



ASTORRE MANFREDI The Most Beautiful Boy of the Italian Renaissance His Life and Times

Michael Boyd Hone

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Very few people have ever heard of Astorre Manfredi. He nevertheless lived in one of the most exciting times in the history of the world, the Italian Renaissance, home to the likes of Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Lorenzo Il Magnifico, Cesare and Lucretia Borgia, all of whom he may have rubbed shoulders with, one of whom murdered him. It was also one of the most turbulent of times. Wars, civil unrest, popes who engendered children, girls seduced through incest, heretics burned at the stake, bacchanalias unknown since Ancient Rome, and the list goes on and on. Plots and counter plots, assassinations, cruelty beyond human understanding, plagues, treason, poverty that condemned a generation to an early death--and wealth beyond measure--were part of every-day life during the Renaissance. The story of Astorre Manfredi is a mystery of major proportions, the murder of a boy so beautiful that the artists of Italy flocked to his door for the honor of doing a painting or a piece of sculpture, this in an age of particularly beautiful boys and girls. Astorre was murdered, perhaps by Pope Alexander VI, a man who had fathered at least six children, perhaps by Alexander's son, Cesare, a man said to have slept with his sister as Caligula had slept with his, a man who was not indifferent to boys, in the same way that his father the pope was drawn to muscular thighs. Or perhaps he was murdered by both, at the end of a three-day orgy during which Astorre, age 17, his brother, age 15, and a number of pre-pubescent girls took part, willingly or not. The task I've set myself is to tell the story as completely and as historically as is humanly possible. I will invent nothing; I will give voice to all of the participants—and they were numerous. Numerous but admittedly silent after half a millennium in their graves. I will bring forth the facts that are known--I will exploit the historical truths, rumors and on-dits at my disposal.

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