note by humanist standards); nor were historians generally hamstrung by stylistic preferences that no longer favored classical models or by inattention either to history as rhetoric or history as research. The move among historically inclined scholars away from political history into such fields as antiquities (Cosimo Della Rena), religious history (Ferdinando Ughelli), etruscology (Girolamo Mei), or art history (Giorgio Vasari and Filippo Baldinucci) was therefore due to the emergence of

new topics, not the disappearance of familiar ones. And Florentines' abiding concern about their past, throughout the age of the grand dukes, cannot simply be summarized by reference to the fawning utterances of ducal eulogists like Giovanni Battista Cini. Instead, Callard uncovers a widely shared culture of memory articulated in many dimensions, and in respect to all the major periods of the Florentine past, from pre-Roman times to the present, in forms of expression ranging from the written word to the visual image. To be sure, it was a culture of memory carefully cultivated by the grand ducal regime; and here is where this account of the vicissitudes of humanist historiography diverges radically from the *âcrisis* of content approach.

A major concern of the regime, from the time of Cosimo to the end of the dynasty, Callard argues, was to define the terms of the culture of memory so as to place the prince in a mutually reinforcing rather than antagonistic relation to the patriciate. The Florentine Republic would be reread as a prelude to the resolution of factional differences through the tightening of Medici control. Ac-

cording to the ideology enshrined in the Cosmian settlement, the regime determined what historiographical work to promote and what to discountenance, what utterances to allow in print and what to forbid. The grand dukes and their associates endeavored to organize substantial consensus around not only the founding myths of the grand duchy but also around the myths regarding the Medici past, from the warlike cunning of Giovanni delle Bande Nere to the diplomatic acumen of Lorenzo de' Medici. Archival centralization, begun by Cosimo I in spite of significant centrifugal tendencies among officeholding families, would regularize access to key documents in an age more and more preoccupied with the verification of historical conclusions by appropriate sourcing. Alongside the historical works, there were ceremonial representations, as we know better now through the recent accounts of Marcello Fantoni and Mario Biagioli, and iconographical programs, notably in the grand ducal apartments at Pitti, analyzed here by Callard, where the relevant portions decorated by Giovanni di San Giovanni intricately intertwined the related strands of Florentine and family history with the associated myths.

The regime naturally paid particular attention to the book trade; and its policy advisor Pietro Vettori, in Callard's analysis, paralleled his Venetian counterpart Paolo Sarpi in advocating favorable printed coverage as a mainstay to political consensus. Systematic suppression of inconvenient historiography was by and large not necessary, since writers basically sided with the regime—either because of personal commitment or because of self-censorship. What is more, Medici hegemony was so secure as time went on that negative views about Medici history, such as in the second part of the work of Ammirato, at first denied publication, eventually found their way into print. Nor did the grand dukes have to continue sponsoring an official historiography following Benedetto Varchi's first attempt under Cosimo. By the time of Antonio Magliabechi in the latter half of the seventeenth century, censorship was basically a collaborative project of the court intellectuals. To be sure, whatever picture we have of the Florentine book trade from the extant records is highly fragmentary—not just because the printing trade in Florence was far inferior, in this period, to its Venetian, Neapolitan, and Roman, not to mention its Dutch and French, counterparts. More important, any discussion regarding the depth and breadth of historical discourse would ideally incorporate an account of the non-Florentine works in circulation on every conceivable historical topic, which are nonetheless difficult to trace except in a study of letters, diaries, and

inventories, which has not yet been done. Only then could one make sense of such insights as those of the diarist Giovanni Baldinucci, writing in the early decades of the seventeenth century, who refers far more conspicuously to events occurring outside Florence (based on what sources?), than, say Luca Landucci or any of the other earlier better-known diarists.

Accompanying the Medici ideology of rule was the patrician's ideology of preeminence as a service nobility—a feature already finely drawn in Burr Litchfield's study of the major Florentine families. Patrician identity was based on involvement in Florence's republican past, proven, Roberto Bizzocchi has shown, by membership in the centuries-old citizen councils. Indeed, so close was the cooperation between regime and patrician officeholders that a certain degree of corruption was almost openly tolerated, notes Jean-Claude Waquet. Since, contrary to Furio Diaz's now-discarded hypothesis, no new service bureaucracy really emerged before the eighteenth century; genealogies—real and imaginary—were more valid demonstrations of worthiness than any proven skill or loyalty or even honesty; and the accumulation, collection, and organization of family archives accordingly reached an unprecedented intensity. And here, to the approaches of Krzysztof Pomian and others, in regard to collecting, Callard adds the aspect of the associated forms of sociability, even academies. In the midst of this activity, in Florence as elsewhere in Italy, family histories became a characteristic of late and post-Renaissance Italian historiography, basically ignored in such previous treatments as those by Sergio Bertelli or Rosario Villari.

If, to all effects, the question of the disappearing historiography is more a pretext than a research question here, nonetheless there is another answer to it that may help to broaden the context of this discussion. As events came to be played on an increasingly wider stage by more powerfully armed adversaries, the period between the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis and the Peace of Westphalia was hardly lacking in newsworthy items—hence, indeed, in the 1640s, the emergence of the genre of the printed gazette in Italy including Florence (thirty years behind the rest of Europe). But the war of Mantua and the War of Castro (both of which interested Florence), the war of the Valtellina, and the various rebellions (Palermo, Naples), not to mention the Italian states' involvement in the North European wars—consider the case of the grand duke's self-appointed captain, Don Giovanni de' Medici, and his Tuscan regiment—was chronicled not in the municipal historiographies but in the more and more

complex, verbose, unwieldy world histories, compiled by Girolamo Brusoni, Maiolino Bisaccioni, Vittorio Siri, and the like, from a variety of sources of varying degrees of reliability. Finally, one may still ask how the major cultural themes of the texts here examined played out in the shops or the streets, in the city squares, and even outside the city walls of Florence, especially in an age when in-

formation and rumor spread with equal speed. However, even from an argument and a project of this impressive scope, one can scarcely demand a definitive solution to the common paradox of research concerning climates of opinion, which, after all, was not the author's intention in this fine book.

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