Court and Politics in Papal Rome, 1492-1700, eds Gianvittorio Signorotto and Maria Antonietta Visceglia. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Pp. 257. ISBN 0-521-64146-2. Hardback, US.\$ 60.

This collection of essays, one of the latest offerings from Cambridge's 'Studies in Italian History and Culture' series, is the only volume so far dedicated exclusively to Rome. The editors of *Court and Politics in Papal Rome* have conceived the book as a synthesis of the renewed interest in diplomatic history, curial studies, and court studies as well as a foray beyond the curia to the informal contexts of court life under the pope.

One of the great benefits of this approach is an enriched understanding of the family and patron-client relationships that helped to define many of the political and religious agendas at court and to see how these relationships stretched like a web across Europe. Curial factions formed a significant element of these informal networks, so several of the essays in this volume investigate the arcane world of Roman factions and treat the complex machinations of cardinals and bishops to guarantee the victory of their faction, even if that victory came decades later under a different papacy. Despite these long stretches of time invested into factional agendas, Maria Antonietta Visceglia's essay shows how factions were also "dynamic aggregation[s]" (p. 102), endlessly sensible to changing politics, constantly adapting to the challenges brought by a new pope. Moreover, Visceglia demonstrates that the craft of mixing friendship with faction played a crucial role in cultivating a career in Rome. Elena Fasano Guarini's chapter—which treats almost twenty years' worth of letters between Ferdinando de' Medici in Rome and his family in Florence—traces the young Medici's apprenticeship in plots and schemes, and his gradual mastery of all the 'practices' of a successful curial courtier. Gianvittorio Signorotto investigates one of seventeenth-century Rome's most renowned factions—the *squadron volante*—and shows the evolution of its policies as the church expanded into an international politico-religious entity.

A symptom of this gradual expansion was the development of a well-honed bureaucracy at the expense of institutionalized conciliarism and nepotism. Marco Pellegrini argues that the 'spiritual auctoritas' of cardinals declined as fifteenth- and sixteenth-century popes assumed greater power for themselves and their creatures. The new breed of 'pope-king' left little room for conciliarism, so cardinals came to serve more secular functions, often as ambassadors to foreign courts. Antonio Menniti Ippolito and Olivier Poncet both follow the rise of seventeenth-century bureaucrats (the secretary of state and the cardinal-protector respectively), and chronicle the relative decline of the cardinal-nephew, a high-ranking member of the pope's family whose administrative skills proved no match for better-trained functionaries.

Faction and bureaucracy have interested scholars of seventeenth-century monarchies for some time now; French historiography in particular has explored factional politics and its relation to absolutism. In *Power and Faction in Louis XIV's France* (1988), for example, Roger Mettam sought to challenge the paradigm of absolute monarchy by insisting on the king's reliance on traditional power structures and by stressing the crucial role of noble factions even in the most seeming-

ly autocratic regime. It is interesting to see a similar perspective brought to the Roman court, where a monarchy of a different sort was equally tempered and balanced by factional intrigue.

The reader of *Court and Politics* also encounters interstitial episodes in which the absence of the pope is the most compelling feature. Irene Fosi's chapter on the *possesto* ritual emphasizes the importance not of continuity between popes, but of discontinuity and novelty. Tensions from the previous papacy, she concludes, were quashed or at least masked beneath an image of the new pope's justice. On the other hand, when a pope removed himself from his civic and festive duties – as Innocent XI did for reasons of piety in the 1680s – tensions quickly mounted to a boil. Renata Ago charts the escalating disputes between sacred and secular authorities during Innocent's retirement from public view, and the secular nobility's appropriation of the festive scene during the pope's absence. Statecraft and religion were at play here, since the pope's absence was not due to prudishness, but rather formed part of an agenda to encourage widespread moral reform in Rome. The disruption of the papal court exposed the fissures not only in the ecclesiastical bureaucracy, but also in the wider socio-political edifice that defined itself in relation to the pope's presence.

Two very interesting chapters treat the literary byproducts of curial business. Mario Rosa draws a fascinating portrait of the cardinals' learned academies, a veritable training ground for young prelates, and of the intellectual cross-fertilization between academy and curia. The dissemination of knowledge was crucial to papal politics. Mario Infelise's chapter also touches on how the witty, sarcastic Roman newsletters and gazettes (*avvisi*) traveled abroad and even influenced international relations.

The editors of *Court and Politics* have succeeded in collecting stimulating works from a group of enterprising Italian and French scholars. At its best, this book provides the kind of synthesis of sources and analyses that reveal an unfamiliar facet of diplomatic history and shows the politics of early modern Rome in a new light.

JOHN GAGNÉ
Harvard University

Reeder, Linda. *Widows in White. Migration and the Transformation of Rural Italian Women, Sicily, 1880-1920*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003. Pp. 322. ISBN 0802037313 (cloth), \$65. ISBN 0-8020-8525-3 (paper), \$27.50.

Il lavoro di Linda Reeder, *Widows in White*, si propone di analizzare il mondo delle donne siciliane tra il 1880 e il 1920 aprendo una finestra su un piccolo villaggio, Sutera, nel suo impatto con l'emigrazione maschile di massa e i cambiamenti che accompagnarono l'espansione del capitalismo nazionale e globale segnata dalla divisione internazionale del lavoro. I contadini si fanno operai itineranti tra due conti-