

Confréries et dévotions dans la Catholicité moderne (MI-XV^e–début XIX^e siècle). Études reunites par Bernard Dompnier et Paola Vismara. Collection de l'École française de Rome, 393. Rome: l'École française de Rome, 2008. Pp. 442. B/W illustrations + 2 colour plates. ISBN 978-2-7283-0794-4. Euros 39.

This collection of articles is based on the proceedings of a colloquium held in Rome in 2003, “Espaces et Cultures,” that brought together Italian and French confraternity scholars. Six of the contributions are in Italian, with the other twelve, and the interesting concluding essay, in French. The articles focus primarily on France and Italy, although three of them reach outside Europe, to the New World and Asia.

The goal of the colloquium, and the book, was to look at the religious dimension of confraternities, especially as a way of approaching the devotional history of the Catholic Church, while exploring some new approaches and sources. One of these newer approaches is to extend the period covered by the book's studies into the nineteenth century, emphasizing that the confraternal movement continued and renewed itself after the difficulties it experienced at the end of the eighteenth century. The book thus covers two separate periods of crisis and transformation for the confraternal movement: the one resulting from religious reforms in the sixteenth century, and the one resulting from the intervention of secular powers, whether absolutist or revolutionary, in the late eighteenth. The intention is to emphasize “une capacité d'adaptation continuelle aux transformations de l'Église et de la société,” [422] the capacity of confraternities to adapt to changes in Church and society. The shift forward of the book's periodization is reflected in the studies, and although it technically starts in the fifteenth century, the bulk of the studies focus on the later, seventeenth and eighteenth, centuries.

Another original goal of the collection is to broaden the types of sources used for confraternal research, and the way sources are used. The original colloquium's location in Rome reflected an intention to add sources from Papal archives to the local sources traditionally used for confraternity studies, and also to pay more attention to confraternal relationships with Rome. Notably, the book seeks to take a more thoughtful approach to the use of indulgences as sources. Confraternal use of indulgences, the book's editors argue, “mérite mieux que le sourire amusé et légèrement condescendant que lui ont réservé beaucoup de travaux naguère encore, à défaut de trouver l'angle d'analyse approprié” [420]. Stefano Simiz, in “Les confréries face à l'indulgence : tradition, quête, accueil et effets dans la France de l'est (XV^e–XVIII^e siècle,” and some of the other contributors work to develop these new analytical approaches that will rescue the indulgence from this amused condescension.

In terms of more traditional sources for confraternal studies, such as statutes, the book explores the possibility of examining them in a serial rather than intensive fashion, as a method of illuminating the cultural history of Catholic piety. For example, confraternities provide a valuable view into the emergence and evolution

of specific devotions, such as the Sacred Heart, and at the same time were an active agent in their propagation. Indulgences in turn were one of the key tools for encouraging these new devotions.

This emphasis on new sources and a serial approach comes together in the three articles that study the role of printed books in confraternities. Roberto Rusconi's "« Tesoro spirituale della compagnia » : I libri delle confraternite nell'Italia del '500," for example, analyzes the increase in the number of books printed by confraternities, but also the gradual evolution in their content over time, from simply reproducing statutes and regulations, to adding indulgences, and finally to including guidance for devotional practices.

There are still plenty of traditional aspects to these articles, which still mostly look at specific geographic areas, rely on typical local sources, and address common questions such as the role of confraternities in the city, or tensions with ecclesiastical authorities. But the editors conclude with the hope that the newer approaches explored in this collection can provide a valuable additional perspective on existing confraternal sources and studies.

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Nerbano, Mara. *Il teatro della devozione. Confraternite e spettacolo nell'Umbria medievale*. Perugia: Morlacchi Editore, 2006. xx, 412 pp., 48 illustrations. ISBN 88-6074-065-7. Euros 23.

This is a fundamental study for the history of theatre in Italian confraternities. It examines in detail the "performance" of sacred songs, that is, of the *laude* that were the traditional songs of late medieval confraternities in central Italy. The extensive repertoire developed by and for Italian confraternities included quite a number of "dramatic lauds" meant to be sung by two or more performers who would, in a way, assume a "role", very much as an actor would. The most famous such "dramatic laud" is Jacopone da Todi's *Donna de Paradiso*, also known as *Pianto della Madonna* (not to be confused with his *Stabat mater*, which narrates the same situation, but in Latin and as a narrative, not as a dialogue). The corpus of lauds available to confraternities was quite large and contributed significantly not only to their devotional rituals, but also to the development of a devotional theatre that, in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, blossomed into elaborate sacred representations (*sacre rappresentazioni*) and spectacular spiritual comedies.

For her study, Mara Nerbano focuses her attention primarily on the region of Umbria and its three major cities—Perugia, Assisi, and Orvieto—though occasionally she does also refer to the larger context of the Umbro-Tuscan region. Although in many ways homogenous, this repertoire does reveal a number of differences that reflect local situations, traditions, and interests. As a result, the repertoire is both