RICHARD C. TREXLER. *Public Life in Renaissance Florence*. New York: Academic Press, 1980. Pp. xxvi + 591.

The fundamental premise of Richard Trexler's *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* is that "ritual was in fact at the core of the city's identity. It played a central part in a recurrent, powerful political process by which major urban groups competitively created and asserted the primacy of their own definition of the city's rationale and structure to their compatriots, and to the world at large" (xix). This public, or ritual, behaviour both reflected and determined the character of the Florentine *polis* and as such can be seen as an animating force in the commune's development: study the ritual of the city and the shape of the political, religious, social and economic systems will emerge.

Obviously, Trexler is ambitious in his intent. Indeed, he is so ambitious that he suggests that the method he has developed for investigating the city of Florence can be applied more generally and become "a new way of periodizing the past according to behavioral epochs." How men and women meet in groups, then, is offered as a new key for unlocking the true character of history.

The elements applied to this task are necessarily diverse. Trexler goes well beyond the sources of traditional history and into the social science disciplines of anthropology, psychology and sociology. Also, even in his use of the more common of the rich resources available to students of Florence, he is unusual. Diaries, histories, chronicles and letters are all dutifully consulted (if selectively and occasionally eccentrically) not to determine just what did happen but to discover how their authors and other observers reacted to what happened, that is, to use them as vehicles for entering the psychology, the collective unconscious, of the Florentine people.

As might be expected, the results are mixed. On one hand, the reader is clearly given the impression that Trexler has read far more into simple passages in *ricordanze* or chronicles than was ever intended; but, on the other hand, he has opened a new perspective on the drama of the commune in which concepts of shared belief and understanding are introduced that fall between the lines of standard history. In this way, the modern reader is compelled to consider such things as time, space, art, honour, symbols, self and other in terms that would be most evocative to a Florentine of the Quattrocento and to shed the preconceptions of the present. If nothing else, Trexler's book does convince the contemporary reader that varying shades of the numinous did inform Florentine life in ways not immediately comprehensible to us. Things that mean little to the modern observer or which appear clear in their significance can be seen as much more profoundly portentous to a Florentine of the fifteenth century: contracts, processions, entries, governmental acts and a great many other apparently quotidian human dealings take on an almost litur-

gical function that serves paradoxically both to bind the society through shared experience of a power higher than that exercised by the citizenry as individuals and to lubricate the mechanism of that society to ensure an orderly progression through time, space, life and death. As Machiavelli noted, Florentines were subtle interpreters of experience (p. 274).

In political terms, this ritual behaviour began as a means of honouring the commune, its representatives, traditions and patron saints. This public behaviour provided unity, self-confidence and pride to a society that lacked any universally accepted centre, any single focus of human and divine authority, that is to say, of course, a prince. What Trexler is arguing — and this he does well — is that because Florence was a Republic it had to be legitimized by public ritual, and ritual provided both the authority and the means of communicating that authority to the city. Moreover, as the political circumstances of the Republic changed during the fifteenth and the first decades of the sixteenth centuries, the ritual life of the city changed as well until at the end Florence fell into line with most other early modern states and left the ritual behaviour of power to the court and the ruling dynasty who acted symbolically for all.

This contention is most satisfying in Trexler's analysis of "The Ritual of Foreign Relations." In it many of the concepts discussed earlier re-emerge with far more significance so that the inherent paradoxes in Florentine society become comprehensible, indeed, necessary. Operating in a context which was largely at variance with its own value structure and organization, Florence manifested a balanced but contradictory world view: what was protected internally was not necessarily what was projected externally. For example, the commune had humbled the ancient Tuscan nobility within its territories but simultaneously exalted it abroad on embassies; wealth made through trade and banking was a source of civic pride and power but was equally a source of embarrassment and inferiority in the outside world; the citizens jealously maintained their republican constitution, despite the concomitant lack of continuity in policy and authority, but at the same time this republicanism was viewed by allies and enemies alike as confusion and lack of resolution. Although some observers, like Machiavelli, that most brilliant of political analysts, recognised these dichotomies, the great majority of their compatriots continued to rely on ritualized behaviour and tradition to reconcile these anomalies, and seldom successfully (*vid.* p. 319 sqq.).

In addition, Trexler's approach indicates well who were excluded from power and who enjoyed authority over what. His image is a long procession of Florentine citizens through time in which the composition of the participants changed according to the circumstances. On occasion, the example of the procession is shattered by that of the urban revolt, the flight from crisis or the search for new resources of ritual and public authority. Moreover, Trexler provides a model in which the public life of the citizens was repeated in a long succession of parallel social, political and religious structures. These aspects of ritual behaviour moved from the signoria to the squares and the streets of the city into the houses and monasteries, each reflecting in an analogous way the operation of those civic principles at work on the larger stage of the commune.

It is with the introduction of the Medici into this theatrical dramatis personae that Trexler's study breaks down, almost to the point of silliness. Amidst useful, but rather obvious, observations on the shift of the "ritual centre" from the Palazzo della Signoria to the Palazzo Medici,

there is a great deal of questionable, occasionally absurd, discussion of the ritual role of the Medici, especially Lorenzo who has become, in Trexler's analysis, a new idol in a new space (p. 444), representing the arrival of a new public ritual order. This suggestion is pushed even further — and beyond endurance — in the apotheosis of the Medici family through young Giovanni di Lorenzo's elevation to the Sacred College: "we can see that Giovanni di Medici was like a processing icon of Florentine history, the embodiment and culmination of a Florentine journey toward foreign respect and domestic self-esteem. The material and spiritual genius of the city now combined in father and son" (p. 457). Such a view of the Medici, illustrated again in his encomium of Lorenzo as "prodigy, magician, idol, shepherd, martyr, savior, and finally exemplar of the good death" (p. 459), is not convincingly supported by the sources and, in fact, would have made even Poliziano blush.

In part this exaltation of the Medici is required to permit Trexler his clever transition from the ritual apotheosis of the Medici family to the apotheosis of the Republic under Savonarola. This section of the book is also provocative and interesting and much more supportable from the sources, given that the Piagnoni apologists used a vocabulary and liturgical frame of reference that suited Trexler well. As a result there are some additional and significant insights into the Dominican friar's brilliant use of ritual behaviour during the years of his hegemony over the restored commune. However, even here, Trexler is selective in his use of facts, and attributes powers to ritual that were obviously much more the operation of the coercive authority of the state.

Finally, some mention must be made of Trexler's style and language. In employing the methods, sources and principles of certain social science disciplines, he has also adopted their jargons and their proclivity for the meaningless phrase and word. On occasion this tendency merely confuses the reader but too often it renders the text unapproachable and hopelessly obscure. It is not surprising, then, that Trexler slips most deeply into his most eccentric, incomprehensible and infelicitous vocabulary and syntax when discussing the least plausible of his contentions, those least supportable from his sources. He did warn his reader in the introduction that his "book will leave most questions unanswered. . . and it intends to modernize the discourse among Renaissance historians" (p. xxvi). Unfortunately, even when introducing unanswered questions, discourse requires clarity and not floods of self-indulgent and self-referential jargon designed to obfuscate an absence of proof.

Had Richard Trexler enjoyed the services of a ruthless editor, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* would have been one-third the length and much more accessible. It would also have been an infinitely better book for it. Without doubt, Trexler has raised many critical points for any student who wishes to enter the *mentalité* of Renaissance Florence, and he has done so with reference to the scholarship and methods of other academic disciplines not always recognized or investigated by his fellow Renaissance historians. Consequently, I dispute the least charitable opinion of the book — that it cannot be called history. It is; it is the history of the meaning of events and symbols as they were understood in the past and of the use to which these expressions of ritual behaviour were put by a sophisticated society. The book is thus both useful and provocative in its way, despite the author's almost fatal degree of self-indulgence and his

occasional indefensible manipulation of the facts and the language of history.

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SILVANO GAROFALO. *L'enciclopedismo italiano: Gianfrancesco Pivati*. Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1980. Pp. 126.

È di questi ultimi anni l'interesse vivissimo per il genere "enciclopedia," per le varie forme d'organizzazione del sapere. Basterà ricordare gli studi di R. Collison (*Encyclopedias: Their History Throughout the Ages*, New York-Londra, 1964), di J. Henningsen ("Enzyklopädie — Zur Sprach — und Bedeutungsgeschichte eines pädagogischen Begriff," in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*," 1966), di U. Dierse (*Enzyklopädie — Zur Geschichte eines philosophischen und wissenschaftstheoretischen Begriffs*, 1977), di C. Vasoli (fra i cui lavori si ricorderà soltanto *L'enciclopedismo del Seicento*, Napoli, 1978) per vedere quanto il tema sia attuale e frequentato. E questo è vero non solo per il '700, il periodo classico per questo soggetto di studio, ma anche per il Medioevo — e qui tale interesse si abbina agli studi dell'ermeneutica medievale — per il Rinascimento (i "teatri del mondo" le "sintassi" le "enciclopedie" rinascimentali sono una recente scoperta degli studi sulla mnemotecnica, la cabbala, la crisi della logica, ecc.) per l'enciclopedia hegeliana, e proprio su questa rivista U. Eco ha recentemente discusso il problema dell' "enciclopedia" moderna.

Di tale fervore non si ha eco nel lavoro del G.; ed è un po' un peccato ché non solo questo studio avrebbe trovato una maggiore giustificazione (invero il soggetto è tale da non esigere giustificazioni estrinseche) ma ne sarebbe riuscito più mosso e avrebbe guidato il lettore a capire come e in che misura l'enciclopedia del Pivati contribuì alla storia del genere cui apparteneva. Questa storia, almeno quella più prossima, avrebbe fatto vedere una sequenza che proporrei in questo modo: Bayle — Coronelli — Pivati. È noto (ma non troppo) che la *Biblioteca Universale sacro-profana* del Coronelli è la prima enciclopedia che trova nell'alfabeto la sua norma tassonomica. Ma il Coronelli concepisce la sua enciclopedia come una risposta al Bayle (dal quale, in ultima analisi, riprende il criterio alfabetico), al suo pirronismo, alla sua "empietà," come dirà più tardi il Vico. Coronelli non completò l'opera ché dopo sette volumi (Venezia 1701-06) era appena arrivato alla lettera C. Quanto doveva il Pivati al Coronelli? Non ne completò l'opera sia pure mitigando lo zelo religioso del suo predecessore? E non è interessante il fatto che le due maggiori enciclopedie italiane del primo '700 appaiano a Venezia? Ma al G. non interessa tanto il "genere" quanto il "sapere" che vi opera; e in questo senso il suo libro è un successo.

Lo studio si apre con un rapido e incisivo quadro della situazione storico-sociale cui approda la società veneziana dopo la perdita del grande commercio marittimo e i conseguenti investimenti terrieri. Segue quindi un profilo del Pivati, in buona parte costruito su materiali originali e attinti di prima mano. Il Pivati nacque a Padova nel 1689 e morì a Venezia nel 1764 dove ebbe importanti cariche pubbliche. Di cultura