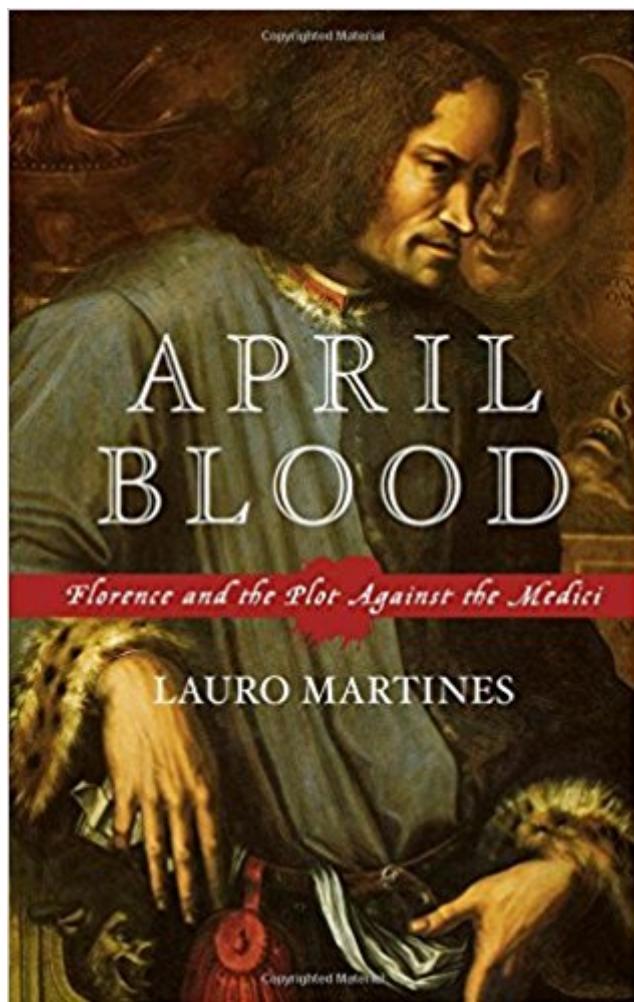


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April Blood: Florence And The Plot Against The Medici



Synopsis

One of the world's leading historians of Renaissance Italy brings to life here the vibrant--and violent--society of fifteenth-century Florence. His disturbing narrative opens up an entire culture, revealing the dark side of Renaissance man and politician Lorenzo de' Medici. On a Sunday in April 1478, assassins attacked Lorenzo and his brother as they attended Mass in the cathedral of Florence. Lorenzo scrambled to safety as Giuliano bled to death on the cathedral floor. April Blood moves outward in time and space from that murderous event, unfolding a story of tangled passions, ambition, treachery, and revenge. The conspiracy was led by one of the city's most noble clans, the Pazzi, financiers who feared and resented the Medici's swaggering new role as political bosses--but the web of intrigue spread through all of Italy. Bankers, mercenaries, the Duke of Urbino, the King of Naples, and Pope Sixtus IV entered secretly into the plot. Florence was plunged into a peninsular war, and Lorenzo was soon fighting for his own and his family's survival. The failed assassination doomed the Pazzi. Medici revenge was swift and brutal--plotters were hanged or beheaded, innocents were hacked to pieces, and bodies were put out to dangle from the windows of the government palace. All remaining members of the larger Pazzi clan were forced to change their surname, and every public sign or symbol of the family was expunged or destroyed. April Blood offers us a fresh portrait of Renaissance Florence, where dazzling artistic achievements went side by side with violence, craft, and bare-knuckle politics. At the center of the canvas is the figure of Lorenzo the Magnificent--poet, statesman, connoisseur, patron of the arts, and ruthless "boss of bosses." This extraordinarily vivid account of a turning point in the Italian Renaissance is bound to become a lasting work of history.

Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (December 16, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 019517609X

ISBN-13: 978-0195176094

Product Dimensions: 7.9 x 0.9 x 5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars 47 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #495,605 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #119 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Italy #545 in Books > History > Europe > Italy #5374 in Books

Customer Reviews

One April Sunday in 1478, assassins-with the support of a member of the Pazzi, one of Florence's leading families-killed a member of the ruling family of Florence, Giuliano de Medici, and wounded his brother, Lorenzo. In the hands of Martines, a professor emeritus of European history at UCLA, the rebellion and Lorenzo's ensuing crackdown becomes a prism through which to view Renaissance Florence. He details the many people involved, from bankers to the king of Naples and even Pope Sixtus. Long seen as a "Renaissance man," Lorenzo was a poet and a patron of the arts. But Martines turns the story on its head. He sees the plot as a reaction to the corruption in Medici rule and the crackdown-which included hangings and prohibitions against marrying female members of the Pazzi family-as overly harsh: "[I]t required war or a successful act of terrorism to overthrow Lorenzo, his cronies, and his creatures." While the crackdown temporarily saved the Medici rule, Martines argues that Lorenzo's ruthlessness eventually turned much of Florence against his family and foretold the end of Medici rule in the city. During the past few decades, historians have increasingly placed social, cultural and women's history at the center of European history. But not here. Drawing upon a lifetime of scholarship, Martines has created a book that places governmental politics at Renaissance Florence's center. And along the way, he has written a book as lively as its subject. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Digital edition.

"Fascinating.... Martines is a master researcher and, like a collector showing off his treasures, his delight in his findings sparkles on every page."--Philadelphia Inquirer"Just the sort of historical mystery that should appeal to fans of, say, Charles Nicholl's *The Reckoning* (about the murder of Christopher Marlowe) or Josephine Tey's classic *The Daughter of Time*."--Washington Post"An intriguing book.... Every situation and character Martines presents to us is of marvelous complexity."--The New York Review of Books"A quietly subversive, elegant counterbalance to centuries of Medici adulation. His narrative is enthralling, his irony devastating, his conclusions unsettling."--Financial Times"A spine-chilling political drama of conspiracy, murder at High Mass, and bloody revenge."--The Times (London)

I enjoyed the book immensely. It's interesting to read a detailed account of a specific historical incident, and have it put in greater perspective. However, the book did tend to drag at times, in

particular with the complex accounting of who was being awarded what by whom for what political purpose, etc. The account of the attempted assassination of the of two Medici brothers - successful in the case of the younger brother Giuliano - was detailed enough without going into further specific two or three times removed from the events. All in all, though a very interesting read.

I slogged through this book because it was chosen by my book group. I would certainly have abandoned it otherwise. It was as if the author lined up notecards and copied directly from them. Read something by Hillary Mantel, if you want to see how good this story could be.

At first the book has a lot of history leading towards the event of April that may be helpful if you did not know anything about the Medici. The really strong part of the book is the event of April on to the end of the book. The author places you at the Church and the resulting after effect of the attempts. Overall one of the better books on the times... .

This is a special book for folks who would like to know the details of this assassination attempt on the Medici.

I picked this book up for my recent trip to Florence. Turned out to be a great choice. Easy to read and informative, April Blood tells the story of the Medici, the Pazzi, international banking and the politics, economy and society of Renaissance Florence. The plot itself and the events leading up to it are so intriguing that I'm surprised it has not yet been the subject of a movie -- this is a story that could be adapted straight from the pages of history, without embellishment and still appeal to a wide audience. As a casual reader of history, I can't comment on the historical content of April Blood, except to say that it presents a seemingly balanced view of its subjects. The book includes maps of Florence and Europe, a thorough index, family trees, and pictures of portraits and sculptures (most of which are currently on display at the Uffizi). A few passages are awkwardly worded (English is not the author's first language), but overall the book is an interesting and fun read.

Lauro Martines takes the reader inside the politics of renaissance Florence and sheds light on a conspiracy that would involve all five city-states of Italy, two families related by marriage, and the involvement of the papacy of itself in a plot to remove the Medici from power. While some may feel the author takes too much time to reach the main story, it is necessary for the reader to have the information Martines provides prior to chapter seven so that most of the players in this intrigue are

known. All together a good read for those with a healthy curiosity of historical Florence.

Good piece of work. Scholarly, but decently written. Despite the title, Martines goes far beyond simply recounting the details of the Pazzi plot to murder Leonardo and his brother. It's not my specialty, but I was somewhat familiar with Renaissance Florence and I still learned things from reading the book. Martines is far more sympathetic to the Pazzi and their allies (and harder on the Medici) than is the general run of historical treatment.

This book came highly recommended by several tour guides on our recent trip to Florence. They also had it for sale at several museums but I knew it would be easier to get at home. Its a great read and shows what life in Italy in the 1400s was like. All the dark intrigue, violence and some art thrown in. It gives a vivid picture of the times, culture and country.

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