Booknotes

Notes de lecture

Nicholas Terpstra, ed. *The Politics of Ritual Kinship: Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. x, 317.

Until about forty years ago, the study of confraternities was scorned as the province of local antiquarians and pious chroniclers, offering little of interest to historians. This volume underlines how far we have come since then, demonstrating the many ways in which artificial devotional kin groups underlay and interacted with the social, political, and religious institutions of the early modern era. Unsurprisingly, not all the articles attain the same level; a few of the authors present detailed information about specific confraternities in their chosen city or region without putting it clearly into a wider context. Most, however, explicitly address the main underlying issues and interpretive problems.

A brief well-written introduction by Terpstra is followed by an historiographic essay by Christopher Black that does rather less than he intended. Having copies of most of the other articles in hand, Black tried to incorporate them and the issues they address into a short discussion of the changing ways in which the field has been defined in the years since the publication of Pullan's *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice*. The result is a bit awkward and too often, on first reading, ambiguous.

A number of the articles underline the privileged role of males and the declining autonomy of women in virtually all confraternities, as the fifteenth century gave way to the sixteenth. Some discuss the political danger urban authorities perceived in unsupervised groups, while others underline the displacement of political activity by the disenfranchised into "safe" confraternal activities. The result is a nuanced series of pictures that demonstrate the great variety of local circumstances and the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of drawing substantial general conclusions about the function and place of confraternities in early modern urban culture.

Particularly interesting to this reader were Richard Mackenney's study of the *scuole piccole* of Venice, which would be very useful for an undergraduate trying

to make sense of Venetian society and government, and Danilo Zardin's "Re-launching confraternities in the Tridentine era . . . in Milan and Lombardy," a good introduction to an important element in the process of Counter-reformation. This latter article makes available to those who cannot read Italian a number of the general conclusions of its author's monographs. It neatly addresses the tensions between reforming clerics and laymen for whom confraternal life was religious but not ecclesiastical. One wonders whether Mark Lewis's failure to mention such tensions in his discussion of the Jesuits' use of confraternities in Naples is a result of their absence.

Only Angelo Torre's article on Piedmont looks explicitly at rural confraternities. His discussion of the relationships among *pieve*, parishes, villages, hamlets and seigneurial jurisdictions is exemplary and would provide any beginning student of rural religiosity, as well as more seasoned readers, with a good understanding of the complexities of the interconnections among religious, social, and political life.

One learns less about the members of the confraternities and the ways in which they integrated their faith into their lives than might be expected. Most of the authors might have done a bit more to underline the opacity of their archival sources and the difficulty of knowing as much about the *confratelli* as we do about the confraternities. Generally well edited (despite some problems with dates in Elliott Horowitz's article), the book belongs in the library of any university offering courses in the early modern era.

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Denis Hüe. *La poésie palinodique à Rouen (1486-1550)*. « Bibliothèque Littéraire de la Renaissance ». Paris, H. Champion, 2002. P. 1050.

On sait ce que les travaux de Gérard Gros ont apporté à la connaissance des palinods médiévaux, ces concours de poésie qui, à partir du XIV^e siècle, se tiennent dans le Nord de la France et qui ont pour objectif de célébrer le culte de la Vierge et, à travers elle, le salut et la résurrection. Denis Hüe poursuit l'entreprise entamée par son devancier et fournit ici la *summa* de ses recherches, que plusieurs études publiées avaient déjà annoncée. Cet ouvrage, très riche, fait apparaître les composantes théologiques (Première partie), socio-historiques (Deuxième partie) et iconographiques et esthétiques (Troisième partie) de la production palinodique, en prenant pour exemple la ville de Rouen, centre de rayonnement de la poésie mariale. Au terme de cette synthèse qui ne dissocie jamais l'histoire matérielle de l'histoire des mœurs et des mentalités, le lecteur perçoit mieux les enjeux d'un culte poético-religieux annuel qui mit aux prises les plus grands poètes (Jean et Clément Marot, G. Crétin, A. de La Vigne, J. Parmentier) et d'autres méconnus (J. Le Lieur, N. Lescarre, P. Avril) qui retrouvent, grâce à D. Hüe, une seconde vie. Une bibliographie exhaustive, un index des noms propres, des critiques modernes, des référen-