

This perspective also implies, and in a certain sense proclaims, the importance of Humanities in current life, and this, in turn, implies a reflection on the role of the intellectual in modern society.

The volume presents two important moments of the Milanese way in providing social services: the first part focuses on the state of the social assistance (lay/religious) before the institution of the “Monte di Pietà” and the fifteenth-century hospitals. One should point out the interesting analysis of the role of intellectuals such as Bonvesin de la Riva in the thirteenth-century Milanese life (“Bonvesin da la Riva, un intellettuale laico alla ricerca di una dimensione religiosa nella Milano di fine Duecento”), the descriptions of the lives of merchants of Milan who were involved in social activities (“Vite di mercanti milanesi del Trecento e del Quattrocento affari e carità”). The study also offers a clear description of the Medieval attitude towards health, body, soul, pandemics; together with an effective description of monastic, first, and lay/religious institutions, second, devoted to health and to assistance to the poor (“Tra anima e corpo: modi e luoghi di cura nel Medioevo”; “Ospedali e cibo in età medievale”). The last part of the book is concentrated on a re-analysis of the historical importance of the reform of Milan’s hospitals in the 1400s that ends with the founding of the Monte di Pietà, strongly supported by preachers such as Bernardino da Siena and other friars.

Albini’s study makes an important contribution to the study of charitable institutions in Medieval Italy (most of all in Milan and other selected areas of Northern Italy), and highlights an interesting historical/critic link between the Medieval hospital system and the contemporary Welfare problems in Western countries.

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Cinquecento anni di Misericordia, ed. Paolo Vitali, text and transcriptions by Fabrizio Mari. Pescia: Edizioni Vannini, 2006. 190 pp. b/w illustrations.

This short, but captivating volume provides an introduction to the history of the confraternity of mercy in the Tuscan town of Pescia, on the Apennine foothills north-west of Florence. Founded in 1506 in the wake of a Marian miracle at the local Franciscan church, the confraternity quickly grew and prospered, easily thriving until the grand-ducal suppressions of 1784. After a sixty-years hiatus, it was re-founded in 1842 and continues to this day to offer a devotional and charitable venue to the people of Pescia.

The majority of the volume consists of a “historical survey” by Fabrizio Mari and his transcription of several important documents related to the confraternity. In the first chapter of his “Excursus storico” Mari details the origins of the confraternity (pp. 15–23). A week after a statue of the Virgin in the church of St. Francis in Pescia had begun to show “certain miraculous signs” (13 April 1506), a group of local men gathered to found a confraternity in her honour, but also (these are Tuscans, after

all) for the benefit of all its members, for the assistance of the poor, the sick, the needy, and the condemned, and in honour of the deceased. Strangely enough, the confraternity was not established in the mendicant church of St. Francis, where the miraculous statue was housed and was “active”, but rather across the street from it in the diocesan church of St. Stephen. As Mari points out, this unexpected decision to honour the miraculous image but, at the same time, to distance its devotees from the mendicant church that housed it, may be linked to local interests in gaining control over the “after-miracle” so as to manage it more effectively.

The second chapter (pp. 25–32) identifies the seventeen founders and members of the confraternity in the years 1506–33, providing short biographies for many of them and pointing out “the remarkable heterogeneity that was typical of an active and enterprising community, as, in fact, Pescia was in the first decades of the sixteenth century” (p. 31). The third chapter (pp. 33–49) looks, instead, at the confraternity’s charitable work for the city and the citizenry from 1506 to its suppression in 1784. Here, Mari focuses on the famine and plague of 1527, the threats from marauding imperial soldiers in 1530, and the great plague of 1631. Here, also, Mari brings to light a fascinating episode from 1680, when fifty female members of the *Misericordia* decided to found a convent and take the veil, which they did, donning the Dominican habit but following the rule of St. Benedict. In this chapter Mari also describes in detail the confraternity’s involvement in a comforting ritual for a 22-year-old youth condemned to the gallows. Although late (1749), this comforting episode is of interest not only for the ritual involved (which is fairly standard), but also for the fund-raising that it inspired “for the soul of the condemned man” and the expenses it generated (minutely detailed in the records) – expenses that included 217 requiem masses for the executed youth as well as chocolate, coffee, and white sugar for the *confratelli*. In chapter four (pp. 51–59) Mari examines the 1506 statutes of the confraternity and then follows it with an edition of the statutes themselves (pp. 63–80).

In 1784 the confraternity fell victim to the general closing of confraternities in Tuscany decreed by Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo. After a sixty-year hiatus, the confraternity re-opened in 1842. Mari jumps the hiatus and continues his narrative with a sixth chapter (pp. 81–99) describing the re-birth of the confraternity and its development in the nineteenth/twentieth century, reaching as far as 1944. The last chapter in the historical survey is a transcription of the nineteenth-century statutes.

After all these chapters, Mari offers the reader a section of *Documenti* with a number of important transcriptions that can prove useful for scholars elsewhere: the journal entry describing the Marian miracle of 1506 (pp. 121–122); the 1506 permit to build the oratory (pp. 122–123); the 1506 founding act of the confraternity (pp. 124–126); the 1506–33 list of members (pp. 126–138); the undated sixteenth-century statutes (pp. 129–165); the confraternity’s obligations of Masses to be recited (pp. 165–167); a 1545 inventory of liturgical objects in the confraternity (pp. 167–171); and the 1726 inventory of the confraternity’s archive (pp. 171–173).

The volume ends with 16 black/white photographs of confraternity events from the 1890s–1960s and an index of names.

Although in many ways a volume for local consumption, this is also a useful work for scholars anywhere interested in the confraternal movement in the smaller towns of Italy during the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries. Fabrizio Mari's "historical survey" (and a survey it is, given the nature of the volume) is solidly rooted in archival documentation and his transcription of the confraternity's three sets of statutes, its inventories, and its membership list will easily serve the greater interests of colleagues not able to consult the documents *in situ*.

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Il restauro di due codici trecenteschi dell'Archivio Capitolare di S. Rufino di Assisi. Assisi: Arti Grafiche Antica Porziuncola, 2006. 58 pp. [includes Francesco Santucci, "I 'Disciplinati' in Assisi e i loro codici più antichi (con particolare riguardo alla Fraternita di S. Stefano", pp. 39–58, on the restoration of the missal of the confraternity of the Disciplinati di S. Stefano di Assisi, dated 1338).

This small, but beautifully produced and illustrated volume was published to mark the restoration of two important fourteenth-century codices from the chapter archives of the cathedral of S. Rufino in Assisi.

The first is a manuscript antiphonary in use at the cathedral from the late fourteenth to at least the mid seventeenth centuries. Fabrizio Mastroianni, a specialist of Gregorian chant, provides the reader with a detailed analysis of the codex and a brief, but informative description of its use. This is then followed by fourteen beautifully produced full-page colour illustrations of some of the illuminated pages from the antiphonary. Music and art historians will find the description and the images particularly interesting.

Confraternity scholars will instead find the second codex of interest to them. This is a missal from the flagellant confraternity of S. Stefano. Francesco Santucci, director of the Archivio Capitolare di S. Rufino di Assisi, provides us with a fairly general, but again very informative survey of the development of confraternities in Assisi in the fourteenth century. Of particular interest to our readers will be his list (complete with founding dates) of the eleven confraternities active in Assisi in the mid-fourteenth century (an indication of just how quickly the confraternal movement set roots in Assisi) and then with a list of confraternities in smaller nearby towns and hamlets. He then follows this general introduction with a description of the contents of the missal. In so doing, Santucci transcribes two lists of members who had joined the sodality by 1338 (the lists can also be read in their original hand in the facsimile reproduction of the pages that contain them). Six full-page colour reproductions of selected pages from this missal close the *volumetto*.