

Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



Pattenden, Miles. Electing the Pope in Early Modern Italy, 1450–1700

Jennifer Mara Desilva

Volume 41, numéro 1, hiver 2018

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1086058ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v41i1.29551>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Desilva, J. (2018). Compte rendu de [Pattenden, Miles. Electing the Pope in Early Modern Italy, 1450–1700]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 41(1), 229–231. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v41i1.29551>

© Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies / Société canadienne d'études de la Renaissance; Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society; Toronto Renaissance and Reformation Colloquium; Victoria University Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2018

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

érudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

Parvini writes directly, passionately, and engagingly. In the first instance, this is not a book about what New Historicism did with, and to, Shakespeare; but mostly about what it could have done but did not. It is also not a book that answers fully the question of what prompted, or conditioned, the emergence of New Historicism at the time when it appeared. A book surveying the writing that “sounded the death knell” (134) for New Historicism is itself one such book. It does not come too late, even though New Historicism has long been over (or so it seems), but it is a nicely woven tapestry of many such critiques, and thus useful to anyone, students and scholars, in need of a quick reference guide to the gist of critique of New Historicism.

GORAN STANIVUKOVIC

Saint Mary's University, Halifax

Pattenden, Miles.

Electing the Pope in Early Modern Italy, 1450–1700.

New York: Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. xvi, 309 + 5 figures, 12 tables. ISBN 978-0-1987-9744-9 (hardcover) US\$112.50.

This new study offers far more than its title suggests. While this book explores how popes were elected in early modern Italy, it will be remembered more for its discussion of “the problems selection by election created for the cardinals and others who invested in the papacy as an institution” (1). This wider focus sets the study apart from previous conclave chronicles of scrutiny tallies and negotiations in the latrines. In this instance, contextualizing the conclave involves a much larger discussion of the practices, expectations, and cultural values that Europeans (and especially Italians) connected with the papacy shared through the early modern period.

Chapters 1–3 set the preparation for, experience of, and dangers involved in conclave clearly before the reader. While the volume's discussion begins with the flurry of preparations made in Rome and elsewhere for conclave voting, it soon becomes a meditation on the political and constitutional nature of the papacy. Pattenden's purpose is to explore how the elective, cyclical, and nepotistic nature of the Holy See impacted the actions of its stakeholders and affected its health, wealth, and governance. At its core, this book offers a broad

test of Paolo Prodi's theory about the dual spiritual and temporal nature of the pope and the ultimate subordination of the church to the state (*Il Sovrano Pontefice*, 1982). Much of this book is a dialogue with other historians of early modern Rome and European monarchies, whose research has revealed parts of the bureaucratic and cultural edifice that grew in these years and that assisted both rulers and families who sought authority, employment, and wealth. Although this group included kings, cardinals, and nobles, clergy and laity much farther down the social scale also found their lives affected by choices made in conclave. These individuals were also party to later efforts to undermine the consolidation of papal power, while encouraging strategies to protect their own social positions and financial benefits. This group's investment in, dependence on, and disinterest in whole-scale reinvention is an important theme that runs throughout the narrative.

As Pattenden shows, elections were unpredictable and highlight the poor political skills or uncertain knowledge of many clerical actors. The tensions that resulted from conclave were "largely insoluble" (263) and, due to the papacy's non-hereditary nature, were bound to be shaken up again in a matter of months or years. To ameliorate and suppress these tensions, popes looked to strategies based on ceremonies, patronage, nepotism, and coercion. Chapters 4–7 explore the campaigns waged to circumvent or resolve that tension from 1450 to beyond 1700. Using a very broad primary source base, combined with demographic and prosopographical data tests, this book examines the motivations for and response to partial successes and the structural effects of these campaigns. Indeed, Pattenden's vision of the world's relationship with papal elections extends far past the traditional conclave, coronation, and *possession* model, taking the reader into detailed explorations of faction, finance, nepotism, venality, legislation, and government reform.

Readers may wonder how this sprawling vision relates neatly to election. In fact, it was the papacy's character as a governing institution prone to unexpected change through oligarchic election that spurred many of the customs that contemporaries and historians consider characteristic abuses. Pattenden identifies the motivations and incentives—political, social, and financial—that prompted newly-elected popes to associate authority and efficiency with nepotism, factionalism, patronage, and coercion through extravagant spending. The continued reliance of popes on many of these practices into the 1700s resulted in pontificates that worked to maximize

immediate income streams, often through public debt and venal offices, rather than cultivate a strong economy within the papal states. Pattenden compares papal financial strategies with those of European hereditary monarchs and concludes that customs influenced by the papacy's non-hereditary and elective nature encouraged policies that led to eventual fiscal collapse.

As befits such a complex and multifaceted thesis, this study's argument is very carefully positioned in relation to recent research. Anyone looking for a primer on the current historiography of the papacy would do well to read this volume. Not only does Pattenden explore important ideas about the papacy, but he pieces them together in order to show how they work cooperatively and reveal an institution that is more often examined one pontificate at a time than in the round. By meditating on the decision-making process that surrounded conclave, and on continued Italian support for the papacy more generally, Pattenden mobilizes research to show how current scholarly discussions are related to, and deeply impacted by, the expectation of a future election and political change. This is the great value of his book: by synthesizing decades of research and identifying the papacy's core constitutional distinction, Pattenden has illustrated how symptomatic practices grew out of, or were encouraged by, the institution's elective and non-hereditary character.

In sum, Miles Pattenden's study of the papacy builds an interesting new world out of a more holistic interpretation of the current scholarship. This is no small task, but he does it with patience and precision, and to the benefit of the larger field.

JENNIFER MARA DESILVA

Ball State University

Philadelphie, Eusèbe.

Le Réveille-matin des François, et de leurs voisins.

Édition de Jean-Raymond Fanlo, Marino Lambiase et Paul-Alexis Mallet.

Textes de la Renaissance, 203. Paris : Classiques Garnier, 2016. 561 p. ISBN 978-2-8124-6074-6 (broché) 87 €.

En 1576 est publiée une défense de la monarchie et du défunt Charles IX intitulée *Le Vray Resveille-matin des Calvinistes et Publicains François : où est*