past, to question their modern assumptions, and to approach Renaissance Italy from interesting and provocative perspectives.

One of the great accomplishments of social and cultural history in the past thirty years has been to facilitate the confluence of multiple theoretical and methodological approaches to early modern Europe. The Cohens, both of whom have contributed significantly to the historiography of early modern Italy, make intelligent use of a variety of approaches in this book. Typical of this text is its ability to synthesize many of these strands in a chapter such as “Dangers,” in which the authors treat the varieties of forces that threatened the existence of early modern Italians from the supernatural to the natural to the man-made. *Daily Life in Renaissance Italy* examines the basic structures of society in chapters called “Who Was Who,” “Family and Other Solidarities,” and “Hierarchies.” The analyses informed by anthropological concepts are fresh and readable, illuminating Italian society from peasant to prince. Cohen and Cohen treat ‘high’ and ‘low’ with careful attention to the peculiarities of social difference, but also with a keen sense of interaction between all levels of society. The book also dedicates two chapters to ‘life cycles,’ tracing the lives of Renaissance Italians from cradle to grave. The division between the two chapters comes at marriage, when the privileges and responsibilities of adulthood finally eclipse the comparably carefree years of youth. The authors offer more detailed treatments of related topics in chapters on “Moralities,” “Keeping Order,” and “Media, Literacy, and Schooling.”

Readers of this book will also encounter chapters dealing with “Spaces,” “Time,” “Houses, Food, and Clothing,” “Disease and Healing,” “Work,” and “Play,” all topics that infrequently find their way into textbooks of the Italian Renaissance (though they are much needed), and suit the purview of this book very well. The authors are obviously familiar with the important new work currently being undertaken in these fields of study; it is encouraging to see such themes so comfortably incorporated into the Cohens’ vision of the Renaissance. Theirs is a vision many readers will enjoy both for its enthusiasm and its efforts to enlist students in the critical and imaginative work of Renaissance history, “a rich adventure of the mind” (297).

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The matter of patronage in the making of culture continues today to be a major driving force, functioning, as it does, under diverse guises — philanthropy, commissions, sponsorship, bequests, donations, to name a few. Much is known on the subject of male patronage in relation to powerful Italian mediaeval and Renaissance families. Catherine King, through her attentive research, sheds new light on the role of women in this important cultural promotional activity. Her
study identifies the main lay and ruling women patrons, the nature and character of their commissions, as well as the reception of their works. The author purports to “pursue the historical debate concerning the way in which Italian laywomen experienced the ‘Renaissance’, and what artistic contribution they themselves were able to make to it” (2). By involving buyers, users, critical beholders of art and patrons, King makes the important point that authorship of representations and buildings belongs not to the makers, the artists exclusively. Then, as in our times, the discerning consumer—and women played a significant role—was also the determinant of the product’s success. This study eminently fills a visible lacuna on diverse aspects of patronage, shedding light on conventions of behaviour that deeply influenced human relations and transactions in a field that belonged very exclusively to men. It was men in fact, who lay down in handbooks on conduct a range of advice on the behaviour appropriate to wives and widows. Women referred to these written guides in order to carry out commissions that were mandated in family wills, or which had been left unfinished by husbands or fathers at their moment of death. There were also bolder wives, widows, daughters, however, who at times wished to move away from or modify traditional norms in order to achieve more accurately the tomb or building, the painting or sculpture that had been entrusted to them to commission or sponsor. Thus in time, women aided in continuing an important tradition of patronage, but also assisted in its transformation.

Organized in ten well documented and abundantly illustrated chapters, this study addresses the origins of some main pictorial and architectural works from early Trecento to the high Renaissance in Italy, north of Rome. In considering the sorts of lay and ruling women capable of commissioning, the author takes into consideration contemporary social structures in which women operated, and presents a range of documented case-studies upon which much of the research rests. Since women’s marital status was the determining factor permitting patronage and sponsorship, the bulk of the research centres upon wives, Chapter 2, and widows, Chapters 3–7.

Wives, whose legal guardian was expected to be their husbands, might elect to commission works of art for the salvation of their soul: Chapter 2, for example, dwells at length on the case of a wife, a childless heiress who built a hospital, a convent, and a church, while a wife with three sons completed a commission begun by her father for his funerary chapel, adapting it, however, to suit her own descendants. What could be commissioned or built by women, whether wives or widows, was determined by a number of external factors: women living in different areas of the peninsula were expected to order objects depending on the political regime in power and the traditions maintained there; women commissioning jointly, or in a collaborative venture had restricted choice on account of lack of individual wealth; women who commissioned for ‘living saints’—sante vive, on the other hand, were accorded great latitude; women who, respecting social conventions, adhered more closely to the private sphere, commissioned for the house, not for the public sphere such as monuments, churches, chapels, or decorations of these.

The third chapter, concerned with “Widows and the Law,” outlines the legal confines within which they could move and had to act with sagacity if their independence and patrimony were to survive. As a rule, the family impressed upon the

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widow the desirability to make art for family commemoration (tombs, monuments, busts), rather than as a public good (chapels, church doors, decorative murals for public buildings). Chapter 4 considers the situation of widows who did not act while alive, but posthumously through detailed orders in wills or contracts negotiated with artists. These were perhaps the weakest circumstances of commissions by women since, though widows thought of ingenious ways to have their wishes carried out after death, they were not present to respond pragmatically to the commission as it developed. Cases of widows in control of their commissions during their lifetimes are studied in Chapter 5. Many widows with disposable capital fulfilled the role expected of them, that of commemorating their husbands, sons, and even male in-laws, as opposed to widows who put their own spiritual concerns first (Chapter 6), commissioning in their own lifetimes pieces bearing their own votive portraits with the hope of salvation. Women able to play more assertive roles in decision-making, would often place inscriptions rather than portraits on their commissioned works (Chapter 7). Examples of special cases involving unique or large commissions are given in Chapters 8-10: Chapter 8 illustrates cases of group patronage deriving at times, from all-female sororities or other organizations to which laywomen often belonged; Chapter 9 is dedicated exclusively to women—whether as individuals or groups—who were relatives of ‘living saints’ (eventually to be canonized), and therefore were enabled to commission objects in honour of their female relatives.

The concluding chapter studies a single case, that of the commission by Donna Margarita Pellegrini of a funerary chapel for her son and herself from the celebrated architect, Michele Sanmichele, at San Bernardino in Verona. Donna Margarita, a widow, could afford to build from the foundations, and oversaw the entire commission personally “over nearly three decades” (229). Catherine King calls to mind the broad critical literature, which through the centuries has highlighted the exceptional character of this building—an elaborate chapel such as was conventionally commissioned only by rich and powerful men like Pope Julius II or Cardinal Giulio de’ Medici. The Pellegrini chapel exemplifies, in fact, the reach and scope of which wealthy women were capable: “The fact that this centrally-planned chapel was commissioned by a woman meant that it was designed differently; and because it was so innovative and perfectionist, it threatened to disrupt contemporary notions of women as passive rather than leading in thought, and as imperfect rather than capable of initiating an exquisite design” (232). Sanmichele himself benefitted from Donna Margaretta’s commission since in the long journey toward the chapel’s accomplishment his reputation was confirmed, and he received several prestigious commissions from the city.

In this study King not only investigates the difficult and little documented field of women patrons of the arts, but also provides an eloquent snapshot of the social and economic obstacles confronting women in relation to creating an artistic heritage in early-modern Italy. In early fifteenth-century Florence, for example, “about a quarter of women” were widows, classed as miserabili, “old, indigent and dependent,” too poor to be taxed (76-77); widows were required to have legal guardians when not living in large centres such as Venice, Genoa, Verona, Rome
(82). Little is known about women’s patronage because self-identification on commissioned works was often not permitted: “Widows did not draw attention to themselves by including portraits on votive images,” and “the opportunity to place her image on a large item of church embellishment, visible to all, was not often granted a widow” (184-85). And what of courtesans as patrons? King notes that documented evidence of their patronage is scant; but in northern Italy records are abundant of their commissioning funerary chapels for themselves, owning their earnings, beautiful homes, and being free of legal guardians. Patronage, the creation and consumption of art, and architecture, then, was an essentially gendered activity, embracing all levels of economic and social standings. Though women as patrons only rarely worked with artists of Vasarian reach and scope, King argues that there remains, notwithstanding, a great deal to be discovered about the numerous, perhaps less stellar makers of Italian culture, whose works grace canvases, churches, cemeteries, and cities.

Women with disposable capital have played a very real role of leadership in this historical period in the broad definition of art history as it related to makers, buyers and users of art, as well as to later collectors and cultural consumers. For our own century when increasingly more women have disposable income, King offers inspiring examples of how Italy’s lay and ruling women created indelible artistic imprints. This study makes a signal contribution by bringing to light the social religious and legal situations in which women could participate in the making of art and architecture, an area of research which has vast implications for students of art and cultural history, gender, and Italian studies.

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The reprint of Mark Roskill’s full-scale critical edition of Lodovico Dolce’s Aretino is a felicitous occurrence for Italian Renaissance studies. Even though the editor begins the Preface by saying that inevitably, “three decades after its first appearance, my edition of Dolce’s Aretino calls for some emendation or revision of emphasis”(vii), the volume has definitely stood the test of time well enough to warrant a second edition with relatively minor revisions. The new Preface contains references to more recent studies (of the last thirty years or so) related to rhetoric, dialogue, painting technique, etc.

Roskill engages such terms as “grazia,” “sprezzatura,” “ingegno,” among others in order to clarify imprecision. For example, he corrects any possible misinterpretation regarding “energia” and “enargeia.”

The term energia, which I translated as “dynamism” (128f.), represents in fact a technical term in rhetorical theory, meaning an emphasis on the force of effective detail, that lends itself to hyperbole. (viii)