The editors' introduction "The Honoured Courtesan," provides a biography and cultural context for Franco's letters and poems, where she dramatizes her connections with men friends employing her skill with sexual and rhetorical nuancing. Franco's letters shed light on her intricate biography and her many social concerns. Although much of her correspondence is concerned with legal matters (her economic situation, her wills, her Venetian Inquisition trials accusing her of practising incantations), nevertheless the chosen selections show an important portion of the wide spectrum of social connections that enriched and also complicated Franco's personal and cultural life.

Letter 22 is of particular interest as it focuses on one of Franco's main life-long concerns—the condition of the woman in Venetian society. In her lucid depiction of the life, responsibilities, risks, and sacrifices of being a respected and honoured courtesan, Franco responds to a mother's inquiry for advice by stating that only an evil mother would wish for her daughter to become a courtesan because "among all the world calamities, this is the worst." Franco's high regard for a good marriage was informed by her deep concern for women, whether single, unwed mothers or penitent prostitutes, whose need for shelters she repeatedly reiterated to the Venetian government. Situated just after a rich body of critical material on Franco in the past decade, Franco's poetry and letters, translated so accurately into the idiomatic diction of today, are especially welcome. The realism, the immediacy, and concerns of the original, mirror in a telling way the feminist predicaments of today.

This study represents an important addition to the Series not only because of the expert use of English to convey the letter and spirit of the Italian original, not only because it enriches the stock of Italian Renaissance texts in translation suited to cultural studies, gender/women's studies, and the several related fields, but also because it continues to consolidate the discourse affirming that women's voices must be recognized as sources and origins of the maturing feminist tradition, and of the restructuring of social institutions taking place in our contemporary societies.

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***The Cultural Politics of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici.* Ed. Konrad Eisenbichler. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2001. 19 pls. + xxi + 262 pp.**

Exploration of the breadth of Cosimo de' Medici's cultural policies is the focus of this gather of papers presented for the session, 'Culture and Politics in Ducal Florence' at the Renaissance Society of America Conference, Los Angeles, March 26, 1999. Collectively, its contributors move us beyond the welter of propagandistic programmes of ducal self-fashioning expressed in acres of fresco, sculptural montage, architecture and apparati. In these engrossing case studies, the broader effects of ducal patronage across society are explored. Dissenting voices,

the vagaries of a merchant's career as ducal double agent, the decorum of princely equestrianism, carnivalesque parody of Cosimo's prized Accademia Fiorentina and subtexts in 'reliable' records or underpinnings in eulogistic poetry are among its many explorations. As in his role as artificer of an absolutist state, Cosimo's reach in cultural matters seems never to have exceeded his grasp, but we are forced to reevaluate his image as he 'emerges' from archival evidence in unexpected ways.

Three introductory chapters set the political stage. Marcello Simonetta succinctly describes how, in the wake of shocks to Florence's body politic the new boy-Duke ably outmanoeuvred Francesco Vettori and Francesco Guicciardini, seasoned oligarchs who sought to propel their interests through him. They were quickly sidelined into bitter, political limbo. Through her study of tiny Lucca's struggle against his expansionism, Mary Hewlett conveys Cosimo's determined bid for hegemony over Italian principalities, and exposes European realpolitik designed to curb his political heft. Laura Hunt details the career of the merchant Antonio Guidotti as Cosimo's diplomatic double-agent. His limited grasp of political realities is revealed in his boast to hold the 'solution to all difficulties' in the Anglo-French negotiations of 1550; one insoluble proposal was to betroth Cosimo's nine-year-old heir Francesco to England's sixteen-year-old Princess Elizabeth.

Roger Crum envisions the empowered young Duke, temporarily quartered in the Palazzo Medici as he absorbs in its ambience the legendary aura of his ancestors, and in doing so fashions his own. The pattern shown by Deanna Basile of Cosimo's cunning self-promotion as a new Solomon in the adjudication of his own laws is startling. Transgressions were dispassionately forgiven by him for the sake of holding on to any cultural prize. Mitigation of punishment usually came, however, at a price: Benedetto Varchi, eminent capo of Cosimo's Accademia Fiorentina, was induced to write his *Istorie fiorentine* to offset a charge of rape against a nine-year-old girl; the brilliant courtesan Tullia d'Aragona's salon and patronage by Duchess Eleonora compelled Cosimo to 'grant her leniency as a poet' against new sumptuary laws which would force her to adopt the insignia of a prostitute. Margaret Gallucci details Cosimo's shrewd sentencing of the obstreperous Benvenuto Cellini to house arrest for his homosexuality; as a result, the unfortunate Cellini's career withered into oblivion.

Three contributions concern Cosimo's most enduring legacy: his promotion on many fronts of the Tuscan vernacular as the lingua franca of Italy. Antonio Ricci surveys the career of the ducal printer, Lorenzo Torrentino, whose contract ensured his compliance to exclusively fulfil Cosimo's cultural agenda, an endeavour that beggared him. Using fonts chosen by the Duke, his presses poured out classical translations; university texts; manuscript transcriptions; vernacular works of great Tuscan writers and contemporary poetry, prose, history, commentaries and frank propaganda generated by the Accademia Fiorentina, the hub of interconnected cultural initiatives. Mary Watt examines the reception of Dante as repository of Florentine values, pride of language, patriotism and as thematic support for Cosimo's monarchical form of government. Victoria Kirkham's a newly

discovered eclogue by Laura Battiferra places the ducal couple in a Medicean Arcadia that mythologises them and recalls the illustrious circle of Lorenzo de' Medici.

Scholars will make pause as Paola Tinagli questions assumptions that Vasari's *Ragionamenti* functioned principally to explain decorative cycles completed in 1560 in the Apartment of the Elements and the Apartment of Leo X in the Palazzo della Signoria. Her stringent analysis of Vasari's exchanges with ducal iconographers reveals subtexts that promote Cosimo as fated through his Medici lineage to found his dynasty and become 'mirror of prince' for his descendants. In James Harper's examination of the baroque tapestry cycle, *The Life of Cosimo I*, commissioned in 1655 by Grand Duke Ferdinando II, the fruition of that ideology is revealed in his great-grandson's effort to align his own reign with Cosimo's, using his illustrious ancestor as model.

Fulfilment of the Duke's utopian vision was not always smooth. When his much-lauded Accademia del Disegno was instituted in 1563 to rein in warring practitioners of sculpture, painting and architecture, its elitist rules of admission immediately inflamed artistic passions. Vincenzo Borghini's embarrassed exchanges express the delicacy of his position as *luogotenente* —the Duke viewed any unrest as a potential threat to his social polity. Karenedis Barzman concludes by aligning Foucault's theory of the 'technology of power' with blurring of fidelity to God and Cosimo in the Disegno's mandate. Philip Gavitt documents how institutional indolence, insolvency and scandal grounded philanthropic intentions for convergence of economic, social and artistic disciplines at the Ospedale degli Innocenti. Rug and tapestry workshops were instituted to train foundlings in profitable luxury trades. Prior Borghini again treads a fine line: he relates the desperation and rebelliousness of eager boys whose instructor fails to instruct; he admits that a Majorcan instructor has absconded with a foundling; another has unscrupulously sold foundlings' rugs; he reports that efforts to institute Levantine practices have forced the mutinous response that 'it is not the custom to shave hair from goats in Tuscany.' (To reinforce the point, foundlings present Francesco I with a 'Levantine' rug woven from hair shaved instead from a dog). Domenico Zanrè unveils the waggish antics of wits of the Accademia del Piano. Secretary Lorenzo Pagni's and Bargello reports of a macabre convivio at Bartolommeo Panciatichi's home beautifully illustrate concerns at subversive undercurrents in ducal cultural circles. With 'his own eyes' Pagni had viewed through a window a darkened room filled with effigies —one was of a recently deceased bishop— constructed of turnips, leeks and carrots, augmented with performance of a mock *laudatio funebris* in parody of the Accademia Fiorentina's solemn obsequies for dignitaries. (Decoration of Panciatichi's home with cabbage stalks was, apparently, a particular target for investigation). Delight in this account and in Cosimo's aplomb as latter-day Solomon in adjudicating the zealous reports of his thought police fade at the revelation of his pitiless strike against some political foes among the Pianigiani.

Calvacanti's aphorism 'Whoever holds the piazza always is master of the city' encapsulates Mary Gibbons's engrossing discussion of citizens' reception in 1594

to Giambologna's colossal equestrian statue of Cosimo, who hailed it as their own Trojan horse or new Marcus Aurelius. Gibbons judges its impact in context of the disciplined decorum required in the art of riding as appropriate to great rulers.

All of these contributions intersect at the figurehead Cosimo, a very paradigm of Werner Gundersheimer's 'Big Man,' the leader who envisages himself as 'part of a great continuum, extending deep into the past and far into the future.' In his sweeping, visionary view of rule, mental constructs of history are absorbed by this astute prince and his legacy to future generations is constructed.

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***Gender and the Italian Stage: From the Renaissance to the Present Day.* Maggie Günsberg. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1997. Pp. xi, 275.**

The vibrant character and popularity of Italian theatre since the period of Machiavelli have inspired erudite studies on disparate subject areas as well as prominent inclusions in encyclopaedic international histories. Yet this genre has not received sufficient or adequate analysis in areas of feminist thought and gender awareness. Günsberg's text not only corrects this evident defect, but also offers up-to-date interdisciplinary approaches to produce a set of feminist readings in which gender interacts with a number of social categories in general, and age, family, and class in particular.

The thread which unites these six chapters is the attention paid to the element of materialism in association with feminist critique that recognizes the importance of the economic sphere for understanding women's social position in relation to their age, race, colour, class, familiar and working status. Each chapter penetrates deliberately and eloquently in the interface between ideology and culture evidencing patriarchy's adherence to and cultivation of gender difference as oppositional rather than relational. This volume covers a broad span ranging from the early "capitalist market economy" of the Renaissance to the plays of Franca Rame written and performed in the industrial capitalist post-boom years.

While changing socioeconomic climates visibly affected gender representations through the past five centuries, patriarchal ideology has changed only superficially. The evident and intriguing dichotomy between the vicissitudes, trends, attitudes affecting gender in midst of social evolution versus the rather constant and stable portrayal of these on stage is the fundamental concern of each chapter. The first ("Waiting in the wings: female characters in Italian Renaissance comedy"), assesses the role of female characters maintaining as focus of interest, as in chapter two ("Gender deceptions: cross-dressing in Italian Renaissance comedy"), the interface between gender portrayal and stage conventions. Basing her analyses on the corpus by Aretino (1525), informed by Cinquecento's epistolary texts and recent scholarship, Günsberg is able in these two and following chapters, to surface new and intriguing evidence to support her conclusions. No female char-