

the Franciscan movement brought about a vast renewal of religious life, and where a specific model of female sainthood emerged. Thirteenth-century central Italy witnessed the presence of exceptional women, such as Clare of Assisi, Angela of Foligno, and Chiara of Montefalco, who carried out St. Francis' legacy of poverty.

In particular, St. Clare of Assisi received the habit from Francis himself; she later established the highly successful order of the Poor Clares and had her own rule approved by the Pope. She was canonised in 1255, two years after her death.

This volume deals with the presence of the order of St. Clare in Assisi, and its significance. It collects several essays on different topics. The first part is devoted to the study of the order's houses in Assisi; it does not focus on St. Clare's basilica and first monastery (*Protomonastero*), since they were the subject of an extensive work by F. Casolini in 1950, but rather on the other, secondary Clarian monasteries. Their history is documented through accurate archival research, which covers seven hundred years. The second part examines the particular legal and jurisdictional problems the monasteries faced in the nineteenth century with the end of the state Church. The third part is a survey of iconographical and liturgical material related to the saint's figure.

Giovanna Casagrande, a specialist on the history of religious life in central Italy, and Sonia Merli have written an essay of particular interest about secondary Clarian monasteries in Assisi between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries. We learn that in this period, in addition to the *Protomonastero*, there were four monasteries of the order; none of these religious communities survived the fifteenth century. The authors provide documents on their foundation, economic resources, transactions and endowments, together with lists of abbesses and nuns. We find evidence of the social and economic relevance of the Poor Clares in medieval Assisi, and of their success in establishing religious communities. We also get a glance at some legal conflicts between these communities and the local ecclesiastical authorities, usually a result of the latter's uncertain jurisdictional power over the monasteries.

This volume provides useful reading for any researcher in Italian ecclesiastical history and religious life. Unfortunately, the editor has not provided a bibliography, nor an index of names and places.

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Rubino, Antonio. *Le confraternite laicali a Taranto dal XVI al XIX secolo*. Puglia storica, 6. Fasano (BR): Schena Editore, 1995. 404 pp., ill.

This book is a detailed analysis of the history of confraternities in the city of Taranto between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, namely between the Council of Trent and the unification of Italy. Taranto and its province were part of the Kingdom of Naples at the time, a very conservative and centralised state. In the immediate aftermath of the Council the main concern of the Church was to cleanse the community. It strove to ensure that heresy did not penetrate the Catholic world and excommunicated those who did not follow the new rules imposed by the Counter-

Reformation. Such strict measures were also taken in Taranto. The bishops fought strenuously against immoral practices and witchcraft, and were especially attentive to preventing the community from being contaminated by negative influences.

Rubino analyses this situation carefully in his first chapter, quoting relevant documents and translating the Latin sources consulted. According to his research, the Franciscan order was the largest in the city, followed by the Dominicans, the Carmelites and the Benedictines. In the aftermath of the Council, however, the lay confraternities gradually assumed a prominent role not only in the spiritual life of Taranto's citizens, but also in their social life. Between 1500 and 1600 the number of confraternities in the city of Taranto grew to such an extent that by the turn of the century they were able to control the financial activity of the city. The second chapter of this volume is especially interesting since it traces the history of every single lay confraternity in the city. Rubino provides a detailed outline of the history of each confraternity, analyzing their iconography, their habit and their purpose. He is especially meticulous in listing the articles of their rule. He refers to several relevant documents, which, as he himself observes, are as yet unedited but are nevertheless extremely important for this type of study. Rubino then goes on to analyze the confraternities' common practices, such as the organising of ceremonies and the charitable activities that they promoted unceasingly. The third chapter is an attempt at establishing the common lines on which the confraternities operated and still operate today.

This volume is an extremely useful source of material for the historian of confraternities, as a result of the copious amount of information contained in chapter two. As a whole, it not only offers an accurate historical outline of the growth of the lay confraternities, but also creates a link with the present, since Rubino does not fail to mention their activities up to the present day.

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*La scena della gloria. Drammaturgia e spettacolo a Milano in età spagnola.* Eds. Annamaria Cascetta, Roberta Carpani. Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1995. x, 804 pp. 96 b/w plates.

This collection of essays on theatre in Milan during the Spanish domination (1535-1713) defines theatre not just as a professional activity in the modern sense, but as an attitude that infused many different ritual and ceremonial aspects of urban life. The book is divided into four sections, each dealing with a different side of this phenomenon.

The first section discusses how theatrical ideas underlay the architecture and urban planning of this period. Marco Rossi's essay discusses both how new architectural ensembles were integrated theatrically into their settings, and how they embodied the agendas of their sponsors. The Spanish used architecture as a means of transforming Milan into an imperial city while Carlo Borromeo and his successor as archbishop, Federico Borromeo, were intent on emphasizing the Christian aspect of