dater l'origine, tracer l'évolution, montrer le triomphe et constater la décadence chez les structuralistes et les déconstructeurs. Les reproches qu'adressait Proust à Sainte-Beuve doivent se mesurer avec prudence aujourd'hui (voir notre « Pour Sainte-Beuve : 1804–1904–2004. Propos d'un seizième siècle », *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 1 (2004), p. 3–24). Il faut bien l'avouer, « tout écrivain cherche à former de lui-même, à partir de l'œuvre qu'il écrit, un portrait avantageux » (p. 491), même lorsqu'il pratique l'autodérision. Ce qui est vrai du XIX^e siècle l'était déjà *mutatis mutandis* dans une large mesure à la Renaissance. Montaigne offre sans doute le meilleur exemple de cette soif de se faire apprécier, de laisser à son lecteur une image flatteuse de lui-même sans qu'on puisse vraiment le lui reprocher. Et l'on comprend que ce beau volume se termine par des réflexions sur la manière dont l'auteur des *Essais* nous parle de ses retours en arrière qui sont aussi des marches en avant (p. 496).

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Kelley Harness

Echoes of Women's Voices. Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence.

Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press. 2006. Pp. xvi, 378.

Kelley Harness's book is composed of eight chapters and an introduction. Each chapter presents how Florentine women used their patronage to convey specific messages—through art, music, and theatre—mainly during the first half of the seventeenth century. From the introduction to chapter six, inclusive, Harness concentrates on the patronage of the regent Maria Magdalena of Austria, archduchess of Florence and widow of Cosimo II, and the latter's mother, Christine of Lorraine. This time of regency extends from 1620 to 1628. Chapters seven and eight consider the patronage of the nuns of the Monastero di Santa Croce—better known under the name of La Crocetta—from the end of the sixteenth century until the middle of the seventeenth.

Each chapter deals with a particular aspect of female Florentine patronage. Harness almost systematically employs the same method throughout. For each topic, she initially selects some musical productions almost always programmed for political and diplomatic events. She underlines their political context, and determines the objectives the patrons may have had. The author then carries out an analysis of the selected spectacles. In most cases, the music of these spectacles is lost.

The analysis thus rests in very great part on their text. The sacred and profane stories staged in those spectacles are modified in order to better convey the intended message and agenda. Harness goes back to the sources of the examined libretto, compares the variations, and analyzes the choices of the new libretto author as well as the modifications done to the drama itself. The modifications are then put into a political context, which clarifies the female patron's intentions and agenda. In the case where there still is access to the music of these spectacles, Harness also carries out a musical analysis, based primarily on the tonal structure. In some instances, she considers other forms of art, such as painting and theatre, and carries out iconographic and textual analyses. Where she discusses a particular document, it can be found at the end of the relevant chapter—except in the case of the introductory first two chapters.

The introduction develops the topic of communication through patronage. With examples taken directly from the history of Maria Magdalena's regency, Harness shows to what extent political and ecclesiastical protagonists in Italy believed that musical productions and other spectacles could be used as media to convey messages often politically charged; they likewise made use of the media to further their own agenda. Such is the basic idea of Harness's book; the introduction presents the book's objectives. Harness proposes to examine how Florentine women made use of patronage to convey their messages. In particular, she shows that the female aristocrat patrons of Florence exerted a control on the way women were represented through art, in a manner that reveals their opinions on the status of women. Harness asserts that it is even possible, based on a work's message, to identify female patrons. Lastly, she enumerates categories of subjects that were used to convey specific messages. These are more closely examined in the following chapter: legends of virgin martyrs, women of the Bible, epic and chivalric representations, and mythological heroines.

The first chapter presents the historical context of Maria Magdalena's regency, as well as the broad outlines of how the Medici family always used art to control their image on the political level, within the city and Italy. The second chapter concentrates specifically on the archduchess Maria Magdalena's methods; in particular, shedding light on Maria Magdalena's agenda to legitimate her political power and to affirm her capacity and right to govern as a woman. In order to achieve her objectives, she favours biblical and hagiographic examples of women who hold their power and authority directly from God. Harness here distinguishes four categories of subjects of that kind: virgin martyrs, chaste widows, beneficial witches, and heroines and goddesses of mythology. In order to better emphasize Maria Magdalena's agenda,

the author also analyses iconographic decoration of the new regent's palace, the Villa Poggio Imperiale.

The third chapter presents three operas representing characters of the first category, virgin martyrs. The author starts by reconstructing an historical context that relates femininity to virginity. Harness stresses that virginity, in early modern Florence, was the most effective symbol for enabling a woman to exert power. The development of this relation is twofold: virginity proves the woman's spiritual strength, and then gives her a special force equivalent to that of a man. Secondly, Harness develops the idea that the legitimization of female power implies some kind of transgression of the received female model. The operas which are analyzed in those terms are *La Cecilia sacra* (1621), *Il martirio de Sant'Agata* (1622), and *La Regina de Sant'Orsola* (1624 and 1625).

The fourth chapter is entirely devoted to the character of Judith, in *La Giuditta* (1626), illustrating the subject of the chaste widow. (Judith, of course, also represents the category of biblical female characters.) Harness continues to explore early Florentine ideas about femininity, but here looks at the relationship between chastity and virtue, as another way for women to acquire male power. Notably, this topic of *La Giuditta* includes a male failure. At the same time, Harness emphasizes the connection between the regent's discourse and the nature of the political relations between Florence and the papacy.

Chapter five examines the spectacles pertaining to epic and chivalric literature. Through the analysis of three musical productions, *Le fonti d'Ardena* (1623), *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina* (1625) and *La disfida d'Ismeneo* (1628), Harness shows that Maria Magdalena also made a point of reaffirming her belonging to the powerful Habsbourg family, as well as her imperial origins. The music of *La liberazione* survived; Harness analyzes the characterization of the story's protagonists through the tonal structure of their specific music. At the end of the chapter, Ferdinando, Maria Magdalena's son, reaches his majority and access to power.

Appropriately, the sixth chapter shows how the transition towards male power is proclaimed through the spectacles still programmed and organized by Maria Magdalena. The topics of the musical productions turn to male subjects underlining male power and female passivity. Two spectacles are analyzed from this point of view: *La Flora* (1628), for the music also survived, and *Il riscatto d'Amore* (1629). For the last time, Maria Magdalena controls the representation of her political role in *La Flora*, by stressing the fact that it is a female power that allowed the restoration of male power. Maria Magdalena thus is shown as absolutely essential to the success of this transition. *Il riscatto d'Amore* confirms this restoration.

The seventh and eighth chapters deal with the artistic activity of the monastery of La Crocetta, where, in addition, Christine of Lorraine and Maria Magdalena will more and more often reside after the period of regency, like several other Medici princesses. Harness begins the seventh chapter by describing the history and the political aspects of relations between the Medici, the monastery, and its founder, Domenica da Paradiso, which leads as a matter of fact to the latter's canonization. Harness then recalls the musical activity and the musical patronage of the monastery, especially concerning sacred music. She observes that the female characters take on an increasing importance in the musical and visual works commissioned by the monastery; Harness shows that the monastery follows a program based on the promotion both of women, and of the monastery itself—as a Florentine institution on par with other male institutions.

The eighth chapter then develops the last period dealt with in the book, characterized by the presence of several Medici princesses in the monastery La Crocetta. Harness shows that their presence at the monastery encouraged and increased patronage of music and the development of theatrical activity. Here the patrons' agenda completely ceases to be political. Instead, music and theatre promote models of nuns, in terms of free vocation, wisdom, and perseverance in the vocation, underlining again a kind of female force. Harness analyzes three motets by Gagliano as well as a play, *La vittorie di Santa Tecla*, which pertains to hagiographic subjects.

Together, the two final chapters show how the presence of the Medici women at the monastery encouraged an artistic patronage putting forward the promotion of women's role in the Church, as well as the nuns' values. Harness observes that the Medici women's patronage dropped the political agenda exactly when their political power ceased, and turned more to apolitical messages that nonetheless promoted fundamentally female values and qualities. The conclusion of Harness's entire book emphasizes the fact that Christine of Lorraine, Maria Magdalena, the princesses of La Crocetta and the nuns of the same monastery all used their patronage to convey a specifically feminine message—a woman's voice.

Kelley Harness's work is highly useful as an exploration of the close relationship between the Florentine political contexts and the musical spectacles programmed by Maria Magdalena. Harness's demonstration of how Maria Magdalena made her search for legitimacy be heard on the political level is extremely interesting and shows how women of that time could use the ambient discourse to their advantage. In fact, the majority of the book is devoted to the political message of Maria Magdalena. This balance is not without flaws. The first chapter, and especially the introduction, present the book's primary idea through the case of Maria Magdalena. The result is

that the general purpose of the study, which is to show that Florentine women used their patronage to make their voices heard, is somehow lost as the reader's focus settles upon one voice in particular. Hence, chapters seven and eight, which study the patronage of La Crocetta, seem to break with the central idea of the preceding chapters. In the general conclusion, however, the author reminds the reader of her purpose and brings together the arguments of all eight chapters. On the whole, the slight imbalance of the introductory chapters does not impair the quality of a well-written book that is of great interest to gender studies and cultural history, and an example of high quality research in that field.

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Roger J. Crum and John T. Paoletti, ed.

Renaissance Florence: A Social History

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The past decade has seen an explosion of books about the space and spaces of the Renaissance—the sacred space of shrines, the planned space of squares, the aural space of music, the mystical space of pilgrimage, the legal space of ritual. Where much of this work has appeared in essay collections that juxtapose spaces from the Upper Tiber to Lower Braunschweig, Roger Crum and John Paoletti have here brought together nineteen essays that centre on the extended, imagined, and constructed spaces of Florence from the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries. The scholarship is new, innovative, and international, and demonstrates why Florence itself remains compelling and instructive; perhaps not the most typical of Renaissance cities, but certainly one of the most fascinating. Florence has always attracted historians eager to test inter-disciplinary models and this collection offers a focused examination—the most informed, well-rounded, and integrated to date—of space in its many dimensions as a tool of historical analysis.

The book's six sections map the topic. Opening with "The Theater of Florence," John Najemy first shows how political battles of the late communal period altered the physical layout of Florence. Demolishing an opponent's argument in the Signoria may have brought intellectual satisfaction, but demolishing his house or driving a road through his neighbourhood meant future generations could follow your logic and ratify your point with every step they took. Sharon Strocchia looks at how Florentines shaped their daily lives performatively in the spaces thus created, and how streets, corners, piazzas, and walls shaped the staging of their social contacts.