F. W. Kent. *Lorenzo de' Medici and the Art of Magnificence*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. Pp. xiii, 230, with 28 black and white plates.

Like his grandfather Cosimo il Vecchio, Lorenzo de' Medici, known as *il Magnifico*, is an endless source of fascination and study for historians and art historians alike. The dilemma the Medici family faced throughout the Quattrocento was how to assert their pre-eminence in Florence without unduly offending the city's republican sensibilities. Central to all their enterprises was the mobilization of a vast network of kin, friends, and neighbours; and the painters, sculptors, architects, and writers who constituted one part of this clientele produced a massive body of work which celebrated the family and advanced the Medici cause. As F. W. Kent observes in his introductory chapter, "the myth of Lorenzo de' Medici" as the "wise and munificent statesman" was accepted unquestioningly until the 1960s when it came under attack from a group of revisionists who created a "contra-myth" by arguing that Lorenzo's patronage of contemporary artists was really quite meagre and that the lionization of Lorenzo was little more than "humanist rhetorical exaggeration, or *amplificatio*, and partisan deference" (p. 3). In the flurry of scholarly work produced in the 1990s to commemorate the five-hundredth anniversary of Lorenzo's death, the contra-myth itself came under attack, although, as Kent observes, the effort "to recreate the superman described in the Renaissance rhetoric," often on the basis of very shaky evidence, is "little short of nauseating" (p. 4). In this book, which the author describes as "a historian's contribution to the art-historical debate on Lorenzo de' Medici and the visual arts" (p. xi), Kent seeks to restore Lorenzo's reputation as a discerning and active patron of the arts, without provoking a "new mythic explosion" (p. 5). The result is a rich and rewarding study which offers a sympathetic biographical portrait of Lorenzo. For those who are not specialists in Florentine history, Kent's study offers something else: it provides a model for thinking about the various activities which constituted Renaissance patronage and for discerning the multiple objectives of patrons.

As regards Lorenzo, the picture that emerges from Kent's book is of a man forever chasing after the image and achievements of his grandfather. Raised in the palace built by Cosimo and surrounded by precious things, Lorenzo early on developed a discerning eye and a deep appreciation of luxurious objects. "Opulent beauty," according to Kent, "was his birthright" (p. 19). A trip to Naples in 1466 sparked his lifelong interest in antiquities. But Lorenzo also adopted at an early age another family tradition—that of serving on various *opere* or works' committees, including two stints as one of the city's Canal Officials, a board of men expert in matters both hydraulic and military. Service with this body gave the young Lorenzo a deep understanding of military architecture. Kent notes as well Lorenzo's efforts as a poet and concludes that he "was a genuine intellectual with broad yet educated and discriminating tastes" (p. 42).

Following this portrait of the patron as a young man, Kent discerns three partially overlapping periods in Lorenzo's career. In the first, from 1468 to 1484, Lorenzo gradually gave himself over to, as the title of Chapter Three calls it, "the temptation to be magnificent." According to Kent, the conquest of the rebellious city of Volterra in 1472 represented a major turning point in Lorenzo's life, one that freed him to pursue his artistic and patronage activities. It also offered him the opportunity to break in "the bureaucratic and partisan team" which would serve him throughout his life (p. 50). By the 1470s Lorenzo had also begun to acquire a peninsula-wide reputation as a tastemaker, although one who could be ruthless and high-handed in pursuing what he wanted, as demonstrated when he pressured Giovanni Rucellai to sell to the Medici his farm at Poggio a Caiano. In the following period, from 1485 to 1492, Lorenzo was a major player in the Florentine building boom. According to Kent he was not constrained, as some have argued, by a lack of money from building. Instead he pursued a number of projects, many of them in conjunction with his favourite architect, Giuliano da Sangallo. Among his most ambitious was a plan for a major renewal of the zone of the city centering on the Via Laura, a plan which, according to Kent, may have foreshadowed Lorenzo's "grander political pretensions" (p. 95). But within Florence, Lorenzo was always constrained by the city's republican traditions. This was not the case in the country where from 1483 to 1492 he showed himself to be a "fine husbandman and villa builder" (the title of Chapter 5). Especially at Poggio a Caiano, Lorenzo revealed his princely side, although it was his audacity to have his signature carved on fragile and precious ancient jewels which more than anything "betrays Lorenzo's cultural and political ambitions," namely, to be a new Augustus (pp. 147–48). For Kent, Lorenzo de' Medici was a man who carefully balanced the civic, dynastic, and princely themes of his cultural projects, although the trajectory was clearly in the direction of the princely. He also argues that unfavourable comparisons to his grandfather Cosimo are "odious" and inherently unfair since Lorenzo died at a young age, before many of his architectural ambitions could be realized (p. 150).

While specialists in Florence will welcome Kent's book for his portrayal of Lorenzo, non-specialists will profit from his lucid consideration of patronage as a phenomenon, for just as Lorenzo had various goals, so he had different ways of pursuing them. He was, as Kent demonstrates, simultaneously a *patrone* or "boss," a man who enjoyed legally defined patronage rights (*iustpatronatus*), a Maecenas, and "a master of political patronage and clientage (*clientelismo*)" (p. 17). Kent's discussion of Lorenzo's service on the various *opere*, the quintessential form of "republican" patronage, is especially illuminating and should serve as a cautionary tale for those thinking about patronage projects even in more overtly princely regimes.

One oversight mars this otherwise illuminating study—Kent's failure to define what Lorenzo and his contemporaries understood by the word "magnificence." The word does not even appear in the index. This aside, Kent's fascinat-

ing book whets the reader's appetite for his forthcoming two-volume biography of Lorenzo.

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Reid Barbour. *John Selden: Measures of the Holy Commonwealth in Seventeenth-Century England*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003. Pp. x, 417.

Only two major books about John Selden appeared in the twentieth century, David Berkowitz's *John Selden's formative years*, a lifetime's labour which handles the period from his birth to the early 1630s, and Paul Christianson's *Discourse on history, law, and governance in the public career of John Selden, 1610–1635*. Since Selden was active until his death in 1654, one might ask why no fuller account of his life was completed: the answer is the multifariousness of his achievement. He was a member of a number of parliaments and of the Westminster Assembly; a major theorist of natural law; a cultural historian whose expertise ranged from England to the ancient Near East; a great collector of manuscripts; and more besides. There are good accounts of aspects of his thought in, for instance, Richard Tuck's *Natural rights theories and Philosophy and government* and D. R. Woolf's *The idea of history in early Stuart England*, and short overviews in Graham Parry's *Trophies of time* and the *Oxford DNB* (a fine article by Christianson), but Reid Barbour's *John Selden* is the first modern attempt to give a unified, book-length account of the thought of this extraordinary figure.

The book's subtitle, *Measures of the holy commonwealth in seventeenth-century England*, suggests the clue which is to lead its readers through the labyrinth of Selden's thought: throughout his published works, Selden engaged with the problem of the relationship of civil and spiritual authority in "a religious society," handling "normative vehicles, from poetry to English law, from natural law to Judaism." So, after an overview of Selden's life and publications, the book discusses him in five contexts, in overlapping chronological order: poetry, including his relationship with Jonson, his commentary on the first volume of *Poly-Olbion*, and some highlights from the *Marmora Arundelliana* and other early Latin writings; the common law and Parliament in the 1620s; natural law, including the *Mare clausum* and *De jure naturali et gentium*; church government, including the edition of Eadmer, the earlier writings on Judaic culture, and Selden's contributions to the Westminster Assembly; and ancient Judaic culture, especially the constitution of the Sanhedrin. A conclusion examines Selden's "legacy" between his death and the publication of the *Table Talk* in 1689—by which point "England was on the verge of waking up from the dream of the holy commonwealth to find its society comprehensively civil."

Barbour's achievement is impressive in many ways. He has devised a coherent master narrative which unifies a formidable body of work; henceforth,