

Theses Completed

Gerald Allan Dunlevie. “*Virginibus Puerisque*: Five Preaching Plays of Castellano de’ Castellani Addressed to the Youth of Florence.” Doctoral Dissertation, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada, 2005. Director: Konrad Eisenbichler.

Castellano di Pierozzo Castellani (1461–1519/20) was a Florentine priest, poet, academic, and playwright. His lineage was patrician, but since his family fortunes were much reduced he had his own way to make. A man of many talents, he became a professor of canon law in the Studio of Florence, Vicar of the bishop of Fiesole, a *conte palatino*, and a client of the Medici, patrons of the Florentine Renaissance and *de facto* rulers of the city. In addition, Castellani was a zealous religious reformer who contributed actively, both as regulator of convents and writer of devotional poetry, to the late-Quattrocento Christian Renaissance that produced such figures as the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1498).

Employing his literary gifts in the service of his reforming zeal, Castellani composed *sacre rappresentazioni*, religious dramas intended for the entertainment, edification, and conversion of his audiences – the Horatian combination of *delectare et monere*. This thesis treats five of these plays in a manner not attempted before. First, it is argued that the dramas constituted an extension of preaching by other means: in keeping with the playwright’s clerical profession, the plays it examines were in effect dramatized sermons, theatrical realizations of the kind of *exempla* that conventional preachers would be expected to use in sermons on the subject. Secondly, evidence is adduced that they were composed for performance in convents and youth confraternities with the specific aim of solving certain moral problems confronting the young people of the day. Finally, the thesis offers a detailed analysis of the plays themselves both as theatre and in their social context.

The groundwork for this contextualization is laid in Chapter 1 by an examination of the author’s personal background, the society which formed him and which is reflected in his plays, and the subsets of that society which constituted his target audiences. Chapter 2 follows the evolution of the *sacra rappresentazione* itself from religious spectacle in the time of Cosimo de’ Medici *il Vecchio* (1389–1464) to literary drama under *il Magnifico* Lorenzo de’ Medici (1449–1492); then the critical fortunes of the genre, and of Castellani in particular, are traced from the sixteenth century to the present day. The next two chapters evaluate five of the author’s “preaching plays”, three written for young women and two for young men, both as theatre and in their probable effects as propaganda upon their youthful audiences. Among other things, these analyses reveal the twofold nature of Castellani’s preaching plays. First, they were cultural throwbacks, catering to the nostalgia of sophisticated Florentines for a perceived heroic past of shining faith and mighty deeds. Secondly, they were successful works of

religious propaganda in their own day, tailored to engage the interest and meet the needs of their author's target audiences in convents and youth confraternities. By virtue of both these qualities the plays are shown to be precious examples of the vibrant culture that gave them birth.

Six appendices complete the thesis. The first provides a list of of Castellano de' Castellani's religious dramas; the second enumerates the sources for the chronological bibliography of Castellani's published works; the third names the scholars of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries who mention Castellani; the fourth gives the publication dates of Castellani's expressly attributed plays in print; the fifth provides a transcript of the Clematius inscription; and the sixth explains the rationale for attributing the *Conversione di S. Maria Maddalena* to Castellani.