



**D'Arista, Carla. The Pucci of Florence: Patronage and Politics in Renaissance Italy**

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leading to the English Revolution” (136). Engaging more with scholarship on late medieval clandestine marriage and broader consideration of the social, economic, and environmental changes in England, beyond the political milieu, might have shed greater light on why clandestine marriage was such an area of concern between 1590 and 1605 and again in the 1620s.

Yet, despite these minor critiques, Cleland’s book represents an important step forward in contextualizing early modern English literature. This book enriches that scholarship by providing a deeper understanding of the many types of marriages portrayed in early modern literature and how they reflect the social anxieties of the period. Clearly written and tightly argued, the book should be of interest to scholars of literature and history.

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**D’Arista, Carla.**

***The Pucci of Florence: Patronage and Politics in Renaissance Italy.***

The Medici Archive Project 6. London: Harvey Miller Publishers / Turnhout: Brepols, 2020. Pp. iv, 359 + 296 colour ill. ISBN 978-1-912554-25-6 (hardcover) €200.

Chosen for publication in the Medici Archive Project series, Carla D’Arista’s art historical investigation of the Pucci family of Florence during the Renaissance rests on a very firm foundation of documentary research. In its impressive sweep, her study charts the family’s patronage of architecture, art, and other domestic and sacred furnishings in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For each generation in turn, D’Arista carefully portrays the fraught political environment in which the Pucci rose to prominence. During the Quattrocento, despite modest roots in the artisan class, the Pucci earned leading positions in the Medici government through fervent demonstrations of allegiance. The Pucci fortune was gained from banking (including loans with very high interest rates and speculation in government bonds), and through farming on thirty-six estates in the Tuscan countryside, though the family also endured pronounced downturns of fortune. By the first decades of the Cinquecento, D’Arista’s focus

turns to the papal circle in Rome, where members of the Pucci line reaped the rewards of high ecclesiastical rank under a sequence of popes.

The historical strengths of D'Arista's study are particularly evident in chapters 5 and 6, as she follows the eventful careers of two Pucci churchmen, Lorenzo (1458–1531) and his nephew Antonio d'Alessandro (1485–1544). D'Arista traces Antonio d'Alessandro's gradual ascent of the church hierarchy amid the political and religious turbulence of the times. She describes his peregrinations as an ambassador and political negotiator for the popes, while military threats were posed by the Ottoman Sultan Selim I (reigned 1512–20), religious upheavals were caused by the Protestant Reformation, and, in 1527, Rome was sacked by Imperial troops and Antonio was held captive. Among other telling vignettes, D'Arista notes the negative response of Erasmus to Antonio d'Alessandro's choleric temperament and narrowly political perspective. Into this profile, D'Arista integrates Antonio d'Alessandro's interest in the arts. Especially intriguing is an anonymous document in the Archivio Pucci, first published in 1908, which credits Pucci with persuading Raphael to paint the *Ecstasy of St. Cecilia* for S. Giovanni in Monte, Bologna in 1514.

Almost all the primary documents for this densely researched book were read in two Florentine archives, the Archivio Pucci, housed to this day on the first floor of the family palace, and the Archivio di Stato. Though the holdings of the Archivio Pucci principally illuminated the later history of the family, from the sixteenth century forwards, D'Arista studied them in the location where the Pucci first established their urban identity in architectural form during the Quattrocento. In 1461–62, Antonio Pucci the Elder (1418–84) bought a large house at the corner of Via dei Servi, a few blocks north of the cathedral, and then enlarged it with the purchase of three smaller adjacent homes. As D'Arista explains, the result was not a coherent and elegant example of early Renaissance domestic architecture, but rather a rambling palazzo that comprised eighteen rooms, providing enough space for Antonio's business transactions and to house his family of fourteen children and his second wife, Piera Manetti. At this juncture, D'Arista might have drawn a comparison with the Spinelli, a family closely connected to the Pucci. In the 1450s and 1460s, when Tommaso Spinelli sought to establish his family seat in Florence, he likewise engaged an architect, perhaps Michelozzo, to unite and refurbish a group of earlier houses to create the Palazzo Spinelli, as investigated by Philip Jacks and William Caffero in *The*

*Spinelli of Florence: Fortunes of a Renaissance Merchant Family* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001).

Several of the artistic commissions undertaken by Antonio Pucci in the 1450s–80s are very significant. Most important was the construction and decoration of the Oratory of St. Sebastian, a family mausoleum, attached to the Servite church of SS. Annuziata. Because the Quattrocento decoration of the oratory was destroyed under a later family member in 1605, D’Arista attempts to evoke the original appearance through comparison with other surviving examples. In this instance, the archives provide limited information: a record of payment to the workshop of the Da Maiano in 1474–75, which has been interpreted as an indication that Giuliano and Benedetto da Maiano designed intarsia wood-panelling for the interior, and the payment of 300 florins in April 1474 to Antonio del Pollaiuolo for the oratory’s spectacular, surviving altarpiece, the *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian* (The National Gallery, London). Turning away from the details of the oratory’s interior design, which can only be surmised, D’Arista draws attention to the political significance of the commission. The crippling expenses imposed by the Servites indicate how Antonio became financially bound because of the strong connection of the church to the Medici family and their supporters.

One of the most interesting documents that D’Arista discusses is the detailed inventory made of Antonio Pucci’s palazzo on 10 November 1484, just a few weeks before his death. The inventory is among the Strozzi papers in the ASF, and a complete transcription can be found in D’Arista’s PhD thesis (Columbia University, 2017). In this notarial record, the contents of each room are described briefly, including Antonio’s private apartments and rooms that are designated as belonging to his wife and children. But, as D’Arista acknowledges, for our purposes the information yielded by the documents is frustratingly incomplete. For instance, in Antonio’s room there was an image of the Virgin, framed in gold, but whether it was a painting or a relief sculpture and by whom remains untold. Similarly, several rooms were richly furnished with imported carpets and expensive tapestries, but no further details are provided.

However, a group of paintings, which were hanging in Antonio’s personal apartments in 1484, can be identified as Botticelli’s *Nastagio degli Onesti* panels. Ordered to celebrate the wedding of Antonio’s son, Giannozzo, to Lucrezia, daughter of the wealthy banker, Piero Bini, which had been arranged with the strong help of the Medici, Botticelli was called upon to illustrate a disturbingly

violent and misogynistic novella from Boccaccio's *Decameron* and to divide the narrative among four, oblong, *spalliere* panels. Yet, instead of a feminist reading, D'Arista pursues her primary interest in how artistic patronage reflects family politics, interpreting the paintings as coded references to the Pucci's relationship with the Medici. For instance, she perceptively suggests that the knight in Botticelli's rendition of the *Decameron* fable, Guido of Anastagi, represents the Pucci in their chivalric defence of the Medici, because the knight's armour features the balls (or *palle*) from the Medici shield.

In this impressive and, at times, dramatic study, D'Arista demonstrates how the loyalty shown by the Pucci to the Medici, over the course of generations, was amply rewarded with ingress to political and ecclesiastical power. But the family obligations to the Medici were also extremely costly, whether this was manifest in financial debt, or in the loss of a son, as when the bridegroom, Giannozzo Pucci, later was executed by the Florentine government after a failed Medici coup in 1497. Even if clan politics drove some aspects of their artistic patronage, the resulting art and architecture helped to shape Florence as it emerged during the Renaissance. Indeed, D'Arista's many insights serve to enrich our understanding of the breadth of artistic patronage that made Florence the leading artistic centre in Italy during the early Renaissance.

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**Desan, Philippe et Véronique Ferrer, éd.**

***Penser et agir à la Renaissance. Thought and Action in the Renaissance.***

Cahiers d'Humanisme et Renaissance 161. Genève : Droz, 2020. 568 p. ISBN 978-2-600-06007-3 (broché) 69 CHF.

Le fascinant volume édité par Philippe Desan et Véronique Ferrer analyse la relation problématique entre agir et penser au temps de la Renaissance européenne. À cette époque, « la pensée se définit presque toujours par rapport à des actions sur le terrain ». Dans cette perspective, « l'image du penseur ou du savant, distant du tumulte du monde, retiré dans son cabinet et étudiant les textes classiques, est fortement remise en cause » (8).