

Medieval and Early Modern Ritual. Formalized Behavior in Europe, China and Japan, ed. Joëlle Rollo-Koster. Leiden: Brill, 2002. 310 pp. ISBN 9-0041-1749-0.

Ritual, from witchcraft to royalty, from the Orient (China, Japan and Tibet) to Avignon, is a theme so diverse that Catherine Bell, in her introduction, asserts the impossibility of finding anything much in common. The twelve articles, linked here so tenuously, originated in two sessions of the Medieval Studies Conference in Kalamazoo, Michigan, which the editor organized in 1997. Of these, three involve confraternities to some extent.

The third essay by Marguerite Ragnow supplies some interesting background to one origin of the confraternity. Within the familiar context of the tripartite cosmology (heaven, earth and hell) and fourfold exegesis of the European Middle Ages, Ragnow explicates the “multiplicity of meanings” – historic, economic, pragmatic, figurative and spiritual – of rituals associated with the gift of a church to a convent in Angers, France, c. 1085. In the first stage of the ritual, a lay couple, Geoffrey and Ameline, place the church of Vernouille-Fourier “into the hands of the abbess Richildis” (p. 59) in the chapter house of the convent of Sainte-Marie de la Charité before all the nuns. By contextualizing this transfer of property, Ragnow is able to identify it as one more ritual of investiture during the eleventh-century controversy, whose antecedents she traces back to Roman legal practice. Usually, such a transfer involved a reciprocal counter-gift to the donor which might include a grant of burial rights, membership in the monastic community or “privileges of confraternity” (p.60). Thus Ragnow explains one origin of the confraternity in terms of reciprocity within a rite of investiture.

No less complex are the “multiple levels” (p. 150) at which Dylan Reid interprets the carnival celebrated by the Abbey of the Conards in Rouen, 1541. In an article classified as “Ritual and Identity”, Reid relies primarily upon a uniquely detailed description of a French carnival, *Les triomphes de l'abbaye des Conards*, originally published by the Abbey itself. Certainly, one can sense the bubbling sense of comic *esprit* with which the event must have overflowed, not so much in the sober “Funeral of Commerce”, which led the Procession on the Sunday before Easter, as in the most elaborately mounted *tableau vivant*, the *Lessive de l'Abbaye*, which transformed “a classical triumph into a washing day” (p. 166). Although possibly a parody of a lay confraternity, the Abbey is not discussed in these terms by Reid.

Returning again to origins, Michael W. Maker, S.J., describes the mid-sixteenth century emergence of Jesuit-directed confraternities, specifically the *Confraternita della Grazia*, the *Carcerati* and the penitential confraternities (pp. 205–209), in an effort to counter the received view that the Jesuits had “no close contact with the liturgy” (p. 193). Within the confraternities under Jesuit direction, Catholic liturgical ritual became transformative for the orphans and battered women in their shelters. Applying Arnold van Gennep’s analysis of the threefold rite of passage (1908) to the liturgy, Maker even goes so far as to claim that it

could transform the *donna caduta* into one of the *virgine honeste*! Thanks in part to Victor Turner's re-working of Van Gennep's formula: separation, transition or liminality, and incorporation or reintegration, (pp. 19, 206, 247 *et ad passim*), this analytical tool constitutes the most prevalent one used here. This commonality in itself bears mentioning.

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L'Oratorio del Gonfalone a Roma. Il ciclo cinquecentesco della Passione di Cristo, ed. Maria Grazia Bernardini. Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2002. 231 pp., ill. ISBN: 88-8215-485-8, € 40.

This sumptuous volume, published with the support of the Credito Artigiano bank, marks the completion of a breathtaking restoration of the Oratory of the Confraternity of the Gonfalone in Rome. Located in Via del Gonfalone, just off the Via Giulia, and now the home of the Coro Polifonico di Roma, the Oratory has long been famous for its monumental fresco decoration. Between 1568 and 1577, the Confraternity commissioned a series of major and minor painters, including il Bertoja, Livio Agresti, Marco Pino, Federico Zuccari, Raffaellino da Reggio, Marcantonio dal Forno and Cesare Nebbia, to complete a cycle of twelve scenes of the Passion from the Entry into Jerusalem to the Resurrection, separated by fictive spiral columns and, in the upper register, above a fictive cornice, scenes of prophets and sibyls.

The volume opens with an essay by Antonio Martini on the history, both legendary and documentary, of the Archconfraternity, outlining its foundation, its charitable works, and the Passion plays it performed in the Colosseum between 1490 and 1539. This is followed by an essay on the commissioning and iconography of the decoration, by Maria Grazia Bernardini who directed the restoration on behalf of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Storici di Roma (now called the Soprintendenza Speciale per il Polo Museale Romano) and edited this volume. Claudio Strinati's short essay, "Storie della Passione" then situates and evaluates the decoration in the artistic context of late sixteenth-century Rome.

In "Memorie di teatro o rappresentazioni teatrali? Le rappresentazioni del Gonfalone nel Cinquecento e le scene `teatrali' del suo Oratorio," Barbara Wisch, whose 1985 thesis provides indispensable documentation for several of the essays in this volume, challenges the traditional assumption that the decoration is directly connected to the confraternity's plays (which she examines closely), demonstrating instead that the theatricality of the frescoes draws rather on new models of theatrical framing developed by Salviati and Vasari in the 1540s.

The longest essay in the book is Bernardini's series of *schede* on the single artists and their frescoes, "Il ciclo della Passione di Cristo: gli artisti," enriched by details, comparative illustrations, preparatory drawings, and ample documen-