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Cecchi, Alessandro. *In difesa della «dolce libertà». L'assedio di Firenze (1529–1530)*

Stefano Dall'aglio

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Siegfried argues that Romantics such as William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Leigh Hunt, and Charles Lamb found a source of images and motifs in Cavendish, who was also thought to have influenced John Milton. In the twentieth century, Virginia Woolf caricatured Cavendish; by the late twentieth century, feminist scholars were helping to revive Cavendish and other women from the early modern period. In the twenty-first century, when fantasy and science fiction are valued, it seems that *The Blazing World* is Cavendish's most popular work.

Siegfried takes care in editing Cavendish's work; in "Note on the Text," she lays out for the reader a clear sense of what she has done. This edition of Cavendish is valuable for the specialist, the student, and the general reader. It should help extend Cavendish's afterlife and introduce her to yet another generation of readers.

JONATHAN LOCKE HART

Shanghai Jiao Tong University

### **Cecchi, Alessandro.**

*In difesa della «dolce libertà». L'assedio di Firenze (1529–1530).*

Biblioteca Storica Toscana, Series 1, vol. 77. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2018. Pp. x, 302 + 50 colour ill. ISBN 978-88-222-6559-3 (paperback) €29.

The siege of Florence which took place in 1529–1530 is a pivotal event in Florentine history: the final showdown between one of the most emblematic of Italian republics and a foreign army seeking to take it over and impose a ruling dynasty. It is not surprising, therefore, that the historiography on the topic has long been skewed by ideological interpretations that saw the siege as a struggle between good and evil, between liberty and oppression. After a period in which historians were largely indifferent, more recent scholarship has finally begun to approach this event in a different way, revising traditional interpretations and shedding old Manichaean stereotypes. In the wake of Alessandro Monti's *L'assedio di Firenze (1529–1530)* which appeared in 2015, the publication of Alessandro Cecchi's monograph shows that interest in the event continues to be high.

*In difesa della «dolce libertà»* is an extraordinarily detailed account of the events that transpired between the summer of 1529, when the international

circumstances led to an unavoidable war, and August 1530, when the surrender treaty was signed and the Medici re-entered Florence. More narrative than analytical, the book draws on admirable archival research, most of which has been done in Florence. The author has unearthed a massive quantity of documents of various types, such as private and public letters, resolutions and measures issued by the republican authorities, account books, and proceedings of the meetings of the institutional bodies. His day-by-day chronicle of events relies not only on this material but also on contemporary historians (chiefly Benedetto Varchi), most of whom personally took part in them. Thanks to this plethora of primary sources, Cecchi is able to shed new light on apparently well-known events, devoting special attention not only to the political and military matters but also to the more human aspects of the story.

It is impossible to mention all the themes crammed into the book, from the problems related to the lack of food and money, to the organization and weaponry of the different kinds of troops. The same can be said of the story's colourful cast of characters, like controversial captain Malatesta Baglioni or the legendary Francesco Ferrucci killed by the notorious *condottiere* Fabrizio Maramaldo. In addition, the fact that the author is an art historian means that some of the book's most remarkable pages have to do with artists and artworks. Cecchi emphasizes the role that some artists played during the siege, when they were faced with the choice of leaving the city or staying on, of serving the republic or the Medici pope. The most famous example was certainly that of Michelangelo: torn between fear and courage, convenience and loyalty, he was declared a rebel after he fled from Florence and later was forced to work on the city's fortifications for free. The stories involving works of art or historical buildings that were destroyed or preserved are sad and fascinating at the same time. It is not widely known that as the imperial troops were drawing near, the Florentine republic ordered that all buildings within the range of one mile from the city walls should be demolished. Some artworks were removed but many others were inevitably destroyed, Andrea del Sarto's fresco of the Last Supper at San Salvi being one of the few exceptions.

The ideological assumptions that sustained the defence of Florence are also well illustrated. It would be impossible to fully understand these events without being aware of the pervasive climate of religious fanaticism and patriotic fervour that possessed the besieged. Inspired by Savonarola's teaching, most of them believed that their tribulations were the prelude to a divine reward and

that God would only intervene to defend the republic when all else was lost. The increasing emphasis on devotion, religious celebrations, and moralistic laws as the situation grew worse was the most obvious sign that the conflict was being managed on the basis more of faith than of reason.

In summary, the book provides a detailed and comprehensive treatment of the subject which also includes minor events and lesser-known historical figures. Anglophone readers might find it surprising that there is no conclusion, but they will be amply rewarded by a very thorough work based on a wealth of primary sources and accompanied by extensive footnotes, an interesting appendix of documents, and many high-quality colour illustrations. Alessandro Cecchi's new book is a must read for anyone interested in this crucial historical moment.

STEFANO DALL'AGLIO

The Medici Archive Project

**Costa, Margherita.**

**The Buffoons, A Ridiculous Comedy: A Bilingual Edition.** Ed. and trans. Sara E. Díaz and Jessica Goethals.

The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series 63 / Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 535. Toronto: Iter Press / Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2018. Pp. xv, 368 + 9 ill. ISBN 978-0-86698-592-5 (paperback) US\$54.95.

I am wonderfully indebted to Sara E. Díaz and Jessica Goethals for introducing the first English translation of Margherita Costa's theatrical production, *The Buffoons, A Ridiculous Comedy* (1641)—the first female-authored comedy in Italy's Seicento, a century known for its hostility to female authors (1). This bilingual facing-page play text is framed with a comprehensive introduction that outlines the cultural context of the Seicento, including the baroque aesthetic and the network of patrons and political figures associated with Costa's writing, but equal care is given to Costa's casting of buffoons and dwarves. The editors note that Costa's audience would have been fascinated by buffoons and dwarves for their exotic appeal, which is likewise the case with Costa's choice to set the play in Morocco.