in these recreations was apt to make a man as useful and valuable to his king as diplomatic or military skill.

Green then undertakes to survey the state of literacy in the late medieval royal court, suggesting in passing that Manly's theory (Chaucer was educated at the Inns of Court) should give way before the evidence that he could have received as good or better education at the king's court. Here Green details the elements of the two-part curriculum, "noriture" and "lettrure," and provides an account of some of the books available and evidently read in noble and royal households.

The last three chapters deal with the sort of literature that court poets produced: love poetry, literature designed to inculcate manners and morals, and literature intended to extol the fame of the court. Green's point of view here is to show how the poetic stances of later medieval poets – Chaucer's irony, for example – may in part derive from changed conditions for poetry. Since other courtiers also practised poetry, it was difficult for a poet reading to the court to adopt a non-critical pose before his material. Self-conscious art had arrived. But literary scholars will find that the greatest service provided by these last three chapters is their re-evaluation of much familiar literature on grounds of its court origins. Information of considerable value and subjects for further reflection come through these pages.

This splendid account of court influence on poetry will cause us to rethink the question whether it is evidence of bourgeois influence that the Squire of Low Degree rises through his merits alone to a position of eminence, in contrast to earlier heroes like Havelock or Octavian who require the right heritage as well as the right deeds. Or again do we see the bourgeois dependence on money reflected in Sir Launfal's disgrace when he has none, or is his lack of money simply a reflection of his not having gold enough to "maintain his degree," as any noble must (cp. Chaucer's "Knight's Tale," l. 1441)? Do "London Lickpenny" and "A Libel of English Policy" clearly reflect the mercantile/bourgeois mind at work, as they seem to do, or is there still some sense of noble concern here too? To these specific questions Green gives no answers, but he does provide much evidence against which such questions may be intelligibly posed.

In closing a word must be said on the design and typography of the book. Where so much care has evidently gone into the proofreading (I detected only four minor slips) and into a system of annotation that is both new and laudibly concise and informative, it is disturbing to find an unjustified right margin. If this practice is prompted by economic considerations, then I suppose we must minimize our grumbling and accept it along with computerized bills and a lack of fuel. But a book like this one, of lasting value and interest, deserves better of its publisher, and I for one hope that its design does not herald a new policy at the University of Toronto Press.

LAURENCE ELDREDGE, *University of Ottawa*

Lauro Martines. *Power and Imagination. City-States in Renaissance Italy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979. Pp. ix, 368. \$17.95.

Lauro Martines' masterful study of the growth, grandeur and decline of the Italian city-state, written over a twelve-year period, represents a broad and

visionary sort of scholarly analysis that one seldom encounters these days. *Power and Imagination* canvasses not merely the sweep of Italian political, economic and social history from the tenth to sixteenth centuries, but also the intellectual and cultural history of that epoch; nor does Martines fail to direct our attention to the interconnections between the two realms. Political theory, literature, the plastic arts, theology, courtly manners, philosophies of man and of nature – all are woven into the argument so as to form an intricate and yet coherent picture of the progression of Late Medieval and Renaissance Italian thought. That the text runs to less than 350 pages without oversimplifying its subject-matter is a tribute to its author's skills in organization and presentation.

At first glance, therefore, *Power and Imagination* may seem to be merely a useful undergraduate-level introductory treatment. Although such an evaluation might be in some measure correct, it would fail to take notice of the deeper intentions and aims of Martines' work. Because *Power and Imagination* challenges many of the canons of interpretation propounded by Renaissance historians, the scholarly reader should approach the book as a sort of "reintroduction" to the Italian city-state and its culture. Specifically, it is possible to isolate the following three theses which, taken together, mark *Power and Imagination* as a departure from the received opinion of recent scholarship: first, the development of the fifteenth and sixteenth century city-state is necessarily rooted in certain social, political and economic factors extending back as far as the eleventh century; second, the history of the Italian city-state (and of the Medieval commune out of which it grew) is shaped essentially by the interests of social classes or factions, and by the relations and conflicts between interests of these classes; and third, the products of Renaissance culture and intellect reveal a decidedly ideological content corresponding to the dominant interests within the city-state. Given the novelty of these three claims, they merit our consideration in somewhat more detail.

Martines' argument for the continuity of Italian history in the six centuries following the turn of the first millenium is deeply imbedded in the structure of *Power and Imagination* itself. Surprisingly, Martines makes no direct reference to Hans Baron's efforts at locating the well-spring of the Renaissance imagination in the Florentine republic's resistance to and victory over despotic threats. Rather, Martines stresses the profound significance of the Late Medieval commune, particularly during the era in which it was controlled by the *popolo*, for the social and cultural structure of the Renaissance city-state. In the political and economic advances of the *popolo* through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and especially in its relatively short-lived experiment in communal self-rule, Martines locates the sources of most of the developments that are commonly associated with a later period, including "social mores, education, burgeoning mercenary armies, public finance, state-building, political thought, historical writing, the arts, and vernacular literature" (p. 63). Though the denizens of the Renaissance city may have expanded on and perfected many of these cultural and social attributes, it is coincident with and as a result of the rise of the *popolo* that they came to the fore at all. Even in the *popolo*'s ultimate defeat, the popular commune had left its mark on all elements of civil life, and "the city-state world had been irreversibly transformed" (*ibid.*). In Martines' account, the popular

commune has been a victim of "bad press" commencing with *anti-popolo* propagandists in the fourteenth century and continuing with modern historians of both conservative and leftist bents (cf. pp. 70-1, 62-3). Judging from the way Martines musters his evidence, e.g., in the analysis of communal economics and demography, one cannot help but suspect that he sees the real high-point of Italian history not in the Renaissance but in the Late Medieval popular commune (cf. pp. 167 ff.). In any case, *Power and Imagination* specifically traces the continuity between pre-Renaissance and Renaissance Italy to the advance of the *popolo*. The High Renaissance city-state would be unthinkable without the innovations and reconceptualizations introduced through the rise of a more broadly based social, political and economic force.

Because of Martines' emphasis on the centrality of the popular commune, he is led to adopt what we may call, for lack of a better term, the "materialist" line of approach to the Italian city-state. In this, Martines echoes scholars who have long since gone out of fashion – for reasons, he suggests, that owe little to the substance of their thought, and much more to the dominant ideological perspectives of our own day (p. 45). If the *popolo* was the real driving force behind the social and cultural developments with which we ordinarily associate the Renaissance city-state, then the matter of the composition of the *popolo*, as well as the reasons for its growth and decline, must be explored. In order to establish the plausibility of his claims in favour of the *popolo*, Martines proposes a thesis the like of which we have not heard since early in this century: that the social systems of the commune, and later of the Renaissance city-state, demand to be interpreted on the basis of conflicts of class power and interest. The principle of class conflict used to be a commonplace in interpretation – based on the observation that the age itself was profoundly class conscious – until a relatively recent "revisionist" movement among historians began to stress the more "fluid" character of class structure in the communes and city-states. But for Martines, and for the present reviewer as well, the "revisionist" view, concentrating on isolated examples and momentary events (like political crises produced by external threats to the state), has overlooked the normal course of the Italian cities and has obfuscated a virtual truism, namely, that at most times and in most places, the various classes (in particular, the aristocratic landed *nobilità* and the essentially middle-class *popolo*) formed distinct and identifiable social orders. Such classes, moreover, were and can be "associated with a way of life, a cluster of interests, and a broad set of policies" (p. 46). To place factors of individual psychology (about which we can know but little) in front of the broader contours of class relations is to miss the forest for the trees. "The effect of revisionist efforts to eliminate considerations of class has been to slur over the existence of fundamental divisions in the commune" (p. 46) – divisions which, needless to say, established and favoured the power and authority of the *popolo* for a time, and which ultimately brought the popular commune to an end. The *popolo*, particularly, defined itself in relation to the class power of an opposing faction, and carried therein the seeds of its own destruction (p. 68). The "power" in the title *Power and Imagination* refers to the class power that dominated the history of Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy, and that produced the social, political, economic and cultural arrangements of the age. It

was the power of the *popolo* that generated the fundamental world-view of the Italian Renaissance, and it was the power of a newly-resuscitated nobility that carried that world-view into full bloom.

The actual process of transition from popular commune to oligarchic city-state is for Martines a matter of violent or radical aberration, signaled by the rise of signorial (despotic or one-man) rule in the civic communities of the Later Middle Ages. This claim is itself somewhat novel. There has been a long-standing tendency among historians to describe the signories as a natural outgrowth of the social and economic crises, and ensuing disorder, which afflicted most of the communes in the late thirteenth century. The rise of the signories, from this perspective, is to be attributed to the incapacity of popular communal institutions to maintain the peace. Indeed, it would seem that an account of signory in terms of a failure of popular self-government has excellent evidence to support it: in a number of communes (like Padua) the signory was introduced by popular consent. But Martines sees other forces at work at a deeper level which better explain the shift from popular to signorial rule: most prominently, the calculating hand of the dispossessed nobility. In communes where the agricultural economy, and hence the landed nobility, completely overshadowed the urban economy (Treviso, Mantua and Ferrara come immediately to mind), the role of the nobles in establishing a signory is relatively transparent. Economic dependence upon the nobility proved too great a strain for the continuation of an independent communal government. Yet even in the case of many communes with a stronger industrial or commercial base (Milan, for instance) – cities which were best equipped to resist despotism – the nobility was a decisive factor in the abandonment of popular rule. “Economically and psychologically,” Martines says, the nobles “were more dependent than the *popolo* upon the spoils and disbursements of government. Their alliances and diplomatic movements [while in exile] showed that they preferred to live under a *signore*, expecting to benefit from his government, rather than under the yoke of their own *popolo*” (p. 96). And regardless of whether signorial rule was instituted at the behest of the *popolani*, or under pressure from the nobility, or both, the result was always the same: the *signore* “eviscerated all popular organizations and turned to ground his regime in the local nobility, his ‘natural’ allies” (p. 97). The signory was very much born out of a conflict of class interests, and it invariably led to a reassertion of noble authority and prerogative in the city. Under signorial rule, the communal institutions, along with the popular political and economic associations in which they had originated, were progressively undermined and suppressed. Far from maintaining a genuine concern about popular interests, the governments of *signori* became either *de facto* or *de jure* the instrument of noble power. Over the course of the fourteenth century, and on into the fifteenth, signorial (and hence, noble) control over the city-state was further consolidated and extended. Ultimately, Martines concludes, the communes did not pass away so much as a result of internal instability as of external factors beyond the reach of popular governmental action.

The progressive flowering of the Renaissance is still best traced, of course, through the achievements of culture and intellect, the products of imagination. But the imaginative faculty does not produce in a vacuum; its impact and even its

very existence reflect the circumstances in which it creates. The Renaissance was no exception to this rule. Here we come to Martines' third, novel claim: Renaissance imagination allied itself with and relied upon the same class power that organized social relations generally. Indeed, Martines insists, the loftiest *ideals* of the Renaissance imagination demand to be seen as *ideology* or even crude propaganda (pp. 252, 230) – exactly as such ideals were perceived by the participants themselves in Renaissance culture. Martines gathers evidence for this assertion from numerous forms of the Renaissance imagination. Humanism, for instance, subsisted thanks to a “candid alliance with power,” as can be gleaned from the fact that the humanist “ideals of education, humanity, and political order could be realized only in a society with privileged elites – a society rather like” that in which the humanists themselves lived (pp. 197, 191). Similarly, Renaissance visual arts served to reinforce the prevailing image (and self-image) of the ruling nobility (Cf. pp. 253-4). How could the arts do otherwise? Let us not forget that artistic production was possible only through the good graces, and hence within the confines, of noble patronage (p. 241). The artist was nothing more than a skilled craftsman (p. 244), and artists could therefore not afford to displease their patrons. At minimum, offense taken would end an artist's career; at maximum, it could lead to incarceration or execution. Furthermore, the themes, styles and even manners of Renaissance art reveal a dedication to control and domination, status and homage – in short, the raw material of power. Art represented graphically to the lower classes the nobility's “title to the possession of power,” while simultaneously reflecting the self-image of nobles who, in an increasingly unstable social, political and economic environment, grasped all the more for signs or tokens of their dominance (p. 233). In sum, art performed the function of “a mysterious social language” (p. 249), “mysterious” because it mystified the prevailing conditions and relations of power. In joining itself without reservation to power, art, and the Renaissance imagination generally, was endowed with a distinctly ideological content. Not that the products of imagination were of secondary or derivative significance. “Power relies on imagination,” Martines says, for reasons that should not be too surprising (p. 183). In an age that was profoundly status-conscious, the works of imagination were of themselves necessary if not quite sufficient to establish social identity. Power in the Renaissance came to be equated with the display of power; and display in turn necessitated imaginative activity. The identification and self-identification of power was possible only through the cultural and intellectual production of the Renaissance imagination.

It is this final claim on Martines' part that readers will probably find most disturbing, since it would seem to suggest that the products of the Renaissance imagination are reducible to sheer ideology. Unfortunately, limitations of space prevent me from properly analysing the methodological considerations that underlie Martines' approach to the relation between imagination, ideology and power in the Renaissance city-state. Suffice it to say that Martines himself is aware that he may be open to charges of historicism or of historical relativism – a position that would instantly undermine his pretensions to methodological objectivity – and he does offer a brief discourse aimed at heading off such an accusation (pp. 207-9). Martines' defence, however, only places him in a

methodological bind by claiming for some ideas, including his own principles of historical scholarship, a trans-historical quality that absolves them from historical scrutiny. This is not a very satisfactory solution, particularly for someone who purports adherence to materialist doctrines. But I do *not* think that it is a fatal or irreparable flaw or one that sets into question the validity of his historical findings about the Italian cities. In any case, a longer (perhaps prefatory) meditation about the methodological foundations of *Power and Imagination* would be a desirable, and even necessary, addition to the volume.

I have one further, minor, though still annoying, difficulty with *Power and Imagination*: the inadequacy of its bibliographic references. Too often, quotations from and paraphrases of both primary and secondary sources are included without so much as a footnote. Moreover, the bibliography itself is far from complete, and presumes a good deal of prior knowledge on the part of the reader. Since the book is intended, at least in part, as an introductory text, the references and bibliography should be greatly expanded.

CARY J. NEDERMAN, *York University*

Darryl J. Gless. *Measure for Measure, the Law, and the Convent*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979. Pp. xviii, 283. \$15.50 (U.S.).

If a power-failure were to interrupt a performance of *Measure for Measure* almost anywhere, the audience would in no time be arguing in the dark. Readers, critics, scholars, have long used their freedom to look up from the text and argue in the light – and heat – of controversy. Mr. Gless brings Protestant theology and anti-Catholic polemic to bear on this argument.

Where to begin an assessment of this useful, provocative book? Perhaps by clearing up, as the author does not clear up, the question “what sin would Isabella commit” is she yielded to Angelo’s proposition to save her brother’s life? Fornication, to be sure – usually a sin of weakness not of malice, easily repented, easily forgiven (with a sad second look at the second “easily”). But in this instance, the weakness of the flesh is certainly not what might have prompted Isabella, and indeed Angelo, hideous to himself, is at pains to make himself and the suggested deed hideous to her. Surely he is a tempter to infidelity – to forswear her vows not only as a novice but as a Christian, to presume on grace in the future while despairing of it in the present. As if that were not enough, the act if committed would have been one of the grossest imprudence, for such a bargain would not have been kept, as subsequent events prove. This, it seems to me, is the anchor for any interpretation of the play in a Christian context, Protestant or Catholic.

Having made the right and only choice, the young Isabella is so exhausted by making profession beyond her capacities (a common failing in a novice and perhaps in any wayfaring Christian) that she is overcome by anger and scorn at the weakness of her brother. Here the author is very perceptive of the failings of her religious instruction as they show in her speaking of prayers as bribes, her ferocity of expression amounting to her calling her brother “thou fool,” her