

Di Biase, Pietro. *Le confraternite di Trinitapoli*. Fasano di Puglia: Schena Editore, 1989. 223 pp. ISBN 88-7514-353-6. Lire 24,000.

This beautifully printed and illustrated volume examines confraternities in Trinitapoli, Puglia, with particular emphasis on their 18th-century origins. The author contextualizes the birth of these organizations within the "evolution/involution" which he sees as an important determinant of the lay religious movement in southern Italy and elsewhere in the peninsula at that time. As an example of this phenomenon, the author points to the decrease in charitable activities (once a major component of confraternity life) and its contingent increase in devotional activities. The change, he purports, is predicated by a ruinous drop in economic resources, which he sees as a direct result of Bourbon government attempts to appropriate the confraternities' extensive wealth. Left "high and dry," the confraternities are thus obliged to emphasize their devotional life, eventually externalizing and formalizing it in line with current taste. The final result is a weakening of the strong spiritual/religious sensibilities that had given birth to the confraternities and a loosening of the adhesive forces that had brought and held together the original members.

The volume is divided into chapters that describe not only the confraternities' origins, but also their statutes, membership, habit, administration, religious practices, spiritual advisor, charitable activities, the "problem of death," ending with some "riflessioni" by the author, a description of the confraternities in the 19th and 20th century, and an epilogue. The author has also included three appendices, one describing the Holy Week confraternal procession in Trinitapoli, another the clerical/confraternal conflicts in the post-unification period (post 1861), and the third is a transcription of the statutes of the four confraternities of the Santissimo Sacramento (1758), S. Maria di Loreto (1781), S. Giuseppe (1781), and S. Anna (1832).

Konrad Eisenbichler

Victoria College, University of Toronto

\* \* \*

*Esperienze dello spettacolo religioso nell'Europa del Quattrocento*. Convegno di studi, Roma 17-20 giugno, Anagni 21 giugno 1992. Centro di studi sul teatro medioevale e rinascimentale. Roma: Torre D'Orfeo Editrice, 1993. 370 pp.

The volume under review constitutes an impressive collection of papers presented at the 16th annual conference of the Centro studi sul teatro

medievale e rinascimentale (Rome and Anagni, 1992). This impression is only slightly marred by numerous typographical errors, particularly in the article on Polish theatre by Nina Karály. Although the conference organizers intended to honour the 500th anniversary of the death of Lorenzo de' Medici (1492) by focusing upon Florence in the 15th century (p. 11), the topics and annotated bibliographies, organized into national categories, cover a broad range of theatrical activity from Cornwall to the Ukraine. It is hardly surprising then, that the subject of confraternities arises only in those papers which treat the origins or organization and cultural milieu of the Italian *sacre rappresentazioni*.

The one Italian scholar, Raimondo Guarino, who may be likened to that fatal moth ever attracted by the flame of the old evolutionary view of theatrical development, is disappointingly vague whenever he alludes to the confraternal connections of Italian theatre. Although he recognizes in the final analysis that one cannot identify a single origin for drama (p. 57), Guarino generally favours the formative influence on theatre of the "semi-dramatic" sermon over the *lauda*.

The most significant contributions to confraternity studies are those by Paola Ventrone and Nerida Newbigin, who discuss the connections between the *sacre rappresentazioni* and the four youths' confraternities in 15th-century Florence. While rejecting the evolutionary thesis of the popularization of liturgical drama through dramatic *lauda* (p. 68), Ventrone ascribes a formative influence to those youths' confraternities authorized by Pope Eugenius IV in 1442 and to the pedagogical innovations which Archbishop Antonino Pierozzi implemented in 1446 for instructing the same youths in their catechism (p. 71). Ventrone goes on to describe the rapid diffusion of the *sacre rappresentazioni* from the youths' confraternities into the Florentine community whereby the pious exercises were superimposed upon pre-existing theatrical tradition (p. 93f.).

Newbigin, on the other hand, reminds her readers that there is no way to verify the accepted belief that 15th-century Florentine *sacre rappresentazioni* necessarily belonged in the context of youths' confraternities (p. 105), since supportive documentation exists only for the Company of the Purification, and here only until 1478, when the confraternity's dramatic activities were curtailed in favour of the recitation of pious sermons (p. 107). Newbigin's rigorous methodology, regarding the chronology of her manuscript sources and other criteria for distinguishing those dramatic texts which were destined for the semi-private use of the youths' confraternities from the adult ones (p. 110) is most refreshing.

In the end, nothing could be more suitable than the reference in the footnotes of these papers to the published proceedings, dealing with Italian confraternities, from the 1989 conference in Toronto (*Crossing the Boundaries ...*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler. Early Drama, Art and Music Monograph Series, 15. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1991).

Janet Ritch  
Centre for Medieval Studies  
University of Toronto

\* \* \*

Fella, Francesco. *La confraternita di S. Domenico e l'Addolorata nell'Isola Madre*. Fasano, BR: Schena Editore, 1987. 435 pp. ISBN 88-7514-19409. Lire 38,000.

This in-depth volume examines the history and characteristics of the Taranto confraternity dedicated to St. Dominic and the Virgin of Sorrows from a variety of angles: not only historical, but also anthropological, semiotical, cultural, etc.

The first chapter, aptly entitled "Prolegomeni all'antropologia devozionale" begins with a look at the "sacrality" of words and "the sacred word" in order to define the terminology for a discussion of the 11th and 12th-century "crisis in preaching." The contribution of the Dominican and Servite orders to preaching is assessed, and the chapter ends with an examination of changing figure of Mary, now depicted as a "Mother of Sorrows" (*Addolorata*). The second chapter gives the historical background to the arrival of the Dominican order in the Puglia (the "Province of St. Thomas"), their first conflicts with the local secular clergy and older confraternities, the foundation of the confraternity of S. Domenico in Soriano (1670) and the first fifty years of its existence (1670-1727). The third chapter describes the eventual Dominican victory in the "precedence" question between local confraternities, the first officially-approved Statutes (1777), and the institution of the "Great Feast" of the Addolorata. The fourth chapter is devoted to the official amalgamation (*aggregazione*) of the confraternity of the Addolorata with the confraternity of San Domenico (1870). The last chapter examines the "Little Feast," the Easter procession, the representation of religious plays, the musical festivities, and other events organized or sponsored by the confraternity. Included within the chapters, there are several transcriptions of relevant documents.