

goes well beyond the goal he set out for himself of providing the framework necessary for an in-depth study of the confraternal world in the Abruzzo region, for he also captures the intricacies of the topic, and its significance in the study of the historical impact of confraternities.

Adriana Grimaldi
Department of Italian Studies
University of Toronto

Polizzotto, Lorenzo. *Children of the Promise: The Confraternity of the Purification and the Socialization of Youths in Florence, 1427–1785*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. xiii, 381 pp., 12 ill. ISBN 0-19-926332-9

At the end of his monograph *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael* (1998) Konrad Eisenbichler asks a question of Lorenzo Polizzotto. Eisenbichler wonders whether Polizzotto's discovery of the Savonarolan infiltration of confraternities in 1530s Florence was restricted to adult sodalities only, or whether youth groups – the focus of Eisenbichler's study – were equally susceptible. In his new book, *Children of the Promise*, Polizzotto offers an answer. It comes as part of a study of the Confraternity of the Purification of the Virgin, another youth brotherhood that flourished in Florence from 1427 until its suppression in the late eighteenth century. The Purification was the confraternity most closely aligned with San Marco, Savonarola's Dominican convent, and so affords Polizzotto the opportunity specifically to examine the reception of Savonarolism among Florentine youths. The answer to Eisenbichler's query, as it turns out, is complex, showing how Savonarolism did indeed succeed in infiltrating the Purification despite what Polizzotto calls "the confraternity's indifference to Savonarola's reform" (127). That Polizzotto is able deftly to investigate such complexities in this superb study is a testament to his sharp analytical skills and his wide perspective on the varieties of confraternal life.

This new monograph is, in many ways, a sister study to Eisenbichler's book on the Archangel Raphael. After all, it was the popularity of the Archangel sodality that forced it to split in two, thereby creating the Purification. During these early years both confraternities were overseen by the same adult confraternity, and Polizzotto considers the possibility that both youth groups employed the same statute book during the Purification's first dozen years or so. But by the mid-1440s, the Purification had hitched itself to the Medici wagon and soon enjoyed a meeting place on the grounds of San Marco built for them by Cosimo the Elder himself. It was because of this legacy of Medici support that the confraternity found itself at odds with the anti-Medicean sentiment at San Marco during Savonarola's heyday. Nonetheless, the Savonarolan rhetoric of children's purity pushed the Purification into an unexpected prominence and – despite the

indifference of its traditional membership to radicalism – found itself to be a magnet for the children of prominent anti-Medicean, pro-Savonarolan families.

This demographic shift is the first of many that Polizzotto charts over the centuries, and here we find another resonance with Eisenbichler's study. Like *The Boys of the Archangel Raphael, Children of the Promise* follows the confraternity from inception to suppression, offering a sort of *longue durée* study with the hope that a broad perspective will provide new insight into the confraternity as a living, responsive, self-aware entity. The net gain of this approach is the way it shows the shifting priorities of church, confraternity, and society at large. One of the most interesting trends Polizzotto traces is the gradual devaluation of youth. As the role of children in Florentine rhetoric depreciated in the soberer ducal period, ages of the Purification's members increased; by the late sixteenth century, men in their 50s were being admitted. Along with older members came an increased aristocratization of the confraternity; one of the Purification's central concerns in the mid-eighteenth century was whether to exclude non-aristocrats from its ranks – a remarkable evolution from the fifteenth century when the children of the *popolo minuto* outnumbered their more pedigreed confrères by a ratio of four to one.

In tandem with this evolution Polizzotto shows the impact upon the Purification of the Tridentine reform and the reigns of the Tuscan Grand Dukes. In the first case, Polizzotto argues that in concert with Trent's reorganization of parish life, recreational parish youth groups (*potenze*) came to compete "directly and on all fronts – recruitment, religious education, and public ritual – with the youth confraternities" (193). While youth confraternities were highly esteemed by the post-Tridentine church, it had difficulty condoning their autonomy and aimed to gain a monopoly over youth education and catechesis. This desire to control youth education reflected, Polizzotto argues, a new ambivalence toward youth in Florentine religious and political language. Young men had come to be seen as rowdy miscreants rather than pure agents of Florentine virtue; even in the catechetical manual *Discorsi spirituali* (1583) penned by the Purification's own guardian Jacopo Ansaldi, youths were imagined to be the "ruin of cities and the scourge of provinces" (234). The confraternity began to question its education purpose, and with good reason, Polizzotto notes. The shifting terrain of spiritual education mirrored the alteration of the political landscape in the Grand Duchy. The active citizenship for which the Purification had prepared its boys during the Medici oligarchy no longer existed. Florentines were now subjects rather than citizens, and the acceptance of this fact helped reorient the confraternity away from education (both spiritual and political) and toward charity and philanthropy.

Polizzotto is keen to interpret this change as an adaptation of the Purification's mission rather than as a failure, though it seems as though the confraternity itself was less sanguine in this regard by the early eighteenth century, suffering from a "crisis of confidence" (311) over its reorientation. A significant part of this new direction involved a major bequest from Domenico Melani to establish

a hospice for pilgrims and mendicants to be staffed twenty-four hours a day by members of a new congregation associated with the Purification. But despite claims at the time that the Purification was losing its members and its direction, Polizzotto points out that membership lists in fact show a thriving constituency, and that the confraternity's oratorio performances were so well attended that the audience most likely spilled out from the main hall into the foyer and even onto the lawn of the Purification complex. What lends further credence to Polizzotto's adaptation thesis is the brotherhood's commitment to serve social needs as much as it had done in the fifteenth century, albeit in new ways. In one staggering example of the Florentine thirst for institutional charity in the early eighteenth century, we hear of a bequest left to the confraternity to dower young women; 554 women of all ages applied for just 10 dowries. Whatever the nature of its reorientation, the Purification was clearly still engaged in the social and religious challenges facing Florentines at the dawn of the modern age. Only during the years immediately preceding its suppression by the government in 1785 did the Purification seem finally to have come unmoored from its distant origins, deciding to break its association with the convent of San Marco and to refuse admission to children altogether.

Particularly striking in *Children of the Promise* is the ease with which Polizzotto navigates a wide variety of texts, turning an experienced paleographer's eye to the Purification's statutes, and making confident use of iconographical, theatrical, musical, narrative, and quantitative sources. The author also enjoys a deep familiarity with the world of confraternal scholarship, a knowledge that he marshals to great effect throughout the book's pages. Referring to the research of such scholars as Richard Trexler, Christopher Black, and particularly Nerida Newbigin in Chapter 2, Polizzotto manages to weave their work on specific aspects of confraternal life (such as Newbigin's treatments of theatrical *rappresentazione*) into the broader narrative of the confraternity's entire history. Polizzotto has a felicitous skill for drawing new questions and perspectives from these juxtapositions. One hopes, in the end, that *longue durée* studies like Polizzotto's will elicit even further reflections on confraternal continuity and change over the centuries.

John Gagné
Department of History
Harvard University

Sánchez Herrero, José. *La Semana Santa de Sevilla*. Biblioteca de Sevilla. Madrid: Silex, 2003. 355 pp., 9 b/w illustrations. ISBN 84-7737-120-2

"When we say 'Holy Week of Seville,' we normally refer to the typically Sevillian celebration of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ according to the confraternities and brotherhoods that, during the days of Holy Week, celebrate their processions, or 'stations of penitence' in the Holy Church Cathedral." (13)