

international coverage by including studies from other areas – two papers on Italy, one about Portugal and one about colonial Latin America, along with papers about Holy Cross confraternities in other Spanish provinces. On the other hand, the volume shows a real interdisciplinary dialogue, placing papers from different fields side by side, such as religious studies, art history, and cultural history. Preceding all of these different approaches, a comprehensive article by José Sánchez Herrero presents the theological basis of the devotion to the Holy Cross from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The volume lacks a coherent introduction, however, that makes sense of the diverse contributions made from so many angles, and that places the papers in their proper historiographic context. Also, the overall arrangement of the different topics eludes any consistent sequence. Despite all these organizational problems, the articles as a group collect invaluable documentary material that would be of use for any scholar interested in the local and general developments of Holy Cross confraternities during the early modern period.

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*The Cambridge Companion to Piero della Francesca*, ed. Jeryldene M. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Pp. xvi, 268; 29 ill. ISBN 0-521-65254-5 hardback, 0-521-65472-6 paperback.

This collection of 10 essays comprises a set of diverse approaches to the Quattrocento painter Piero della Francesca. Editor Jeryldene Wood notes in her introduction that she has employed “authors from several fields to consider Piero's pictures from a range of historical perspectives” (12). While some essays focus upon traditional art-historical issues such as iconography and devotional practice, others take a more unorthodox approach, investigating Piero's mathematical treatises and his popularity among twentieth-century artists. The volume thus forms a wide-ranging and stimulating compendium.

Two essays in this volume discuss Piero's confraternal commissions, the first by Diane Cohl Ahl and the second by Timothy Verdon. Ahl's essay, “*The Misericordia Polyptych: Reflections on Spiritual and Visual Culture in Sansepolcro*,” focuses upon Piero's altarpiece, which was commissioned in 1445 for the confraternity of Santa Maria della Misericordia in Sansepolcro. This altarpiece of the *Madonna of Mercy* is Piero's earliest surviving work and was commissioned for a confraternity to which Piero and his family belonged. Ahl discusses the iconography of the altarpiece, and its relation to practices of the confraternity such as self-flagellation, charity towards the poor, and care for victims of the plague. Ahl also explores painted and sculpted precedents for the *Madonna of Mercy* that Piero may have drawn upon, as well as the commissioning of the altarpiece by the Pichi family.

Timothy Verdon, in his essay “*The Spiritual World of Piero's Art*,” discusses several of Piero's early paintings: *Saint Jerome with a Disciple*, the *Misericordia Polyptych*, and the *Baptism of Christ*. Verdon's analysis of the *Misericordia Polyptych*

*tych* complements Ahl's. His iconographic reading is informed by theological studies, and is set in contrast to his investigation of works for private and monastic devotion. Verdon notes, "these works...are typical of three related but distinct 'environments' of Quattrocento religious and cultural experience: private piety, corporate or confraternal devotion, and the more traditional context of monastic prayer" (32). Verdon's discussion may be of interest to scholars concerned with how confraternal altarpieces are distinctive from altarpieces in other religious settings.

Although the other essays in this volume do not discuss confraternal commissions, they may still be of interest to scholars of confraternity studies. They are written by eminent scholars and yield a rich picture of Piero's life and art, and a sense of the context in which his confraternal altarpieces were painted.

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*Cosma e Damiano dall'Oriente a Firenze*, ed. Elena Giannarelli. Firenze: Edizioni della Meridiana, 2002. 205 pp., 22 colour illustrations. ISBN 88-87478-31-7.

This collection of essays edited by Elena Giannarelli offers a valuable investigation into the lives, legends, and representations of saints Cosmas and Damian, the holy twins whose cult flourished under the Medici in fifteenth-century Florence. *Cosma e Damiano: Dall'Oriente a Firenze* treats topics both big and small, from the history of the saints' cult to illuminated Florentine manuscripts, and reflects a welcome trend in cultural history toward a multidisciplinary understanding of the sacred in the early modern period. It is good to see scholars treating Cosmas and Damian, saints so ubiquitous in Renaissance Florence, as important subjects of inquiry in their own right.

Giannarelli's own article is a useful history of the saints that treats the legend of their martyrdom and the florescence of their cult in Constantinople in the fifth century. She examines some interconnections of the three most ancient hagiographic narratives as well as the steady development of the healing cult of Cosmas and Damian in Western Europe. More engaging still is Giannarelli's discussion of the tension in early Christianity between medical healing and divine thaumaturgy. She traces a consistent antagonism toward medicine in the writings of the Church Fathers, a disapproval of any healing other than from Christ's own hand, and a valorization of the ill whose suffering recalled Christ's Passion. Giannarelli sees a consonance between the gradual acceptance of the medical arts and the growth of Cosmas and Damian's cult; in Constantinople a healing rite known as the *incubatio* required the ill to spend a night in the saints' church during which Cosmas and Damian performed surgery on the sufferer.

In Ludovica Sebgondi's article on the iconography and representation of the saints, we learn more about Cosmas and Damian's surgical skills. One of the scenes in the predella panel of Fra Angelico's famous San Marco Altarpiece depicts the 'miracolo della gamba nera,' wherein the couple amputates the cancerous leg of a