

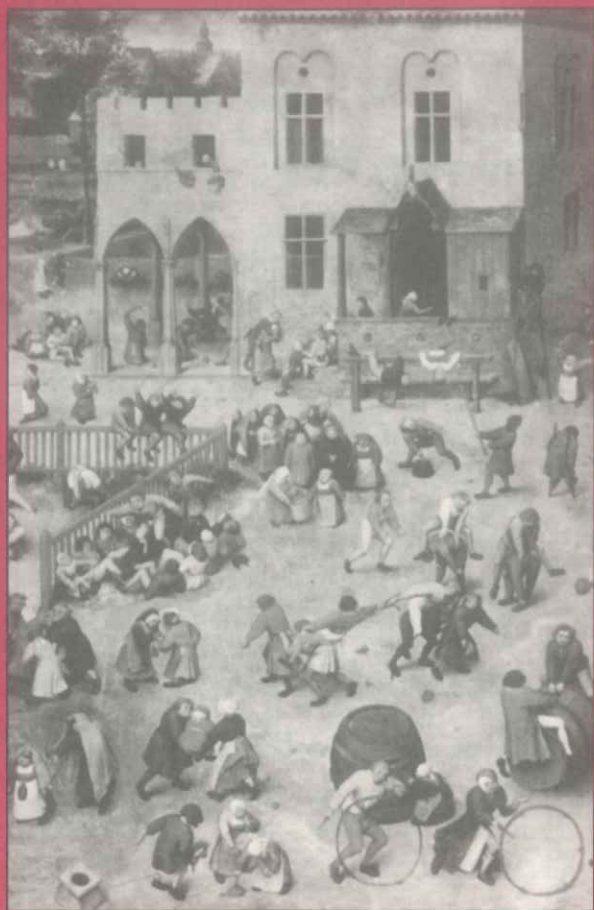
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Studies in Italian History in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Vol. 1, Political Thought and the Language of Politics: Art and Politics. Nicolai Rubinstein. Ed. Giovanni Ciappelli. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2004. 405 pp. €52.00. ISBN 88-8498-146-8.

REVIEWED BY: Mark Jurdjevic, University of Ottawa

The three-volume publication of Nicolai Rubinstein's essays (only the first is under review here) is a welcome contribution to Renaissance historiography for many reasons. Rubinstein passed away in 2002 at the age of ninety-one, leaving unfinished plans for another monograph on Florentine history. The historiography of late medieval and Renaissance political culture is in many ways a history of Rubinstein's interests, insights, and arguments about Florentine history, and few historians have so consistently and influentially created areas of interest and controversy out of previously untapped complex archival sources.

The collection and publication of his essays is fitting and timely not only in light of his stature as a scholar and his role in training younger historians, but also in light of the nature of his scholarly output. Rubinstein published consistently throughout most of the twentieth century (his first article was published in *Archivio Storico Italiano* in 1935) and was primarily an essayist. He published two major monographs, conceived of and edited an influential collection of essays, and wrote literally dozens of essays, all of which are fundamental reading for anyone working in late medieval and early modern political culture. Rubinstein was constantly invited to contribute articles to conference proceedings, *Festschriften*, journals, and thematic volumes (and seems rarely to have declined such offers, judging from his output), with the result that the vast majority of his scholarship is diffused and scattered. An attempt to access, consider, and interact with his work as a whole would require a major library expedition and more than one box of books. The Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura's collection of his essays, under the editorship of Giovanni Ciappelli, is for that reason alone most welcome, though of course there are additional benefits from a collected edition of essays, not least of which is an integrated index.

The conception, planning, and initial preparation of the collected essays began as a collaborative project between Rubinstein and Ciappelli, and Rubinstein himself determined the thematic grouping of each volume and the division of essays. His pathbreaking archival work on the structure and operation of the Florentine government in its various republican and Medicean manifestations are for a subsequent volume. The sixteen essays in volume 1 focus on political thought and the language of politics, span contributions from 1942 to 2001, and include one previously unpublished piece entitled "Dante and Nobility" (1973). Included here are his seminal essays on canonical figures of medieval and Renaissance political thought: "The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence" (1942), "Marsilio of Padua and Italian Political Thought of His Time" (1965), "*Florentina Libertas*" (1986), "Il *De optimo cive* del Platina" (1986), "Le origini medievali del pensiero repubblicano del secolo xv" (2001); as well as studies of Ambrogio Lorenzetti and Giorgio Vasari: "Political Ideas in Sienese Art: The frescoes of Ambrogio Lorenzetti and Taddeo di Bartolo in the Palazzo Pubblico" (1958), "Vasari's Painting of the Foundation of Florence in the Palazzo Vecchio" (1967), and "Le allegorie di Ambrogio Lorenzetti nella Sala della Pace e il pensiero political del suo tempo" (1997). In the aggregate, these essays reveal that Rubinstein was as formidable an interpreter of visual sources as he was of written texts.

Rubinstein was always a much more devoted interlocutor with Florentine political

thinkers than with twentieth-century historians, as a scan of the index reveals. A few historians have more than the occasional reference, notably Ernst Kantorowicz, Hans Baron, and Felix Gilbert, but Rubinstein's real interlocutors are Dante, Aristotle, Leonardo Bruni, Cicero, Brunetto Latini, Machiavelli, Marsilio of Padua, Aquinas, and Giovanni Villani. The notable exception among current historians is Quentin Skinner, who engaged Rubinstein in an influential exchange debating the sources of Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Allegory of Good Government* fresco cycle in Siena's Palazzo Pubblico and whose theories about textual interpretation in political thought Rubinstein formally responded to in 1989. "Problems of Evidence in the History of Political Ideas" was a rare moment of explicit theoretical and methodological speculation from a scholar who tended to avoid such overt forms of debate.

Rubinstein seems to have read and reflected upon virtually every political text written in late medieval and Renaissance Italy and he consistently brought that immense contextual range to bear in his readings of individual authors and texts. Judging from these sixteen essays alone, one could ably argue that Rubinstein was the twentieth century's most accomplished, sophisticated, and persuasive interpreter of late medieval political thought in Italy—all the more impressive considering that his interest in political theory was only one aspect of his scholarship, as the other two volumes of essays testify.

Michele Sanmicheli. Paul Davies and David Hemsoll. Milan: Electa, 2004. 404 pp., 462 b&w illus. €100.00. ISBN 88-370-2804-0.

REVIEWED BY: Andrew Hopkins, University of l'Aquila, Italy

Michele Sanmicheli (1484–1559) was indeed one of the most talented and inventive architects of the sixteenth century but, unlike Jacopo Sansovino (1486–1570) and Andrea Palladio (1508–80), he has had much less attention paid to him in recent times. Apart from the monograph by Lionello Puppi of 1971, recycled (or *ribollita* as the Italians would say) in 1986, the only up-to-date, if fragmentary account of his work was the conference proceedings of 1995. The authors of this new monograph were two of the participants in the conference and, as the bibliography here indicates, they have worked together over the course of fifteen years, jointly authoring a dozen articles that examine various aspects of the architect's work, paving the way for this volume.

It is almost as though a new Sanmicheli has been discovered. Unlike previous chronological accounts, essentially organized around a list of works, here the five chapters present a mixed structure that frames three typologically organized chapters: "Churches and chapels," "Palaces and villas," and "Military works," with an opening chapter discussing "Sanmicheli's life, his friends and patrons," and a closing chapter examining "Style and significance." This is a good arrangement because it acknowledges that patrons and architects, as well as the writers of architectural treatises, mostly thought in terms of building types—treatises were usually structured according to this method, as it reflected the requirements of the patron, whether individual or institutional, who was commissioning a specific building. Within each typological chapter the authors not only discuss all of Sanmicheli's works, but they also address larger issues and carefully set out the historical context into which Sanmicheli fits, so that one begins to understand exactly what his original contribution was to various important issues, whether his approach to the design of the centralized ecclesiastical space or to traditions of residential architecture, both in his native city of Verona or his adopted one of