

Alexander's successor, Pope Julius II, arranged to capture Cesare in 1504 and sent him to Spain, where he died in 1507. For Isabella and Francesco, the best diplomatic defense proved to be a diplomatic offence, leading to the Mantua conference of 1512, where the Medici were restored in Florence, the Sforza were restored in Milan, and interests of the Este were protected in Ferrara.

The author gives little attention to Isabella's activities after the death of Francesco in 1519, but this book is still an enlightening exploration of the diplomacy that led to Mantua's survival in a difficult and complex period and of Isabella d'Este and Francesco Gonzaga's partnership and energy in obtaining this end. It also gives good insight into the nature and uses of Renaissance correspondence.

Benjamin B. Roberts. *Sex and Drugs before Rock 'n' Roll: Youth Culture and Masculinity during Holland's Golden Age*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012. 318 pp. \$45.00. Review by LAURA CRUZ, WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY.

The contemporary Dutch "school" of writing social history is replete with unrivaled archival depth, thick descriptions, and vivid depictions. Historians in the school have written about crowds, churches, children, women, cross-dressers, prostitutes, and more during the Golden Age of the Netherlands. Each contribution has provided a visual and historical layer to a portrait of the complex and dynamic society that characterized this precocious republic. Independent scholar Benjamin B. Roberts adds to this portrait with a focus on young men, particularly those attending university in the first half of the century. As such, his portrayal interweaves changing concepts of violence, masculinity, youth, and culture along with the stories of both the fame and folly of young men and their transition to adulthood.

In the Netherlands itself, historical writing is read by more than academics. This means that historians do not necessarily write only for a narrow scholarly audience, but rather often include a broader, educated one. *Sex and Drugs before Rock 'n' Roll* has aspects that should appeal to both types of readers. As the title suggests, the work invites

comparisons between college students today and those of the early modern past. As Roberts himself suggests, “there are some prominent parallels that cannot be ignored” (17). His use of the term rock ‘n’ roll is figurative, intended to evoke a period of time, often characterized by excess, which takes place as part of either late adolescence or early adulthood, but nonetheless intended to bridge the past with the present. Similarly, any book with a title that begins ‘sex and drugs’ is likely to get noticed at the bookshop, and this appeal is underscored by the bright graphic design of the book’s cover and the lavish color illustrations. Lengthy exegeses on the nature of belonging to a fraternity (or similar social group), on drinking and parties, and on the general high jinks of 20-somethings let loose upon the cities will surely provoke an interesting double nostalgia among those who remember their own college days fondly.

This appeal, however, is largely incidental, in many ways merely a bonus that accompanies a respectful and respectable work of historical scholarship. Roberts starts with an intriguing nugget of archival information, focused on a half-generation of young men during the 1620s and 1630s. He draws much from the archives at Leiden, the site of the premiere university in the northern Low Countries, but also takes pains to visit archives elsewhere in order to give the characters in his story richer contexts and stronger credibility as representative historical actors. He reviews university archives, notarial records, literary and artistic depictions, diaries and other personal documents, sermons, and more in order to find out how Dutch society shaped, perceived, educated, and provided opportunities for a generation to blossom that was very much unlike those that had come before it.

In one sense, his is a static portrait, steeped in detail, but essentially ethnographic in function. This is reflected in the organization of the text by subject, including the following (in order): clothing and appearance, drinking, violence, sexuality and courting, drugs, and recreation. The history buff will find many nuggets of interesting historical trivia, from the machismo of the scar to curious euphemisms for sexual acts. That being said, this ethnographic structure is built upon a shifting foundation, and the primary argument of Roberts’s account is that the culture of youth provides a distinctive lens from which to view the nascent modernity of a new social structure emerging in the

highly urbanized, well-educated, and generally prosperous world of the early modern Netherlands. Without the traditional social safety nets ascribed to rural life, this generation of young men found themselves footloose and fancy-free, embarking on a journey without familiar guideposts while facing the burden of responsibility that comes with increased freedom. Roberts tells stories of young men whose futures were ruined by rash decisions they made in their 20s but also of others who learned from their own exuberance and went on to navigate their lives successfully as pillars of Dutch burgherdom.

While highly readable and well-researched, the book can be uneven, both in length and in its treatment of certain subject areas. The author seems most comfortable, or at least expansive, in the realms of material culture and least comfortable, or perhaps most succinct, with literary or rhetorical analysis. Many of the tools employed by cultural historians are left aside in favor of broader social analysis, a strategy that enriches the latter sometimes at the expense of the former. The depiction of this group takes place largely on two levels: the telescoped archival view, which focuses on a small group of young men, largely wealthy, largely from the province of Holland, and largely drawn from a mere two decades of existence; and the panoramic view of the social history of the entirety of the Netherlands, from the middle ages to the present day. The latter serves as the context for the former and integrates the original research into the scholarly conversations taking place across both the discipline and the country. That being said, moving between these two perspectives can be a bit of a jumpy ride, almost as if one is alternating between two pairs of eyeglasses. One wonders if it might be possible to further illuminate the social space between these micro- and macro- historical vantage points.

These minor shortcomings should not deter either the scholarly or the educated reader from picking up *Sex and Drugs before Rock 'n' Roll*. It serves as an exemplary work of social history, an engaging historical portrait of a most remarkable republic, and a reminder of changing ideas behind what it means to be young.