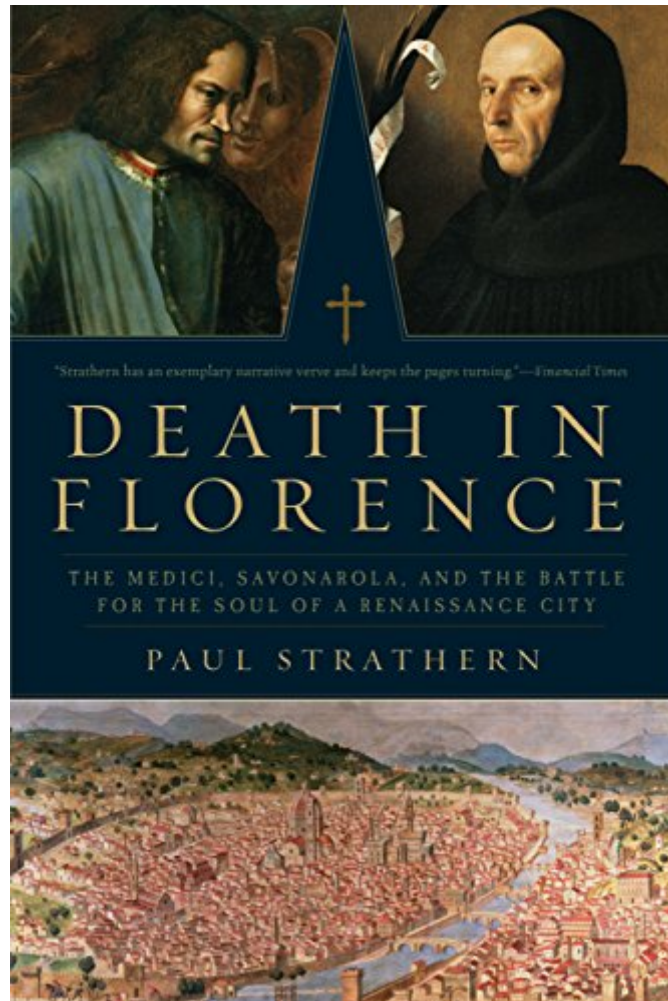


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Death In Florence: The Medici, Savonarola, And The Battle For The Soul Of A Renaissance City



Synopsis

One of the defining moments in Western history, the bloody and dramatic story of the battle for the soul of Renaissance Florence. By the end of the fifteenth century, Florence was well established as the home of the Renaissance. As generous patrons to the likes of Botticelli and Michelangelo, the ruling Medici embodied the progressive humanist spirit of the age, and in Lorenzo de' Medici (Lorenzo the Magnificent) they possessed a diplomat capable of guarding the militarily weak city in a climate of constantly shifting allegiances between the major Italian powers. However, in the form of Savonarola, an unprepossessing provincial monk, Lorenzo found his nemesis. Filled with Old Testament fury and prophecies of doom, Savonarola's sermons reverberated among a disenfranchised population, who preferred medieval Biblical certainties to the philosophical interrogations and intoxicating surface glitter of the Renaissance. Savonarola's aim was to establish a 'City of God' for his followers, a new kind of democratic state, the likes of which the world had never seen before. The battle between these two men would be a fight to the death, a series of sensational events— invasions, trials by fire, the 'Bonfire of the Vanities', terrible executions and mysterious deaths— featuring a cast of the most important and charismatic Renaissance figures. Was this a simple clash of wills between a benign ruler and religious fanatic? Between secular pluralism and repressive extremism? In an exhilaratingly rich and deeply researched story, Paul Strathern reveals the paradoxes, self-doubts, and political compromises that made the battle for the soul of the Renaissance city one of the most complex and important moments in Western history.

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Customer Reviews

Death in Florence is about the combustible clash of ideologies, each represented by two powerful men straddling the turning point between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance in Italy. Lorenzo de Medici, dynastic ruler of Florence, daring, brave, and the ideal model of a modern prince is catapulted into fierce struggle with fundamentalist monk, Savonarola. Savonarola is determined to drag Florence and the progress of the Renaissance back into the Dark Ages. Not afraid of using scare tactics of doomsday predictions to harry and inflame a fractured population, Savonarola is able to convince the population he is a prophet. Strathern writes a detailed and thorough recounting of this time period, using extensive research. He paints a vivid picture of Italy on the cusp of change, the machinations of the vast political and religious communities that were not afraid to use violence, blackmail, or even the threat of eternal damnation to shape the emerging and changing city states. Packed with politicking, murder, and skullduggery, Stathem describes the players, their motivation and goals so that the reader gets a rare picture of a pivotal time in history.

I very much want to encourage readership of this title. It has brought me into Lorenzo's & Savonarola's world and times. We live in a volatile era in which ancient masterpieces are being destroyed in the name of idolatry. There is something to be learned in these pages.

Great writing. Great use of contemporary sources. This is one of those Renaissance tales that sometimes gets lost among the beautiful paintings and sculpture of the period. It is a great read for anyone interested in the personalities and the politics of Florence in particular and Italy in general. The venality of the upper echelons of the clergy and the cut-throat politics of city and state leaders is amply on display, and you come away from the book not liking many of the people you've met. Although I must say that despite his obvious flaws, Savonarola comes off finally as one of the most sympathetic characters.

Excellent. Strathern has written a history that one cannot put down even for its size. Interesting,

exciting, and containing more information than a dozen other biographies of Lorenzo and Savonarola. But the author does not stop there. His observations on Renaissance Italy and government in general are of especial note as well as his inclusion of a multitude of interesting characters. This book is a rare find. Highly advised. .

Very enjoyable and I was interested in Savonarola and his preaching and beliefs. I saw the spot where he perished in Florence and wondered at that time about his life. Although there were few photos, I found them of use when reading about the characters in this book.

Detailed and impartial history of the start of the Renaissance and the religious and political backlash it inspired. It takes place in the city of Florence that began modern art, history, religion and politics. It is amazing that so many of the great names of history, art, politics and religion all had their start in this city during this time.

In depth introduction to the "height of the Renaissance" era Florence. Will be traveling to Florence this year and after reading this book I'm more excited than ever to explore this historic and beautiful city. Reading this book was like being there.

Excellent book. Well-written. It's not easy to find (in English, at least) an in-depth look at Savonarola, so this book fills in some gaps. I'll have to look and see if this author has written anything else!

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