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Howard, Peter. Creating Magnificence in Renaissance Florence

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Sans doute est-ce d'ailleurs pour cette raison que son propos oscille sans cesse entre l'assertion (sur les intentions du traducteur, son ironie, ses réactions ; opposition parfois forcée entre tel texte du traducteur et son modèle latin, qui sert souvent de repoussoir ; connotations parfois subjectives ou anachroniques appliquées aux mots « plaisantes », « sainctes », « accommoder » qui n'est pas « manipuler », « commodité » qui traduit fort bien « bonum », « marche » qui correspond exactement à « gradus ») et la prudence (modalisation par de fréquentes formules d'atténuation : « sembler », « peut-être », « pouvoir », « laisser entendre », etc.).

L'une des conclusions les plus fortes du travail de Mireille Habert concerne l'importance que Montaigne traducteur accorde à l'image comme stimulant de la ferveur et aliment pour la piété, et cela sans aucune trace d'ironie : un trait à verser au compte de Montaigne « orateur chrétien » (p. 137)? Il faudrait sans doute relire plusieurs pages de l'*opus magnum* à la lumière de ces observations. Elles permettraient par exemple de mieux comprendre pourquoi l'auteur y parle du « tres-utile effect » de « la vue des crucifix » et autres « ornements » qui, « dans nos Églises », s'adressent aux sens autant qu'à l'esprit. Sans faire de Montaigne un émule des Jésuites ou un militant de la Contre-Réforme, on peut en effet s'interroger, avec Mireille Habert, sur la propension du traducteur de Raimond de Sebonde à rendre « sensibles » les lignes où le théologien catalan traitait assez froidement de la Passion du Christ?

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Howard, Peter.
Creating Magnificence in Renaissance Florence.
Essays and Studies 29. Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2012. Pp. 173. ISBN 978-0-7727-2126-6 (paperback) $19.

Florentine scholars have been drawn to the theme of "magnificence" for two chief reasons. Mid-fifteenth-century praise of magnificence provided substantial cover for the commissioning by private individuals of expensive artistic and architectural projects that are still admired today but that might easily be and indeed were criticized by contemporaries for being luxurious and/or

corrupting. Meanwhile, the magnificence that was ascribed to—or, better, whose vocabulary was appropriated by—successive members of the Medici family offered political and moral cover for a gradual seizure of power. Art historians and historians of Florentine politics alike have reasons to be interested in "magnificence" at Florence in the fifteenth century.

Peter Howard, in the book under review, suggests several important revisions to our understanding of Florentine magnificence. He argues that the theory of magnificence developed at Florence was not the simple endorsement of the building campaigns funded by Cosimo de' Medici in the 1450s that it is sometimes made out to be. Well before the Medici party came to power, sermons that St. Antoninus Pierozzi delivered in 1427, and that Fra Francesco Mellini gave in 1428, endorsed the idea that wealthy citizens should embellish and enrich their community through the proper exercise of magnificence. We have today only the Latin texts of Antoninus's sermons, which he would have delivered in modified form in the vernacular, and for Mellini we have only the account of a listener; but to have this sort of evidence for oral communication in the fifteenth century is quite rewarding. It permits Howard to argue that the endorsement of magnificence had its roots in the pre-Medicean period, when it could be said to pertain as much to a wealthy citizen like Palla Strozzi as to his rival Cosimo. Although magnificence was later wielded by the Medici much in the manner of an advertising brand, it was initially developed in dialogue with the Florentine hearers of these sermons.

Howard here, as in his other work, argues for an expansive understanding of the sermon's role in society. Although the metaphor is not his, he treats a sermon like a pebble tossed in a pond that initiates waves that spread outward, but then are reflected inward on the speaker. Confirming textual evidence is to be found in Antoninus's later, more developed thoughts on magnificence in his *Summa*, begun in the 1430s and completed by 1454. Howard pays fine attention to the Aristotelian and Thomistic origins of Antoninus's "theology" of magnificence, showing how *magnificentia* did not fit cleanly within evolving understandings of the cardinal virtues—an evolution that has been explored recently and well by István Bejczy. Magnificence falls awkwardly, sometimes between, sometimes under the stools of fortitude (translated at times inconsistently as "courage") and liberality. There was, of course, the problem that *magnificentia* was a virtue inaccessible to the poor man (*inops*), and one can see how the matter of Howard's book might usefully be woven into the classic

discussion concerning humanism, wealth, and poverty that Hans Baron took over from Werner Sombart, adapting it to his own ends.

How Ernst Gombrich and A. D. Fraser Jenkins, in articles published long ago (in 1960 and 1970 respectively), came to associate magnificence with Cosimo, as opposed to his grandson Lorenzo the Magnificent, is made amply clear by a flattering dialogue that Timoteo Maffei composed circa 1454–56. Entitled *Against the Detractors of the Magnificence of Cosimo de' Medici*, Howard publishes this dialogue in its entirety in Latin, with an English translation, in one of several valuable appendices that accompany his text. With respect to the dialogue, there seems to be editorial confusion over the title, in which "detractores" is surely an accusative, the object of "in," and "magnificentiae" the same word's genitive object (see 124 and 139). It might be added that "alpes" (126) are not "the Alps" (140) but simply "mountains"—here meaning the Apennines. Although Howard doesn't say so, the dialogue was written during a difficult period (1454–58) for Cosimo's regime, a time that Arthur Field, among others, has described with clarity. The speeches of the dialogue's "Detractor" thus give this small work a double-edged quality not necessarily apparent on first reading.

Howard has done a real service in attributing to Florentine "magnificence" a religious context in addition to its better known secular one. Where now? For art historians the term's utility is somewhat circumscribed. Although it was used in the fifteenth century to defend expensive, highly visible projects, it tells us little about the styles employed. Perhaps the political and honorific uses of the term are what now need most study. The honorific "il Magnifico" was used not only by certain members of the Medici family in Florence, but also by Orlando Pallavicino in Lombardy and by Pandolfo Petrucci and Agostino Chigi in Siena. A nice project for a historian of political language might involve connecting these labels as "magnifici" with—or distinguishing them from—the late Roman title "vir magnificus" (studied by Beat Näf) with its Lombard continuations. It would be useful, likewise, if "magnifico" could be shown to be related to—or, again, differentiated from—the salutation "Magnifice vir" that begins so many fifteenth- and sixteenth-century letters.

A final surprise that results from Howard's careful analysis regards the alleged novelty of the Florentine understanding of magnificence. When he reworked Thomas's writing on the cardinal virtues, turning magnificence into a local good at Florence, Antoninus was not nearly so original as previously

thought. In his *Summa* the good archbishop in fact relied point by point on the Venetian writer, Henry of Rimini, whose *Liber de quattuor virtutibus cardinalibus ad cives Venetos* (ca. 1300) he duly cited—although prior to Howard no one bothered to check the citation. So much for modern scholarship's compulsive search for originality—a search that often obscures what is historically important in a text. The Antoninus that emerges in Howard's study is appreciated not as a sparkling theoretician but as a responsive and engaged preacher and a theologian who drew upon the rich and diverse theological tradition in which he had been schooled with style and care. One understands why the Florentines liked him.

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Maschietto, Francesco Ludovico.
***Elena Lucrezia Cornaro Piscopia (1646–1684): The First Woman in the World to Earn a University Degree.* Trans. Jan Vairo and William Crochetiere. Ed. Catherine Marshall.**
Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2007. Pp. xxii, 318. ISBN 978-0-9161-0157-2 (hardcover) $40.

Francesco Ludovico Maschietto's book makes a worthy contribution to an expanding genre of literature concerned with women's biographies in the early modern period. Exquisitely researched, and intended primarily for the academic community, it successfully finds ways to communicate its content to the broader public interested in early modern learning. Although Elena Lucrezia Cornaro Piscopia was the subject of previous scholarly research, this was the first extensive study in Italian—here translated into English—that focuses exclusively on her life. This volume has the merit of unearthing a number of unpublished documents on Elena and of giving an overview of the seventeenth-century Venetian social, cultural, and educational milieu.

Using evidence from archival documents, Maschietto meticulously reconstructs Elena's life and provides valuable insights into her private and academic world. The book is organized into nine chapters, which comprise two areas of