



OXFORD JOURNALS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS



Tales of Two Cities: Florence and Venice in the Renaissance

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Source: *The American Historical Review*, Jun., 1983, Vol. 88, No. 3 (Jun., 1983), pp. 599-616

Published by: Oxford University Press on behalf of the American Historical Association

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1864589>

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Review Essay
Tales of Two Cities:
Florence and Venice in the Renaissance

GENE BRUCKER

SINCE WORLD WAR II, the historiography of Italian city-states in the late medieval and Renaissance periods (ca. 1350 to ca. 1550) has been dominated by foreigners, particularly by English and American historians. There is no simple explanation for this remarkable fact, unparalleled for any other European country. No obvious connection can be drawn between the tradition of prewar scholarship, which was predominantly German and Italian, and the Anglo-American monopoly since 1945. The significant expansion in fellowship support (Fulbright, the British Council) for young scholars was certainly a stimulus, as were too, for some, their wartime experiences in Mediterranean regions. While foreigners were increasingly attracted to the study of Italy's remote past, Italian historians were preoccupied with their contemporary history. After decades of research on the Cinquecento, Federico Chabod devoted the postwar years to a study of Italian foreign policy in the nineteenth century. This shift was symptomatic of the scholarly priorities of a generation of Italian scholars, who saw little that was relevant to their concerns in the struggles of Guelfs and Ghibellines, or even in the peninsula's occupation by foreign powers after 1494.¹

BY ESTABLISHING SCHOLARLY STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE and creating a firm documentary foundation for the institutional history of Medicean Florence, Rubinstein has earned a secure place in the pantheon of Florentine historians. A cluster of recent books by younger scholars has expanded the areas of solid archival research and, through sensitive probing of the evidence, has deepened our understanding of the fundamental problems of urban experience in Florence and Venice. In their choice of subjects, their sources and methodology, their work might be described as "traditional," but that appellation is misleading. To some degree, they are all revisionist in their orientation, re-examining old problems with new evidence and insights and developing original conceptual frameworks for

¹ See Randolph Starn, "Florentine Renaissance Studies," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance*, 32 (1970): 677–84; and Gene Brucker, *The Civic World of Early Renaissance Florence* (Princeton, 1977), 3–13.

understanding Italian politics and society in the late medieval and Renaissance periods.

Nearly every important city-state in northern and central Italy has found its foreign historian, who has exploited local archives and libraries and has written a solid and informative history, based largely on unpublished records.² Most of these histories have focused on political developments in these towns during the communal era, and in the transition from commune to *signoria*. There are few studies of demographic and economic development; even rarer are works of regional scope or those that attempt comparative analysis. But the most striking feature of this historiography is its heavy concentration on Florence and Venice.³ During the 1970s, twenty monographs on Florentine late medieval and Renaissance history were published in English, while not a single book in that language was devoted to the history of Milan. And, although Rome has attracted a handful of Anglo-American historians of the postwar era, it has not received the scholarly attention that it deserves. I will concentrate on recent historical work by foreign scholars on the political, social, and economic history of Florence and Venice. This historiography has extended beyond the study of political developments (still the worthy objective of much scholarship on other towns) to an exploration of related problems—some heretofore explored only haphazardly, others not at all.⁴

In this large and diverse body of historical work, it is difficult to discern any conceptual or methodological pattern. No historian of Florence and Venice, native or foreign, has ever established a “school” or a tradition. Consequently, the scholarship on these cities has appeared to lack focus and coherence. Undoubtedly, its most distinctive feature has been its solid base in archival sources. Historians attracted to the study of Florence and Venice have luxuriated in the richness of their archives, whose contents and organization have strongly influenced the direction of their research. Public records, catalogued serially, have been more accessible and exploitable than private or ecclesiastical sources, which has contributed to the strong emphasis on political and institutional history. This postwar historiography, dominated by *stranieri*, has been empirical in its methods, positivist in its epistemology, and, until quite recently, untouched by the ideological struggles that, since 1945, have convulsed Italian historical writing.

The most eminent living historian of Florence is Nicolai Rubinstein, whose work exemplifies the very best of this Anglo-American scholarship. Rubinstein has labored in the Florentine archives since the 1930s; he was acquainted with the city’s

² For recent examples, see Christine Meek, *The Commune of Lucca under Pisan Rule, 1342–1369* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980); and William Bowsky, *A Medieval Italian Commune: Siena under the Nine, 1287–1355* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1981).

³ This concentration was already visible a decade ago in the multi-authored volumes edited by Nicolai Rubinstein and John R. Hale: Rubinstein, ed., *Florentine Studies: Politics and Society in Renaissance Florence* (London, 1968); and Hale, ed., *Renaissance Venice* (London, 1973).

⁴ On the dearth of monographs on Renaissance cities by Italian scholars, see Sergio Bertelli’s Introduction to Gene Brucker, *Firenze nel Rinascimento* (Florence, 1980), xiv. Two recent works deserve mention in this context: Guidobaldo Guidi, *Il Governo della Città-Repubblica di Firenze del primo Quattrocento*, 3 vols. (Florence, 1981); and Mario Bernocchi, *Le Monete della Repubblica fiorentina*, 4 vols. (Florence, 1974–78). Though lacking a sustained analytical dimension, they are valuable contributions to Florentine institutional history. See Judith Brown, Review of Guidi’s *Il Governo della Città-Repubblica di Firenze* in the *AHR*, 87 (1982): 1418–19.

great historians—Robert Davidsohn, Nicola Ottokar, Gaetano Salvemini—of an earlier generation. He has been an archival scholar *par excellence*; no one has ever matched his knowledge of the sources for the Florentine Quattrocento. Like Frederic Lane, the distinguished *maestro* of Venetian historiography, he has been committed to the principle of “the irreplaceable value of painstaking work and of honest and exact scholarship.”⁵ Although he has written on other cities (Siena) and other subjects (political theory), he has concentrated on the political and institutional history of Florence from the thirteenth to the early sixteenth century. His major work, *The Government of Florence under the Medici, 1434–94* (1966), was described by Philip Jones as “nothing less . . . than the true beginning of the systematic history of Quattrocento Florence.” With other reviewers, Jones praised the patience, pertinacity, and meticulousness of Rubinstein’s research “on the forbidding complexities of the Florentine constitution and the devices by which . . . it was manipulated for partisan domination.”⁶ The author described the methods by which the Medici and their allies maintained their authority in a republican polity. Although Rubinstein’s focus throughout is upon the techniques of government, his book also illuminates the complex relationship between political power and social status in Medicean Florence.

The laudatory reviews of this book are surely merited. Yet, while it established scholarly standards against which to measure all future publication in the field, the work also raised certain questions about methodology and conceptualization that, expressed cautiously and hesitantly in reviews, have lately been stated more openly and forcefully in evaluations of Anglo-American scholarship. Immediately noticeable in the first pages of *The Government of Florence* is the absence of any background or context, which suggests that the book was written primarily for specialists. Rare are the references to earlier scholarship, and none to any historiographical tradition in which the book might be located. In his brief preface, Rubinstein pointed to the fundamental differences between the Medici regime with its preservation of republican institutions and other despotic governments in fifteenth-century Italy. But he is not interested in any comparative analysis of political systems and would surely have agreed with Burckhardt’s dictum that neither Florence nor Venice “can be compared to anything else which the world has hitherto produced.” Rubinstein’s concentrated focus on “who governed and how they were chosen”⁷ contributes to the clarity of his argument, but it does leave unexplored and unexplained other important issues: the structure of the Medicean party; the actual administration of the state; the evolution of political ideology. The manipulation of electoral systems tells us much about power and its uses, but not, perhaps, the most important things. Finally, there is the matter of the author’s empathy with his subjects, the ruling class of Medicean Florence. Some critics have suggested that foreign historians of Florence and Venice have identified too closely

⁵ Fernand Braudel, Foreword to *Venice and History: The Collected Papers of Frederic C. Lane* (Baltimore, 1966), xii.

⁶ Jones, Review of Rubinstein’s *The Government of Florence* in *History*, 52 (1967): 319.

⁷ Daniel M. Bueno de Mesquita, Review of Rubinstein’s *The Government of Florence* in the *English Historical Review*, 83 (1968): 121.

with their elites, thereby losing detachment and objectivity and, in particular, rejecting any consideration of alternate systems of government.⁸ To this largely unconscious bias, a Florentine historian has recently alluded, in describing his determination “to look beyond the aura of inevitability that historians tend to give to established authority.”⁹

A good example is John Najemy's *Corporation and Consensus in Florentine Electoral Politics, 1280–1400* (1982). Najemy identified the procedures for electing civic officeholders as a key issue in Florentine politics in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. By focusing sharply on this single issue, he was able to describe and clarify the patterns of political conflict within the commune and to identify “two competing conceptions of communal society and politics” (page 3), the corporate and the consensual. Too ambiguous to be defined as ideologies, these rival conceptions are continuous threads running through Florentine politics for this century-long period. Phases of intense conflict were followed by periods of stasis, reflecting particular historical circumstances and the fluctuating strength of guildsmen, who favored a corporate policy, and their oligarchic opponents. Although the corporate model was ultimately defeated by its enemies, Najemy has insisted upon the vitality and durability of this guild-based conception of politics and of its pervasive influence (the notions of equality, fraternity, consultation) on Florentine republicanism. Based upon exhaustive research and a close scrutiny of the documents, Najemy's analysis is very persuasive and, in many of its parts, seemingly impervious to challenge or correction. More consciously than most scholars who have studied this period, Najemy has sought to integrate his analysis into the historiography of Italian (and European) urban history: problems of social structure and social conflict; the relationship between political and socioeconomic change, and between political experience and civic ideology. Perhaps the most vulnerable part of his argument is his formulation of the “consensus” model, with its suggestion of unity and cohesiveness within the city's elite.

In *The Rise of the Medici: Faction in Florence, 1426–1434* (1978), Dale Kent has studied the emergence of a Medicean faction in the late 1420s and its ultimate triumph over a rival, and more inchoate, party led by prominent oligarchs from the Albizzi and Peruzzi families. Her analysis of these factions and their struggle for dominance is the most thorough and solidly documented investigation of “party” for any Italian city-state in the communal and signorial periods. In the private correspondence of the Medici, Kent found the evidence for identifying the partisans, whose place in Florence's status hierarchy she determined from supplementary evidence—electoral, notarial, and tax records. Though never so informative as to provide full answers, these letters do furnish clues to the complex motivations that impelled Florentines to join one or the other faction. Kent decoded and analyzed this evidence with consummate skill. Not all of the mysteries

⁸ For examples of this criticism, see Renato Pecchioli, *Studi veneziani*, 13 (1971): 693–708; Eric Cochrane and Julius Kirshner, “Review Article—Deconstructing Lane's Venice,” *Journal of Modern History*, 47 (1975): 321–34; and Anthony Molho, in *Italia e Stati Uniti d'America: Concordanze e dissonanze* (Rome, 1981), 201–44.

⁹ Randolph Starn, *Contrary Commonwealth: The Theme of Exile in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1982), xv.

surrounding the Medici's ascendancy are fully resolved by her analysis; the role of their wealth, for example, is still problematic (pages 29–30). But her book establishes a solid documentary foundation, and provides a model, for future research on the Medici party and its political success.¹⁰

Supplementing the public records (legislation, debates, electoral and tax sources) and the chronicles, these private sources have enabled Kent to construct a richer and more nuanced picture of Florentine political life in this critical juncture than is possible for any other Italian government. Recent studies of Venetian politics are, by comparison, less solidly documented and more tentative in their conclusions. The pervasive influence of the *mito di Venezia*, which denied the existence of factional discord within the city's ruling class, has contributed to the image of a stable and durable regime, governed by men united in their political interests and in their dedication to the republic's welfare. But scholars who, in recent years, have searched for evidence of conflict, have often been thwarted by the sources, which reveal so little about the ways in which power was exercised and political decisions were made in Venice. That obscure world may eventually be illuminated through intensive archival research, although the impediments are truly formidable. Instead of plunging into that documentary morass, Robert Finlay decided to focus his study, *Politics in Renaissance Venice* (1980), on private records, most notably the fifty-eight published volumes of Marino Sanuto's diaries, covering the years 1496 to 1533.

In his analysis, Finlay confronted the political problems raised by the myth. How did this polity achieve so remarkable a degree of stability and continuity? How did it avoid the factionalism that was the curse of other republican regimes? Finlay assumes that Venetian nobles were no more virtuous, and not necessarily more civic-minded, than their neighbors. The key to political stability, he argued, was the creative use of electoral competition to involve the majority of the nobility in the political system and, at the same time, to discourage the formation of factions. "Hostility within the patriciate was channeled into place seeking and elections. Passions were expressed by excluding others from office, with ballots, not with blood" (page 219). The political system was thus stabilized by means that other ages would describe as corrupt. As the diarist Priuli wrote, "In Venice there is nothing that cannot be obtained and nothing that cannot be forgotten with time, lobbying, and intrigue." Finlay's interpretation minimizes the role of ideology as a force in Venetian politics. He did not see much evidence of particular families forming power blocs in elections and in policymaking. Within the constitutional structure, he placed more emphasis on the role of the Great Council, and on the political influence of the doge, than have many historians. He also stressed the system's pragmatism and flexibility, its resilience during and after crises (for example, the War of the League of Cambrai), and its ability to change in response to events. Chapter 5, on the problem of dissent, is a superb analysis of the workings of this

¹⁰ Also see the evaluations of her work by Werner Gundersheimer in *Speculum*, 54 (1979): 822–26; John K. Hyde in the *English Historical Review*, 97 (1982): 177–78; Roberto Bizzocchi in the *Journal of Modern History*, 52 (1980): 339–41; and Samuel Cohn in the *Renaissance Quarterly*, 33 (1980): 70–72.

polity, which demonstrates Finlay's sensitive exploitation of evidence and his talent for using specific incidents to illuminate broad issues.

Not the least of the virtues of Finlay's book is his demonstration that the shell of Venetian "political silence" can be breached and that the personalities and careers of individuals—Luca Tron and Marino Sanuto, for example—can be described in some detail. Still, writing Venetian biography will never become a major industry since, for reasons that remain unclear, private records for Venice's Renaissance centuries are relatively sparse and uninformative. The Florentine advantage in this area is overwhelming; witness the current project to publish Lorenzo de' Medici's correspondence in ten volumes.¹¹ Two recent biographies of Bartolomeo Scala and Filippo Strozzi illustrate the genre, in its Florentine context.

Alison Brown's case study of Bartolomeo Scala, the obscure notary from Colle who became chancellor of the Florentine republic (1465–94), is a model of scholarly thoroughness. She has described Scala's public career, his "place in society" and his literary work in rich detail. Three themes in this biography focus on important, and controversial, problems in the current historiography of Medicean Florence: (1) patronage; (2) administrative reform; and (3) Laurentian culture. Scala came to Florence (in his own words) "naked, disadvantaged, of the lowest parentage . . . , absolutely penniless, without reputation, patrons, or kinsmen" (page 3). Influential patrons helped Scala in his meteoric rise, although there are disagreements over their identity and their methods. Brown argued that Scala's talent and ambition contributed substantially to his career and that the Medici were not his only patrons. The issue, not fully resolved by *Bartolomeo Scala, 1430–1497, Chancellor of Florence: The Humanist as Bureaucrat* (1979), appears to be, Was Medici support the exclusive and decisive route to significant career advancement in Florence? The most original and controversial part of this biography (chapters 6 and 7) concerns Scala's service as chancellor. Brown has depicted him as a dedicated reformer whose goal, a goal that she suggested was shared by Lorenzo, was the rationalization of the chancery as part of the broader transformation of the government into a prototype of the "modern state." Although each specific reform appears modest in scope, the whole program did represent a significant change in administrative technique and spirit. Brown also traced, in Scala's writings, the formulation of a theory of state sovereignty that foreshadows Machiavelli and Bodin. She viewed Lorenzo's regime as more creative and "progressive" than have most historians, who have stressed its traditional and patrimonial qualities.¹² Although the evidence to support her provocative thesis is sometimes thin and ambiguous, Brown has raised fundamental questions about the nature of government and the relationship between experience and ideas in Laurentian Florence.

Republican and despotic regimes, patrons and clients, the connections between wealth and political power: these were perennial problems in Florence, providing a degree of continuity and coherence to its history. Bartolomeo Scala rose from

¹¹ The exception is Paolo Sarpi, whose career has been intensively studied. See, too, Caetano Cozzi, *Il Doge Nicolò Contarini: Ricerche sul patriziato veneziano agli inizi del seicento* (Venice, 1958).

¹² Also see the reviews by Anthony Molho in the *Renaissance Quarterly*, 33 (1980): 420–22; Mark Phillips in the *Journal of Modern History*, 52 (1980): 344–46; and Julius Kirshner in *Speculum*, 55 (1980): 529–32.

obscurity to eminence under the Medici before being cashiered by the republican regime in 1494. Filippo Strozzi's career also had its dramatic vicissitudes, which are well described in Melissa Bullard's *Filippo Strozzi and the Medici: Favor and Finance in Sixteenth-Century Florence and Rome* (1980). Son of a wealthy banker who had been brought back from exile by the Medici in the 1460s, Filippo contracted a marriage (1508) with Clarice, granddaughter of Lorenzo de' Medici, at a time when his descendants were in exile. This marriage was the foundation of Filippo's fortunes, making him one of the richest and most powerful men in Italy during the pontificates of the Medici popes, Leo X and Clement VII. The patronage of those ecclesiastical princes was crucial to Filippo's career; from them he received the offices of depository of the Florentine Signoria and the papal curia. These posts allowed the banker to tap the revenues of both fiscal systems and to transfer Florentine public monies to Rome to pay for the wars of the Medici popes. Working with fragmentary archival materials from private and ecclesiastical sources, Bullard has pieced together the record of these complex fiscal transactions. But Filippo's life illustrates much more than the intricacies of Renaissance fiscal practice. He was the beneficiary, and ultimately the victim, of a patronage system controlled by the Medici; in a very real sense, he was a "creature" of that dynasty. When Clement VII died in 1534, Filippo's economic situation deteriorated. Throwing in his lot with the republican cause that he had previously ignored, Filippo led the anti-Medici army that was defeated at Montemurlo (1537). In the end, he was forced by events to play a political role as a citizen who, like his model Cato, was prepared to sacrifice his life for liberty. This is a first-rate monograph: lucid, concise, tightly organized, carefully and thoroughly documented, it is a significant contribution to Renaissance fiscal practices and to the patronage networks that controlled access to power and wealth.

In chapter 2, "Filippo Strozzi's Florence," Bullard summarized the current knowledge of the city's economic situation in these decades, particularly the fortunes of the aristocracy. The scholarly work in this area is very thin and spotty. Most intensively studied have been the structure and operations of companies engaged in commerce, banking, and cloth manufacturing. But generalizations about the Florentine economy as a whole, or any of its major sectors, are hazardous at this juncture. There are, however, encouraging signs of a sustained effort by economic historians to lay the foundations for a synthesis, based in part on statistical analysis, of the city's economic development.¹³

Hidetoshi Hoshino's study of the Florentine woolen cloth industry in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, *L'Arte della lana in Firenze nel basso medioevo: Il Commercio della lana e il mercato dei panni fiorentini nei secoli XIII–XV* (1980), is based largely on the surviving account books of *lanaiuoli*, supplemented by evidence from tax and guild records and from doganal documents in Italian towns that imported Florentine cloth. His conclusions, carefully and cautiously developed, significantly revised the older interpretations of Doren and Davidsohn, which have been

¹³ The Venetian economy has been more thoroughly studied than has Florence's; see Brian Pullen, ed., *Crisis and Change in the Venetian Economy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London, 1968); and the articles by Lane, Pullen, and Ugo Tucci in Hale, *Renaissance Venice*.

enshrined in the standard accounts of Florentine economic history. Hoshino has persuasively argued that the development of the woolen cloth industry was not synchronized with the rest of the city's economy. Not until the 1320s did Florentine *lanaiuoli* begin to produce substantial amounts of high-quality cloth, gradually replacing the fine Flemish and French products in the Mediterranean market. Villani's estimate of 75,000 cloths produced in 1338 was, Hoshino demonstrated, wildly exaggerated; the true figure was between 24,000 and 30,000. The woolen cloth industry was quite prosperous in the second half of the fourteenth century; it did not suffer from the collapse of the great banking firms in the 1340s or from the effects of the population decline after the Black Death. Hoshino traced the vicissitudes of the industry in the fifteenth century: a significant decline in the 1420s (11,000–12,000 pieces) followed by recovery after 1440. In the 1490s, the Levantine market for Florentine cloth was so strong that production rose to more than 20,000 pieces annually. In addition to its revision of production figures, Hoshino's *L'Arte della lana in Firenze* is particularly informative on the marketing and quality and price differentials of the cloth produced in Florentine *botteghe*. His focus is sharply defined and limited; some problems—labor, for example—are not addressed. But the book's strengths outweigh these limitations and provide a solid contribution to the scholarship on the Florentine woolen cloth industry.

Hoshino might be faulted for the narrowness of his focus and for his reluctance to integrate his research into a broader context. Those criticisms do not apply to Jean-Claude Hocquet's pioneering study of the role of salt in Venetian history. This two-volume work, *Le Sel et la fortune de Venise* (1978–79), combines quantitative research in the *Annales* tradition with a bold and original interpretive vision.¹⁴ The importance of salt for the Venetian economy has long been recognized, but heretofore its production and marketing have not been systematically studied. Hocquet has filled that lacuna, but he has done much more. He located the salt trade firmly within the context of Venetian history, relating it to state policy and to the shifting fortunes of Venice's ruling elite. In the first, "medieval" phase of this saga (to ca. 1280), Venetians intensively exploited their local salt works and also expanded and strengthened their market monopoly in northern Italy. During the crucial "Renaissance" phase, from the late thirteenth to the late sixteenth century, the Venetian government deliberately suppressed local production, replacing it with salt (used as ballast for its ships) from distant ports in the Levant and the Balearic isles. This policy, Hocquet argued, was designed to subsidize Venice's long-distance trade and thus to promote the welfare of its merchant class at the expense of consumers, who paid artificially high prices for their salt under monopoly conditions. Sometime around 1600, Venice's salt trade foundered, as did its shipping industry. Local needs were again satisfied by local production. This summation does scant justice to the complexity and sophistication of Hocquet's argument, which, from this sharp focus on one commodity, touches upon so many important aspects of Venetian experience. For some tastes, his analysis will be excessively schematic, materialist, and doctrinaire, but his wide-ranging interpreta-

¹⁴ Hocquet has summarized his conclusions in "Capitalisme marchand et classe marchand à Venise au temps de la Renaissance," *Annales: Économies, sociétés, civilisations*, 34 (1979): 279–304.

tion should stimulate a thorough re-evaluation of Venetian history during these crisis-filled centuries.¹⁵

In Hocquet's interpretation, Venetian salt policy was a classic illustration of an elite's ability to devise a strategy for its own economic and political advantage. Selfish and ruthless the policy may have been, but it was formulated and implemented with great skill. Richard Goldthwaite's *The Building of Renaissance Florence: An Economic and Social History* (1981), which focuses on the construction industry in the fifteenth century, is similarly concerned with the activities and motives of the Florentine elite, specifically its massive investment in private palace building. Goldthwaite described building practices and techniques, the costs of materials and labor, and the roles of patrons, architects, artisans, and laborers in this building boom. He has written the most detailed and comprehensive study of the construction industry for any European community (or region) in the preindustrial era. The chapters devoted to these economic and technical topics are of very high quality, fully meriting the accolades they have received from critics.¹⁶

In sharp contrast to Hocquet's scenario for Venice, where rich merchants profited at the expense of consumers and the poor, the fifteenth-century Florentine economy Goldthwaite described was robust. Artisans and workers benefited from the building boom subsidized by wealthy citizens. The private building sector was a model of free enterprise, largely unregulated by guilds or commune and sensitive to market conditions of supply and demand. Goldthwaite's analysis reflects his bias in favor of the private over the public sphere and his sympathy for a Burckhardian world of entrepreneurs and individualists, whose energy and vision created Renaissance civilization. Some critics have suggested that this picture is altogether too benign.¹⁷ Not all of Goldthwaite's generalizations are supported by adequate empirical data; indeed, some can be refuted or qualified by evidence from sources that he has exploited—the *catasto*, the *Mercanzia*, and the *Innocenti*. It has been argued that the economy was less buoyant, the tax burden heavier, wealth less equitably distributed, and artisans and workers less prosperous than Goldthwaite believed. Although his bold attempt to sketch a broad picture of Florence's material and social milieu may be premature, it will surely stimulate further research and inspire other scholars to formulate their syntheses of the Florentine Quattrocento.

IF THE WORKS DISCUSSED THUS FAR have sometimes employed techniques, concepts, and methods that derive from current historical practice, they nevertheless fit comfortably into the mainstream of Florentine and European historiography. They would not have startled, or puzzled, Salvemini or Davidsohn. Some recent books have been more strikingly innovative in conceptualization and methodology—and

¹⁵ For a detailed evaluation, see Alberto Tenenti, "Il Sale nella storia di Venezia," *Studi veneziani*, new ser., 4 (1980): 15–26.

¹⁶ Nicolai Rubinstein, Review of Goldthwaite's *The Building of Renaissance Florence* in the *Renaissance Quarterly*, 35 (1982): 274–78; Domenico Sella, *ibid.* in the *AHR*, 87 (1982): 211; Caroline Elam, *ibid.* in the *Times Literary Supplement*, November 13, 1981, p. 1335; and Felix Gilbert, *ibid.* in the *New York Review of Books*, January 21, 1982, pp. 65–66.

¹⁷ Gene Brucker, Review of Goldthwaite's *The Building of Renaissance Florence* in the *Journal of Modern History*, 53 (1981): 692–94; and Julius Kirschner, *ibid.* in the *Journal of Economic History*, 41 (1981): 671–72.

also more controversial. Quantifiers have been very active in European urban history, and their techniques have been adopted by several scholars working in Florentine and Venetian history. The second important influence has come from anthropology, whose concepts and vocabulary have been particularly influential in studies of social structure, civic ideology, and ritual.

Although Italian cities have generally preserved more ample records than their transalpine counterparts for the late medieval and Renaissance centuries (before 1600), this documentation is usually too fragmented and spotty to permit the construction of reliable secular trends for population, prices, wages, rents, and the like. Undaunted by these limitations, economic and demographic historians have searched for quantifiable data that will provide some solid evidence for their analyses. In 1976, Charles de la Roncière published his massive, four-volume study, *Florence centre économique régional au XIV^e siècle: Le Marché des denrées de première nécessité à Florence et dans sa campagne et les conditions de vie des salariés, 1320–1380*.¹⁸ He gleaned his data on the economy of Florence and its *contado* in the fourteenth century from a broad spectrum of published and unpublished sources, but his richest finds came from the records of the city's largest hospital, Santa Maria Nuova, and for the *contado* from a cluster of notarial records. In his first volume, he traced prices and salaries in the city from 1320 to 1380; volume 2 analyzes the commune's annony policy for these decades and the links between population trends, prices, and wages. His analysis of the economic relationships between city and *contado* in volume 3 is particularly valuable, since it treats themes—*contado* markets and entrepreneurs, for example—that had not previously been subjected to systematic study. In his conclusion, De la Roncière discussed the economic context of the Ciompi revolt and formulated an ingenious theory to explain that uprising. His historical vision is unusually broad in scope, embracing religious and ideological themes as well as the material conditions of fourteenth-century Florentines and their rural cousins. Future work on Florence's Trecento economy will be based on the foundations established by De la Roncière.

Judith Brown's monograph on the relationship between Florence and one of its subject towns, *In the Shadow of Florence: Provincial Society in Renaissance Pescia* (1982), traces the demographic and economic fortunes of Pescia over three centuries, from the Black Death to the seventeenth century. Her work is based on statistical evidence from tax records and other economic sources, supplemented by a careful reading of archival records in Florence and Pescia. The breadth and solidity of Brown's research lends credibility to her conclusions; her conceptual framework deserves praise for its concern with the larger issues of the economic and political integration of Tuscany in the early modern period. Her evidence does not support the traditional interpretation of Florence's subject territory as being exploited and impoverished by the capital city. Indeed, Pescia's fortunes improved significantly from the mid-fifteenth to the late sixteenth century as a result of lower taxes and of

¹⁸ De la Roncière summarized his views on the Ciompi in his "La Condition des salariés à Florence au XIV^e siècle," *Il Tumulto dei Ciompi: Un Momento di storia fiorentina ed europea* (Florence, 1981), 13–38. For an extension of De la Roncière's work on laborers' living standards, see Giuliano Pinto, "I livelli di vita dei salariati cittadini nel periodo successivo al tumulto dei Ciompi, 1378–1430," *ibid.*, 161–98.

the integration of the town's commercial and industrial activities into a Tuscan regional economy. Pescia's aristocracy also profited from its close relationship with the Medici grand dukes, who recruited its members for their administration and conferred honors and benefits upon them. Pescia was not the whole of Tuscany, and Pesciatine prosperity may have been exceptional. But Pescia's experience does suggest the need for study of regional diversity in Tuscany and for the abandonment of clichés like "imperialism" that do not help us understand the patterns of statebuilding and economic change in the early modern period.¹⁹

The computer made its debut in Florentine historiography with the publication of the collaborative work by David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans et leurs familles* (1978). In the late 1960s, these enterprising scholars began their assault upon the records of the *catasto* of 1427, which contains the statements of 60,000 heads of Tuscan households concerning their family members (260,000 souls) and their property. The main object of this study was the formation of a demographic profile of the people living under Florentine rule in 1427. Chapters 1 through 5 (describing the *catasto*, its origins and its implementation) are a valuable contribution to Florence's fiscal and administrative history in the early Quattrocento; the compilation of the *catasto* was an extraordinary administrative achievement, perhaps unparalleled in European history before the eighteenth century. The middle chapters trace population movements and patterns in Tuscany from 1300 to 1550 and formulate hypotheses concerning birth and death rates, marriage and fertility, the fluctuating size and structure of households over time. Chapter 9 describes the heavy concentration of wealth in Florence, as compared to the territory, and, within Florence, among a very small group of citizens, 1 percent of whom owned one-fourth of the city's resources and one-sixth of Tuscany's. The concluding section of this *capolavoro* discusses the complexities of the Tuscan family: its unstable and variable structure, and its economic, social, and emotional dimensions.

By any criterion, *Les Toscans et leurs familles* is the most significant contribution to the urban history of Renaissance Italy in recent years. Its utilization of the computer to organize vast amounts of demographic and economic data has been a boon to the field. The machine-readable edition of the *catasto*, prepared by Herlihy, Klapisch-Zuber, and their collaborators, is a precious scholarly resource.²⁰ The book's chapters are a treasure trove of information culled from the tax records and other archival sources (*libri dei morti*, notarial records, and the like), and from private diaries, letters, sermons, and theological tracts. By combining statistical data with material that is unquantifiable, the authors hoped to present a more rounded picture of the Tuscan family and its environment, but the integration of this evidence is not always successful. A degree of fragmentation and disjointedness in a multi-authored work is not surprising and perhaps explains the complaint that the

¹⁹ For a summary of recent scholarship on granducal Tuscany, see Furio Diaz, *Journal of Italian History*, 1 (1978): 95–110.

²⁰ For its value to other scholars, see, for example, Thomas Kuehn, *Emancipation in Late Medieval Florence* (1982), 208 n. 16.

authors have failed to develop a coherent view of their subject, which to one reviewer seemed more like a Picasso than a Masaccio painting. But these reservations do not seriously detract from the magnitude of this achievement; another reviewer has described *Les Toscans et leurs familles* as a work “che ... induce a riflettere sulla sacralità della storia e sul sacerdozio dello storico.”²¹

The most perceptive review of this book has been written by Francis William Kent,²² whose own work on Florentine patrician families complements this demographic study. Whereas Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber strove for comprehensiveness in their analysis, Kent focused upon three lineages and, from his intensive exploration of their surviving records, has created a very solid yet nuanced portrait of the Florentine family in its many dimensions and manifestations. His conceptual vision has been influenced by his readings in anthropology, but his approach is quintessentially historical. He does not view Quattrocento Florence as just another Mediterranean village. Kent used *catasto* data for his analysis of the household, and his findings support the conclusions of Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber that upper-class households varied widely in their composition and organization and, indeed, were in continual flux. He found no evidence of any seismic shift from extended to nuclear households in the fifteenth century. He has argued convincingly that Florentine patricians possessed strong feelings for their paternal lineage, which influenced their behavior and helped define their social and political obligations. Exploiting a wide range of sources both public and private, Kent has constructed the fullest and richest picture of family structure that exists for any European urban community in the Renaissance period. His *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence: The Family Life of the Capponi, Ginori, and Rucellai* (1977) has been both warmly praised and sharply criticized. His conclusions, it has been argued, are flawed by the small sample of lineages that he investigated and by his lack of analytical rigor. He has been faulted for neglecting the economic activities of his patricians, for treating them in isolation, and for ignoring or minimizing the pressures for change in family structure and sensibility.²³ These criticisms are not so much reasoned responses to Kent's analysis as they are expressions of dissatisfaction with his demolition of cherished beliefs about the nature of Florentine society. This book is a model worthy of emulation: exemplary in its conceptualization, in its sensitive interpretation of evidence, and in its stylistic elegance.

The legal aspects of family history have not been studied in depth; indeed, there has been very little integration of legal and social history for any community in medieval and Renaissance Italy. Legal historians have been preoccupied with theory while neglecting social experience; “social historians,” as Thomas Kuehn noted, “have been loath to bloody themselves with the law” (page 5), daunted by its complex language and terminology. In *Emancipation in Late Medieval Florence* (1982), Kuehn has made a modest but significant assault on the barriers dividing

²¹ Edward Muir, Review of Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber's *Les Toscans et leurs familles* in the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 11 (1981): 253; and Aldo de Maddalena, *ibid.* in the *Rivista storica italiana*, 92 (1980): 253.

²² Kent, Review of Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber's *Les Toscans et leurs familles* in *Speculum*, 55 (1980): 129–31.

²³ James C. Davis, Review of Kent's *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence* in the *AHR*, 84 (1979): 1089–90; Lauro Martines, *ibid.* in the *Renaissance Quarterly*, 31 (1978): 198–99; George Holmes, *ibid.* in the *English Historical Review*, 96 (1981): 609–10; and Richard Goldthwaite, *ibid.* in *Speculum*, 53 (1978): 817–19.

those disciplines. He has immersed himself in the legal sources (codes, statutes, *consilia*) and the scholarly literature; from the *Mercanzia* and notarial records, he has culled thousands of cases of the emancipation of children by Florentine fathers, and, through statistical analysis, he has traced patterns of emancipation from the mid-fourteenth to the early sixteenth century. He has persuasively argued that the key to emancipation, for both parents and children, was not age but the legal obligations for support and the payment of debts. Looking beyond the legal dimensions of the emancipatory act, Kuehn sought to understand its implications for this community's values: the notions of honor and reputation, and perceptions of a proper relationship between parents and their offspring. There may have been, in the upper echelons of Florentine society, a progressive elaboration of family techniques for survival. In this well-researched and cogently argued monograph, Kuehn has clarified one important facet of that phenomenon and has also suggested other themes (the *fideicommissum*, inheritance, and marriage strategies) that should be studied in their legal and social contexts.²⁴

A recently published monograph by F. W. and D. V. Kent on the electoral district (*gonfalone*) of the Red Lion explores the social and political matrix of a Florentine neighborhood in the fifteenth century. The Kents have gained an intimate and unrivaled knowledge of Florentine society, with all of its complexities and peculiarities, in the Medici period. The Red Lion district was the home of the Rucellai and the Strozzi, who were important though not dominating elements in this parochial society. Among the active participants in the district's affairs (which included electoral and fiscal responsibilities) were merchants and bankers from lesser families, artisans and shopkeepers, and some poor and obscure workers in the cloth industry. Some of the most interesting pages in *Neighbours and Neighbourhoods in Renaissance Florence* (1982) are devoted to bonds that linked together the residents of the Red Lion and the purposes for which they were forged. The authors admitted that the emergence of the Medici did change the nature of patronage networks in Quattrocento Florence, but they have stressed the strength and durability of neighborhood ties and interests, which resisted the centralizing pressures emanating from the Palazzo Vecchio and the Medici palace. The importance of neighborhoods in Italian urban society has long been recognized; this book explores the topic in depth, and with an unusual degree of precision and concreteness.

The sources for Italian urban history are so heavily weighted toward "the rich, the well-born, and the powerful" that any attempt to describe the lives of the poor is to be welcomed. The studies of De la Roncière and Herlihy–Klapisch-Zuber have illuminated some of the dark corners of this lower-class world; Samuel Cohn has devoted a monograph to *The Laboring Classes of Renaissance Florence* (1980). The book's conceptual framework is derived in part from Marxism, in part from social science theory. Into this framework Cohn has introduced statistical techniques that

²⁴ In contrast to Florence, the study of Venetian family history is quite undeveloped. But see J. C. Davis, *A Venetian Family and Its Fortune, 1500–1900: The Donà and the Conservation of Their Wealth* (Philadelphia, 1975); and Stanley Chojnacki, "In Search of the Venetian Patriciate: Families and Factions in the Fourteenth Century," in Hale, *Renaissance Venice*, 47–90.

heretofore have been employed mainly by historical demographers. He believes that Florentine history must be understood as, fundamentally, a history of class conflict, of a continuous struggle between rich and poor, between employers and workers. He believes, too, that the Ciompi Revolution of 1378 was a classic example of violent class struggle, comparable to the French Revolution. And he sought to explain why Florentine workers in the Trecento were so prone to revolt, so willing to challenge their masters, while in the next century they were so docile and passive. This change in worker attitudes and behavior resulted, so Cohn argued, from a major restructuring of their living and working patterns and also from the creation of a more powerful and centralized state apparatus. In Trecento Florence, people from all strata of society lived together in the same neighborhoods; such a milieu, Cohn has suggested, fostered city-wide contacts among workers, a precondition for labor revolt. In the fifteenth century, economic and social pressures broke up the traditional structures, creating working-class neighborhoods on the city's outskirts, while the center became the exclusive preserve of the aristocracy. Isolated in their ghettos, the workers were unable to forge and sustain the city-wide associations that had existed prior to 1378.

Cohn's interpretation of Florentine history contrasts sharply with the views of many scholars working in this field. He has seen classes where others have not (or, at least, not in the Marxist sense); he has stressed tensions and cleavages within the social order, where others have emphasized bonds linking the social strata.²⁵ The most innovative feature of his book is the attempt to apply statistical techniques to particular sources, to prove his theories about class formation and class consciousness. He has identified marriage contracts as the most significant form of social interaction and, from a sample of these documents, has extracted data on residence and dowries, from which (with the computer's aid) he has developed his argument. As he admitted, his sources are not consistent, and the evidence is not easily collated for computer analysis. These methodological problems raise doubts in this reader's mind about the reliability of his data and the validity of his conclusions. The statistical evidence seems too thin and uneven to bear the weight of his argument, particularly his notions about changes in the structure of residence patterns and the class consciousness of Florentine workers. If there is a lesson to be learned from Cohn's book and from his ingenious and imaginative methodology, it concerns the limits of quantitative analysis in exploring social relations and *mentalités*. A careful *reading* of sources may sometimes be more illuminating than counting.²⁶

Cohn's arguments concerning changes in Florentine patterns of criminal behavior, from Trecento to Quattrocento, are also impaired by the nature of his

²⁵ Cohn, "Rivolte popolari e classi sociali in Toscana nel Rinascimento," *Studi storici*, 20 (1979): 747–58; and Molho, *Italia e Stati Uniti d'America: Concordanze e dissonanze*, 201–44.

²⁶ For an alternative methodology for studying the Florentine working class, see G. Pinto, Review of Cohn's *Laboring Classes of Renaissance Florence* in the *Journal of Modern History*, 54 (1982): 593: "more minute investigations directed toward the recovery of the individual families of the lowest classes." I concur with Felix Gilbert's statement that Cohn's primary concern was not the living and working conditions of Florentine laborers but "the establishment of features common to the origin and development of revolutionary movements in urban Europe"; Gilbert, Review of Cohn's *Laboring Classes of Renaissance Florence* in the *New York Review of Books*, January 21, 1982, p. 65. For a trenchant evaluation of Cohn's methodology, see Lauro Martines, *ibid.* in *Speculum*, 57 (1982): 595–97.

evidence. The criminal court records—the sources of his statistical data—changed radically over this time span, so that comparisons have only a limited value. Yet, he is undoubtedly correct in his contention that the post-Ciampi regime developed more effective instruments of social control, which were aimed primarily though not exclusively at the lower orders. In his study of criminality in fourteenth-century Venice, Guido Ruggiero has relied upon statistical data for his argument and, like Cohn, was concerned with the social context of crime and punishment in this urban milieu. His *Violence in Early Renaissance Venice* (1980) begins with a discussion of the Venetian system of criminal justice; here Ruggiero described the methods and institutions of criminal investigation and the functioning of the magistracies responsible for judging and penalizing those convicted of crimes. From the records of these offices, Ruggiero has compiled data on particular crimes and their penalties. He was particularly interested in the incidence of criminality among the various groups in Venetian society, which he has dissected into five distinct categories. His evidence suggests that the nobility committed a much larger number of the criminal acts that he has counted (rape, assault, murder, “verbal violence”) than its proportion of the population (18 percent of the crimes from less than 5 percent of the population). This effort to analyze crime statistically in terms of social groups is inevitably hazardous, and Ruggiero candidly admitted the difficulties in the interpretation of his evidence.²⁷ He was on firmer ground in his analysis of penalties—what they reveal about the views of Venetian nobles concerning the relative seriousness of crimes and the use of state power to control social behavior. As reviewers have pointed out, Ruggiero’s monograph has conceptual and methodological flaws.²⁸ But it is an important pioneering work, conceived and written with few, if any, models to serve as guides in an unexplored field. Future students of crime and punishment in Renaissance Italy will profit from Ruggiero’s mistakes as well as from his achievements.

Ritual behavior in Italian urban society has recently attracted the attention of scholars who have been influenced by the work of anthropologists. Ronald Weissman’s *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (1982), a study of confraternal experience from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, is an example of this new interest. Confraternities as religious organizations were not his primary concern; rather, they are “a vehicle for examining the relationship between [Florentine] ritual behavior and social organization.” Weissman’s introductory section, “Judas the Florentine,” describes the range of social networks in Florence and the significance of these associations for the male participants. Weissman stressed the competitiveness and abrasiveness of this milieu, “the agonistic character of social relations” (page 41). In a society in which the individual needed as much support as he could muster, confraternities were an important source of that critical commod-

²⁷ For a discussion of the unreliability of crime statistics in preindustrial societies, see Bruce Lenman and Geoffrey Parker, “The State, the Community, and the Criminal Law in Early Modern Europe,” in V. Gatrell *et al.*, eds., *Crime and the Law: The Social History of Crime in Western Europe since 1500* (London, 1980), 11–48.

²⁸ Samuel Cohn, Review of Ruggiero’s *Violence in Early Renaissance Venice*, in the *Journal of Social History*, 15 (1981): 298–301; Brian Pullan, *ibid.* in the *Renaissance Quarterly*, 35 (1981): 384–86; Werner Gundersheimer, *ibid.* in the *AHR*, 86 (1981): 877–78; Thomas Kuehn, *ibid.* in the *Journal of Modern History*, 54 (1982): 133–35; and Robert Finlay, *ibid.* in the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 13 (1982): 348–49.

ity. Weissman's research has focused on the confraternity of San Paolo, whose history he traced from its origins in 1434 to the mid-sixteenth century. He has done a computer-aided study of the confraternity's membership, exploring such problems as age, duration of participation, economic and social background, and officeholding, and he has supplemented his analysis with data from other confraternal statutes and deliberations and with material from tax records. This information is carefully compiled and evaluated, and the conclusions drawn from it are quite credible. Sensitive to the temporal dimension of his topic, Weissman has attempted to link changes in confraternal organizations and activity to social, political, and religious developments in Renaissance Florence from the Black Death to the Medici *principato*. After a fifty-year period of turmoil, inaugurated by the republican restoration of 1494, Florentine confraternities were stabilized and given a different set of religious and social functions under the watchful eye of the Medici grand dukes. This provocative and innovative study employs statistical analysis with commendable caution and develops an original thesis concerning Florentine social and religious organizations, parts of which will surely be tested and challenged by Weissman's fellow-workers in the Florentine vineyard.

Edward Muir's *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Florence* (1981) focuses upon the public rather than the private dimensions of social and political experience in the Adriatic city. Although his reading in anthropological literature contributed to the formation of his methodology, Muir remained sensitive to the historical, the particular and discrete, dimensions of his subject. In Part 1, Muir discussed the *mito di Venezia* and its historical treatment; this first part concludes with a consideration of problems facing the historian who studies myths "as guides to the inherited symbols and mentalities of a particular culture" (page 56). Part 2 describes specific examples of legends that originated in Venice's medieval (and poorly remembered) past and that, in the sixteenth century, were incorporated into civic ritual. Muir's final section examines the role of the Venetian state in promoting civic rituals for political ends and in determining their particular forms. His evidence is sometimes thin, but he has made a plausible case for his theory that local, parish-based ceremonials were gradually supplanted by city-wide, state-sponsored events controlled from the ducal palace. He has convincingly argued that during the sixteenth century Venetian public ritual achieved its most elaborate and symbolic phase. The importance, for Venice's ruling elite, of these rituals and the ideology that they articulated can scarcely be overemphasized. Muir's sensitive and well-written analysis of this important and neglected subject is a valuable contribution to Venetian historiography.²⁹

If caution and restraint in the interpretation of evidence are distinctive qualities of Muir's scholarship, then boldness of conception and an interpretive vision that can truly be called revolutionary are the salient features of Richard Trexler's remarkable book, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (1981). Several parts of his argument have appeared in article form, but in this book Trexler integrated these fragments into a sustained, coherent, and powerful vision. His subject is ritual

²⁹ See Richard Trexler's Review of Muir's *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* in *Speculum*, 57 (1982): 642–46.

behavior, and he sought to demonstrate its crucial importance for understanding Florentine history. He rejected the conventional view of Renaissance Florentines as the dynamic and creative if contentious builders of a brilliant civilization, constantly struggling among themselves for economic advantage, social supremacy, and political power. Instead, for Trexler, Florentines were actors in a social drama, playing out their ritualized roles in every dimension of their lives, private as well as public. The first two parts of the book define and illustrate these ritual roles; the second two parts discuss the significant changes in ritual forms and experiences, from the traditional mode of the "classical commune" to the new style created by Lorenzo de' Medici and continued by Savonarola. In the communal age, civic rituals were organized by the city elders who wielded political power. Their primary concern in sponsoring and orchestrating ritual practices was to gain honor for themselves and their city in a feudal world that viewed them, their mercantile activities, and their community with condescension and contempt. Lorenzo, however, moved freely in the company of princes, and, under his aegis, Florence enjoyed greater respect and honor. He also transformed and expanded the ritual life of the city by encouraging the participation of young men who replaced their elders as the guardians of civic virtue. That trend was continued by Savonarola, who brought women and children of both sexes into the religious processions and ceremonies that were so prominent during his ministry. This was, in brief, the ritual revolution that transformed Florentine public life and laid the foundations for the city's metamorphosis from republic to *principato*.

Public Life in Renaissance Florence easily wins the award for the most controversial book on Italian urban experience. The radically revisionist nature of Trexler's argument will guarantee its hostile reception by some critics, who may be so incensed by the book's palpable flaws that they ignore its genuine merit.³⁰ The introductory chapters, in particular, are replete with obfuscatory language and overstatement; the second half of the book is, by contrast, better written and more cogently argued. Even at its most perverse and quixotic, Trexler's reading of the evidence is invariably stimulating and provocative. Although each part of his thesis will doubtless be challenged, his insistence upon the creative role of ritual in Italian urban life will surely leave its mark. Whether Trexler's professed objective, "to modernize the discourse among Renaissance historians" (page xxvi), will be realized is problematic, but his distinctive interpretation of Florentine history will be read and pondered by every student, present and future, in the field.

THIS OVERVIEW SHOULD CONVEY a sense of the vitality and ferment that characterize recent historical scholarship on Renaissance Florence and Venice. Much of this work is consciously innovative: in subject matter, in methodology, in interpretation. In some instances, the zeal for novel techniques and explanations may have taken

³⁰ For a distinctly negative reaction, see Felix Gilbert, Review of Trexler's *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* in the *New York Review of Books*, January 21, 1982, pp. 62–64. For more positive though critical evaluations, see Francis W. Kent, *ibid.* in the *Journal of Modern History*, 54 (1982): 382–88; and Randolph Starn, *ibid.* in the *Art Bulletin* (forthcoming).

some scholars beyond the limits of the credible (and certainly the provable), but these interpretations, however dubious, can serve a constructive purpose by forcing critics to examine their assumptions and clarify their views. This veritable explosion of scholarship has advanced our knowledge substantially, particularly of demographic and economic developments³¹ and in areas of religion and formal behavior. While the study of these urban societies has progressed apace, problems of social stratification, and of the relationship between social, political, and cultural change, are still unresolved. Indeed, it must be conceded that the results of much of this scholarly work are still unintegrated, and the prospects for any synthesis of urban experience in these cities seem very remote.³² The barriers to integration and synthesis are formidable, but they must be surmounted if this rich and fertile field is to prosper in the future.

³¹ Soon to be published is a computer-based analysis of data from the records of the *monte delle doti*, with important conclusions concerning mortality rates, marriage patterns, and dowries in Quattrocento Florence. See Anthony Molho and Julius Kirschner, "The Dowry Fund and the Marriage Market in Early Quattrocento Florence," *Journal of Modern History*, 50 (1978): 403–38.

³² But see Lauro Martines, *Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy* (New York, 1979).