

diocesan libraries, or in seminaries, especially in books for the purpose of teaching homiletics. Finally, at the end of the catalogue is a much appreciated bibliography listing, in one section, editions of patristic writings in their Slovenian translation and, in the other, a rich repertoire of secondary sources.

The catalogue proper describes the manuscripts, codices and books as they were displayed at the exhibition, each with detailed description of the work. The catalogue closes with a summary in English of the essays presented above.

Anne Urbancic
Victoria College
University of Toronto

Sebregondi, Ludovica. *San Jacopo in Campo Corbolini a Firenze. Percorsi storici dai Templari all'Ordine di Malta all'era moderna*. Firenze: Edifir, 2005. 206 pp., 127 b/w and colour illustrations. ISBN 88-7970-237-8. € 30

When it was founded by the Knights Templar at the beginning of the thirteenth century the small church of San Jacopo in Campo Corbolini stood outside of Florence's city walls and in the middle of orchards (near the so-called Campo Corbolini, or field of the Corbolini). The fifteenth-century Codice Rustici, shows that even a hundred years later it was still surrounded by trees and fields. Around it, however, gravitated a number of great artists and influential figures, so much so that the church was soon embellished with great masterpieces, such as the tombstone of Luigi Tornabuoni, an extraordinary piece created by a mysterious, as well as gifted sculptor known simply as Cicilia. Today the church is no longer active, but it has been restored and can be visited by appointment.

Ludovica Sebregondi's book reconstructs the history of this small church and important *commenda*. Her work (which revisits and largely enriches her doctoral thesis of some years ago) combines the scientific strictness of the Florentine school of art studies—that is, careful attention to archival documents, due consideration to the historical, ideological and political context, wide knowledge of the critical literature—with the author's talent for drawing together, with great clarity, a thorough amount of historical data into a lucid and fascinating historical narrative. Both rhetorically and scientifically, the book is a terse synecdoche, using the part to signify the whole, in this case using the church of San Jacopo in Campo Corbolini as a venue into a better understanding of Florentine religious, social, and artistic life over the course of seven centuries.

The text is divided into seven chapters chronologically ordered from the thirteenth to the twentieth century. It is enriched by preliminary articles by Mina Gregori and Antonio Paolucci. The number of archives and documents consulted by Sebregondi is truly impressive. Her sources range from the major Florentine archives (Archivio di Stato, Arcivescovile, dell'Opera del Duomo, dell'Ospedale degli Innocenti etc.), to the archives of the Knights of Malta and beyond. A rich array of these documents

is then transcribed in the Appendix. Sebreondi's uncommon scientific precision is echoed in her uncommon thoroughness in the selection of documents. Each chapter is preceded by a synthetic paragraph that contextualizes the history of the church in the greater history of the Knights Templar and the Knights of Malta in Florence and, more generally, in the Renaissance.

Without condescending to easy 'suggestions' in talking of the Knights Templar or the Knights of Malta, Sebreondi presents a rich collection of facts that tell a parallel story: that of the *commenda* and its commendatories and patrons set on the 'stage' of a changing political season that culminates with the political and cultural hegemony of the Medici family over Florence.

The first chapter discusses the founding of the church by the Knights Templar. The Order did not have a rooted presence in the Florentine area; so the church of San Jacopo in Campo Corbolini becomes one of the few and most important vestiges of its presence. Basing her narrative on a rich harvest of information drawn from original documents, Sebreondi describes the extent of Templars' properties in Florence up to the suppression of the Order. This first chapter also reconstructs the vicissitudes suffered by the knights and contextualizes them in the wider political and historical European scenario. Using the same detailed methodology, the author then describes the period in which the Knights of Malta owned the *commenda*. Here, too, Sebreondi's work is enriched by precise information about all the aspects of life in this Order, including its codes and required behaviours. This is not a secondary element, because only through the acquisition of an exact 'gallery' of data it is possible to decode the iconological elements of the artistic paths connected to the different personalities of the *commendatori*, or through the different political seasons of the dynamic late-Medieval and early-Renaissance period.

Among the biographies of the various *commendatori*, that of Giuliano Benini, who led the *commenda* for thirty years (1423–53), stands out. Benini was a member of an aristocratic family, a courageous knight, a diplomat, and a man of letters who owned rare and precious manuscripts. It is under his charge that the name of Filippo Brunelleschi begins to appear in the documents. Although the great architect created a *tabernacolo* for the church, just a few parts of it have survived to the present day (they have been recently restored). Together with great names such as those of Brunelleschi, or Donatello, or Michelozzo, the pages of the *commenda*'s books also report those of an exceptional 'crowd' of 'minor' artists, such as Ventura di Moro or Adriano di Nofri. They are a testament to the Golden Age of Florence when even a small peripheral church could employ a variety of excellent artists to embellish it and work side by side with the pinnacles of Western European art. This, which we defined earlier as a synecdoche, is brilliantly evidenced in Sebreondi's analysis, a sophisticated entry point into the spectacular web of relationships active among artists and patrons in Renaissance Florence.

The tombstone carved by the mysterious Cicilia for Luigi Tornabuoni's grave is another little-known masterpiece of Florentine art in San Jacopo. Sebreondi provides a clearer picture of this artist whom Vasari says is from Fiesole (near to Florence),

but for whom we do not have any exhaustive archival information. He probably worked in Sicily and was later surnamed Cicilia for this reason. The Tornabuoni tombstone is a virtuoso piece created while the controversial *commendatore* Luigi Tornabuoni was still alive. He was member of one of the most eminent Florentine families and an enemy of Filippo Strozzi, who contended the *commenda* of San Jacopo. The tombstone, which was completed in 1515, has been recently placed back in its original location inside San Jacopo, next to the altar, an uncommon location for a tombstone, and a particularly prestigious one to boot. Sebreghondi's historical analysis of this exquisite masterpiece allows the reader to evaluate better the major contemporary masterpieces such as the Verrocchio's grave for Cosimo the Elder, just a few hundred metres away in the Old Sacristy of San Lorenzo.

The book continues with a study of the life of the church and of its *commendatori* through the decadence up to the contemporary restoration. A rich appendix offers a variety of documents from the thirteenth century to the present: a remarkable collection that testifies to the importance of this small but emblematic Florentine church in the religious, cultural, and artistic life of Florence.

Gianni Cicali
Department of Italian Studies
University of Toronto