

living it as an adventure" is for Smith, indeed, the "root of Disraeli's appeal." This fact was recognized by at least a few of his contemporaries. One of Disraeli's Liberal opponents, William Harcourt, told him in 1876 that to "the imagination of the younger generation your life will always have a special fascination." And, of course, it does.

On the issue of his importance, however, Smith argues that "Disraeli made little immediate difference to the Conservative party or to British politics." For Smith, Robert Peel brought about his own downfall; William Gladstone's "overbearing arrogance" did much to prevent the Peelites from rejoining the Conservative Party after 1846; and Disraeli became Prime Minister in 1874 as a result of declining Liberal fortunes, not because of his own political acumen. According to Smith, "any [Tory] leader would have lost the elections of 1847 to 1865, [and] it is arguable that almost any would have won that of 1874." Furthermore, Disraeli's core principles -- faith in the Conservative Party, the Crown, the Church, the territorial aristocracy, and the British Empire -- did not induce him to advocate bold measures once he had, as he said, "reached the top of the greasy pole." Disraeli's fundamental belief was that the establishment of a national consensus and the alleviation of class tensions would come not as a result of legislation, but through the power of rhetoric, image-making, popular manipulation, and political flexibility. Herein lies the reason for much of his popularity among twentieth century conservatives from Richard Nixon to Harold MacMillan to Enoch Powell. His career both provides the "aegis of a colourable tradition" and bequeaths "a fund of insights and watchwords on which . . . [conservatives] could draw productively in the future."

In sum, we are left to face the dilemma Disraeli poses each of us: are we to chastise him as an unprincipled, self-serving adventurer, a "politician" *par excellence*? Or should we delight in his wit and verve; respect his self-confidence and determination to succeed; applaud his political pragmatism; and appreciate his realization that in politics, image, often, *is* everything?

Robert Haggard

Rocke, Michael. *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

In *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence*, Michael Rocke re-weaves the story of the social fabric of Florence during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and early sixteenth centuries to include the role of sexual relationships among men. David Herlihy and Richard Trexler have previously noted the significance of homosexual behavior in this city-republic. However, Rocke, who teaches history at Syracuse University in Florence, is the first to investigate its pattern thoroughly and to evaluate its significance.

Rocke's work is based on the trial records of the Office of the Night, which the Republic of Florence established in 1432 to prosecute sodomy. Although sodomy was legally defined as any sexual act that would not result in procreation, Rocke argues that the Florentines were particularly concerned about sodomy between men. Combining this trial evidence with records from the Eight of the Watch (Florence's central office for handling criminal activity), the *catasto* or fiscal census of 1480, and family memoirs, he is able to add new details to the picture of the Florentine Renaissance man. His findings support one of the main points Michel Foucault made in his *Histoire de la sexualité*: the concept of "homosexual" as an identity emerged only in the late nineteenth century. In medieval and early modern Italy a male's sexual identity was linked to his role as the aggressor in a

relationship. As long as he was the active partner, it did not matter if his sexual partner was male or female.

To some extent, Roche's findings fit a pattern suggested in the seventies by Herlihy: homosexual behavior usually involved men in their twenties (active partners) and adolescents under eighteen years of age (passive partners). Echoing Herlihy, Roche proposes that one reason Florentine men in their twenties had relationships with teenage boys was that, until their early thirties, they did not have enough money to marry and set up households. He complicates this picture, however, by adducing numerous examples of older men who also coupled with young boys. Roche proposes that, because these men in their fifties and sixties violated the accepted pattern of male sexual relations, they were the most harshly punished sodomites.

Roche builds one of his central arguments on shaky foundations. He insists that the majority of local males were probably officially incriminated during the later fifteenth century. During the seventy years in which the Office of the Night operated, in a city of only 40,000 inhabitants, he concludes that 17,000 individuals were incriminated at least once for sodomy, and close to 3,000 were convicted. However, he only has data for the number of individuals incriminated for the last seventeen years of the Office's existence (1478-1502). He takes the ratio of incriminated to convicted from these years and extrapolates for the previous fifty years. We have no reason to think that the ratio of incriminations to convictions would remain constant over half a century, making Roche's figures dubious. Furthermore, he neglects to address fully why the conviction rate itself was under eight percent.

Roche is on more solid ground when he writes about periods for which he has the data. By using the trial records to trace the prosecution of sodomy, Roche rebuts the claim of such nineteenth- and twentieth-century historians as Pasquale Villari and Roberto Ridolfi that the reign of Lorenzo the Magnificent was sexually free and tolerant and the Savonarolan government conducted an effective crackdown on licentious behavior. The beginning of Lorenzo's rule, Roche shows, actually signaled a peak in convictions for sodomy: 535 men between 1469 and 1474 were convicted; during Savonarola's regime (1494-1498) less than a quarter of this number were convicted. While Roche provides some insightful analysis of these data, he stretches the limits of plausibility when he characterizes the regulation of sodomy as a "measure of the city's pulse" (197). The trial data fluctuate too irregularly to fit into the regular pattern into which he would like to force it.

Although he makes a convincing case that homosexuality was an important part of Florentine male sociability, Roche overstates the political significance of male sexual relationships. He asserts, for example, that when a band of young aristocrats helped Lorenzo the Magnificent's son Giuliano de' Medici overthrow the Republic, they were performing a "remarkable defense of convicted sodomites" by asking that their friends jailed for that offense be released (228). He ignores other reasons why these young men might have supported the powerful Medici family. With *Forbidden Friendships*, Roche has provided valuable new material that will help us understand male culture in Renaissance Florence better. I only wish that he had addressed the fascinating question his work raised -- why were practitioners of a behavior as common and accepted as sodomy in Florence so persecuted? -- instead of dancing around it.

Louisa Parker Mattozzi

Bergin, Joseph. *The Making of the French Episcopate, 1589-1661*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996. 761 pages. \$50.00.