

“discipline” as indicated were to receive an indulgence of forty days from the bishop (72); members with “bad reputation” (*mala fama*) and an unacceptable life style at the time of their death were not to be buried in confraternal robes without special permission from the bishop (84); the federation’s general and confraternity visitors had to be approved by the bishop (86), and so forth.

The Viterbo Flagellant confraternity movement thrived over the course of the fourteenth century, but suffered a decline in the fifteenth century on account of competition from various corporations devoted to the assistance of the infirm and also because of the creation of new confraternal organizations.

In this issue of *Quaderni*, the editors include not only a synoptic edition of the statutes, but also the various liturgical Offices from the fourteenth- and fifteenth-centuries. These Offices touch on the flagellation ritual, which was to be carried out every Friday and at the investiture of a new member; they are written in Latin, but the first one contains a long prayer in the vernacular that includes an exhortation to pray for the bishop of Viterbo “who is the head of this holy brotherhood” (50).

According to the editors, “the Viterbo Offices differ from the liturgies devised by other Flagellant confraternities because of their similarity to ecclesiastical liturgy” (34). The statutes and the Offices included in this volume provide us with a revealing picture of the vitality of Viterbo’s confraternal movement and its distinctiveness.

Giovanna Casagrande

Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche, Università di Perugia

Traverso, Chiara. *La Scuola di San Fantin o dei “Picai”. Carità e giustizia a Venezia*. Venice: Marsilio, 2000. 186 pp, 20 colour and 70 b/w illustrations. ISBN 88-317-7650-9.

Confraternities dedicated to helping prisoners condemned to execution through their last hours began spreading across Italy from the 1330s. With names like the Company of the Dead (Bologna) or the Company of the Blacks (Florence, Ferrara, and elsewhere) we might be forgiven for thinking them self-consciously macabre groups. Yet they considered themselves ‘comforters’ of the condemned, and from that gained the generic name of ‘*conforterie*’. Elsewhere in Europe, this charitable work tended to be the province of regular or secular clergy, but in Italy it was the laity who early and determinedly claimed the right to undertake it. The usual mix of pious and political motives animated them in this, and given the tenacity with which they defended their rights, one might be forgiven for wondering whether the latter weighed more heavily in the balance. Moreover moving through the fifteenth century and into the early modern period we also find across Italy that the membership in these *conforterie* becomes ever more patrician and we might wonder from that whether their motives become ever more political as well.

With permission of the Council of Ten, Venice’s *Scuola Grande di San Girolamo* established one such group, the ‘*Scuola di Santa Maria della Giustizia*’,

in 1458. It soon took on the short-hand name of *San Fantin*, from the church where the confraternity installed it, and it retained that name even after it gained its own quarters. Fire consumed these quarters in 1562, reducing most of the early records to ashes, but the confraternity carried on to the end of the Republic in 1797 and its formal suppression in 1806.

In this volume Chiara Traverso offers a survey of the *conforteria*'s activities as they can be traced from the extant records. Her account ranges widely over these sources, drawing on statutes, wills, and administrative records of various kinds. The approach is more antiquarian than analytical, and Traverso leaves chronology behind as she moves from subject to subject. She opens with a section on the history and organization of the *conforteria*, which follows familiar Venetian and indeed peninsular models. A second section takes us through the various stages in the *conforteria*'s activities from the period beforehand in the cell and on to the execution, the funerary procession, the burial, and the requiem observances. She devotes more attention to the care and handling of the corpse than do most other studies of these groups. A final section takes us through the confraternal quarters and offers an inventory of its numerous artworks; the book is very generously illustrated with plates in colour and black and white. The group's statutes, copied after the fire and then updated periodically till 1756, are found in an appendix.

The book is valuable for the material that it brings forward, though it remains limited in scope and scholarship. Based on Traverso's *tesi di laurea* at Venice's Università Ca' Foscari, it is a descriptive work that asks relatively few questions. It would be interesting to find out more about the comforters themselves: who was drawn to this work and why? How many were involved and what might we learn from a prosopographical study of them? What did they read when preparing themselves to undertake this work? How did their work relate to that of other Venetian confraternities, to Venice's system of justice, and to its civic religion? The Italian scholar who has done most to expand our understanding of these groups and the importance of their work through the early modern period is Adriano Prosperi, and it would be interesting to see how Traverso might assess the work of the Scuola di San Fantin in light of his findings; as it is, his name is oddly absent from the bibliography.

Nicholas Terpstra

Department of History, University of Toronto