

Christopher S. Celenza, Citation for Margaret L. King

Dear friends and colleagues, I cannot tell you what a pleasure it is to be with you here tonight.

My name is Christopher Celenza, and I am delighted to present the winner of tonight's Paul Oskar Kristeller Lifetime Achievement Award. The award "honors a lifetime of uncompromising devotion to the highest standard of scholarship accompanied by exceptional achievement in Renaissance Studies." (rsa.org, accessed 3/3/2018). It is designed to recall the memory and legacy of one of this society's founders, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and it is, moreover, intended to honor a lifetime of work.

I am truly honored to announce that this year's award goes to a scholar whose work has been wide-ranging, influential at levels almost impossible to match, and infused with a combination of scholarly imagination and meticulousness that is, in a word, remarkable.

Please join me in honoring this year's winner: Margaret L. King.

Professor King, emerita professor at the City University of New York's eminent Graduate Center and Brooklyn College, embodies the spirit of this award perfectly.

She is the author of a series of important scholarly books; the visionary co-editor of a book series that has changed the way we look at the Renaissance; and, importantly, a scholar of the highest

rank who has never forgotten that, if we do not communicate what we do to undergraduate students, our efforts will be always incomplete.

After earning her Bachelor's degree at Sarah Lawrence College and Master's and PhD degrees at Stanford, professor King taught for a year at California State College at Fullerton, before moving to Brooklyn College, one of the flagships of the City University of New York system and a place, like the City University system as a whole, where students of diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds come together; and a place, further, where lifelong transformations occur among that student body, effected by remarkable teachers and scholars like Professor King, who carry high teaching requirements and nonetheless produce scholarship of the highest order. They are some of our national heroes, when it comes to access to higher education and the associated mission of finding, serving, and educating otherwise under-represented students; and none is greater than Professor King.

Among her scholarly books, I will mention here only two. *Venetian Humanism in an Age of Patrician Dominance*, published by Princeton University Press in 1986, combined a granular and innovative prosopographic thoroughness with a strong narrative line. In creating a portrait of a Venetian humanism marked by distinctive views on intellectual life, politics, and civic life, Professor King helped to move the study of Italian Renaissance thought out of Florence and into other realms, a mission and emphasis that has continued unabated since then. The book, and Professor King, were honored with one of the field's highest honors, the Howard Marraro Prize for the best book in Italian history. Second, I will mention (and I stress again that these are two

from a number of fine books) *The Death of the Child, Valerio Marcello*, published in 1994 by the University of Chicago Press. In it, Professor King told the story of a boy, Valerio Marcello, who in 1461 died at the age of eight years old. In an age marked by the frequent death of children (by our modern lights), Marcello's father grieved extraordinarily, something that his friends and kin noticed. They wrote him with letters of consolation, poems, works of history, and eulogies; the father gathered them up into a book, never completely finished but importantly, never extinguished from the world. The book, such as it was, wound up in Scotland. Professor King researched it from every angle, weaving together, into a richly textured tapestry, strands of book history, the study of word and image, politics and war, and the history of the emotions. It was, is, a triumph; and this book, too, was honored with yet another Marraro Prize.

If those two books can stand – of necessity, owing to time – for her other scholarly books, yet another of Professor King's signal achievements should be brought to the fore. It is an achievement for which she won, in 2016, the lifetime achievement award from the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women.

Professor King, in addition to all the single-authored books and articles one would wish for, has also lived a scholarly life marked by a gift for collaboration. And the award I just mentioned, from the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women, was won in collaboration with Albert Rabil, Jr., as editors of the remarkable book series, *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*. To say that this series changed Renaissance studies would be a grave understatement. After the work of Joan Gadol Kelly and numerous other pioneers of women's history in the Renaissance, there

was a need, which the series soon provided, for translations of early modern texts by and about women in early modern Europe. The series, begun by the University of Chicago Press, is now going strong, published by Iter, together with the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies at the University of Toronto. One of Professor King's own volumes in that series, Isotta Nogarola's *Complete Writings*, which Professor King co-edited and translated with Diana Robin, won the Modern Language Association's Scaglione Prize in 2005.

Professors King and Rabil deserve the many plaudits they have received for being the prime movers behind this now indispensable vehicle for the study of early modern Europe in all its richness.

But Professor King's gifts for collaborative work – for stimulating scholarship, even as she has carried out so much herself – extends beyond that venerable book series. To give only one example, she is the Editor in Chief of the Oxford University Press Online Bibliography entitled *Renaissance and Reformation*. There are over 300 entries posted and plans in the works to post 40-50 more per year. Everywhere she has turned, Professor King has made the Renaissance more accessible, more meaningful, and more resonant.

And on that front, Professor King has been attentive to the ways in which the Renaissance, the early modern period, and indeed Western Civilization are taught. In each of those areas she has edited or authored significant and successful textbooks, whether these are collections of key sources or, like her books *The Renaissance in Europe* and *Western Civilization: A Social and*

*Cultural History*, free-standing textbooks that bring her own unique and important view on history – a deft combination of the social, intellectual, and political realms – to life. And: even as she has attended to the teaching of the Renaissance and so much else in the profession at large, she has also been a dedicated and successful teacher at home, at Brooklyn College, where in 1993 she received the “Favorite Teacher” award.

Finally, it bears mentioning that all of this fine work across so many areas has not gone unnoticed: Professor King’s scholarship has been furthered and honored with fellowships and awards from the ACLS, the NEH, the Delmas Foundation, and the American Philosophical Society, just to name four among many more.

Friends, we are all so fortunate, in the scholarly work that we do in the Renaissance Society of America, to have a colleague in the field like Professor King: she is a model, an inspiration, and a leader.

Please join me in welcoming Professor King to the stage.



