Giovanna Benadusi and Judith C. Brown, editors. *Medici Women: The Making of a Dynasty in Grand Ducal Tuscany*. Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2015. Pp. 380. ISBN 9780772721808 (soft cover). \$45.95.

This collection of essays, edited by Judith C. Brown and Giovanna Benadusi, presents ten case studies on women of the Medici family. The volume focuses narrowly on Medici wives and daughters who shaped (or failed to shape) ducal and grand ducal Tuscany. Many of the contributors return to primary sources to craft a complex and nuanced picture of these women, and in doing so, they reveal the misogyny implicit in influential nineteenth-century accounts of the Medici dynasty.

Following an introduction by Brown, the essays are presented in chronological order, beginning with Natalie Tomas' discussion of Eleonora da Toledo's (1522–1562) brief periods of regency during the reign of her husband, Cosimo I. Despite suspicion about Eleonora as both a woman and a foreigner, her vast financial resources, her business savvy, and her husband's support enabled her to exert her will and shape the nascent Florentine court. The primary objective of the volume's second essay, by Elisabetta Mori, is to undermine the widely accepted narrative that Eleonora's daughter Isabella (1542–1576) was an unfaithful wife, who was murdered by her husband with the consent of her brother, Francesco I. The documentary record is often ambiguous, and Mori introduces considerable doubt regarding the significance and reliability of sources often taken as firm evidence of Isabella's promiscuity and violent death. Her essay underscores the challenge of reconstructing the private nuances of a marriage and of proving scandalous events that would not have been openly admitted in official sources.

Meant to raise the profile of the Medici family in European society, foreign wives like Eleonora da Toledo were often viewed with suspicion. Tomas demonstrates how Eleonora, acutely aware of her position as a foreigner, successfully steered her family past the mistrust of the populace. Sarah Bercusson highlights similar challenges in her essay on the unfortunate Joanna of Austria (1547–1578), wife of Francesco I, whose influence was hampered by her lack of independent financial resources and by the open disdain of her husband. Christine of Lorraine (1565–1637), the French bride of Ferdinand I, has been cast by historians as a repressive religious fanatic. Sheila Barker's essay adds complexity to this oversimplification by demonstrating Christine's interest in medical cures and her support

for the movement known as the *Nuova Medicina*. Maria Pia Paoli's essay discusses the impact Christine and her daughter-in-law, Maria Maddalena of Austria (1589–1631), had on the educational models employed at the Florentine court. Raised beyond the Italian peninsula, these two women demanded that Tuscan princes and princesses receive educations suitable for their entrance into the internationally influential courts of Europe.

Adelina Modesti's essay on Margherita de' Medici Farnese (1612–1679) focuses on the interactions between the Farnese court and the Florentine court of Ferdinand II. As regent of Parma and Piacenza, Margherita served as the go-between for her Farnese son and her Medici brother on political and territorial questions, and was unusually successful in navigating between her natal and marital families. Giovanna Benadusi discusses Vittoria della Rovere (1622–1694), who was raised in the Medici household and had the advantage of being familiar with the court when she married Ferdinand II. Despite an unhappy marriage, Vittoria exercised considerable influence, thanks to her intellect and her considerable financial resources, and she was held in high esteem as a mediator in disputes. Giulia Calvi discusses the courts established by Violante Beatrice of Bavaria (1673–1731), daughter-in-law of Cosimo III, in Florence and in Siena. After the death of Violante Beatrice's husband Ferdinand, Cosimo III named her Governor of Siena, a post she held for fourteen years.

The volume ends with two essays on Anna Maria Luisa (1667–1743), the daughter of Cosimo III, who returned to Florence in 1717 as the widow of Johann Wilhelm, Elector Palatine. Her father's efforts to include her in the succession failed, and before her death in 1743, she oversaw the Duchy's transition to Habsburg-Lorraine control. Stefano Casciu examines Anna Maria Luisa's role as a collector and art patron, both in Florence and in her marital home in Düsseldorf. Marcello Verga considers the Electress' efforts to shape the enduring legacy of the Medici family. While Anna Maria Luisa has been cast as a pathetic figure, humiliated by greater European powers, Casciu and Verga present the Electress as a shrewd and public-minded princess, rightly skeptical of the motives and habits of the Lorraine court. Today's Florence, filled with cultural treasures, is the result of her efforts to restrict her successors' removal of Medici collections from Tuscany and to preserve them for the public.

Women's roles in the political, religious, and creative worlds of early modern Italy have been the focus of much recent scholarship. Of direct relevance is Natalie Tomas' *The Medici Women: Gender and Power in Renaissance Florence* (Ashgate,

2003), which focused on the Republican period. Tomas demonstrated that Medici women in the Florentine Republic wielded power in ways that go unrecognized by historians focused on institutional histories and official public acts. Unable to participate in government, ambitious Medici women exerted influence through their men, by interceding with their husbands or by guiding and advising politically active sons. Some of the essays in the present volume will leave the reader with similar conclusions regarding the locus of women's power in Grand Ducal Tuscany. While some Medici women enjoyed direct political control, more often they wielded influence by guiding their children, by arranging marriages, or by actively promoting the agenda and reputation of their husbands. Unsurprisingly, those with independent financial resources and their husbands' support had a greater impact than those who did not. But as Brown notes in her introduction, state formation is a social process as well as a political one, and these essays give us a richer picture of the making of Grand Ducal Tuscany and the development of the Florentine court. One hopes that the findings of these scholars will be integrated more fully into broader political and cultural histories of the Medici family.

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Rocco Rubini. *The Other Renaissance: Italian Humanism between Hegel and Heidegger*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. Pp. 386. ISBN-13 978-0-226-18613-9. ISBN-10 0-226-18613-X. \$ 45.00.

Rocco Rubini's thought-provoking and elegantly written *The Other Renaissance: Italian Humanism between Hegel and Heidegger* participates in the recent international trend in unearthing the contribution of modern Italian philosophy to Continental philosophical discourse. Given that Italian philosophy has been construed as only marginally important in the wider European context, its rediscovery and re-collocation requires, as Rubini himself rightly puts it, "a thorough genealogical reconstruction" (xvi). This meticulous reconstruction is achieved in Rubini's exhaustively researched book, which thus makes a fundamental contribution to the recent intellectual shift towards creating "Italian theory."