

## Reviews

Cantaluppi, Anna and Blythe Alice Raviola (eds.). *L'Umiltà e le rose. Storia di una compagnia femminile a Torino tra età moderna e contemporanea*.

Quaderni dell'Archivio Storico della Compagnia di San Paolo, 1. Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2017. Pp. xxiii, 401 + 42 ill., 48 tables. ISBN 978-88-222-6504-3 (paperback) €49.

The ten articles that comprise *L'umiltà e le rose* (Humility and the Roses) are arranged in four sections: the first seeks to illustrate the institutional identity of the Compagnia dell'Umiltà (Confraternity of Humility) in Turin, documented from the sixteenth century to 1934; the second focuses on the economic aspects of the confraternity; the third on its religiosity; and the fourth on its art and literature. The book's title alludes both to the name of the confraternity and to the symbol of its patron saint, Elisabeth of Hungary (1207–1231), who is always iconographically depicted with roses, a symbol of *nobilitas*, in her arms.

The recent discovery in the State Archive of Turin of a confraternity book entitled *Libro dell'Umiltà*, compiled between 1590 and 1638, brought to light the presence of a large number of men and women connected with a charitable confraternity in that city, the Compagnia dell'Umiltà, which included many women—later called “Ladies of Humility” or “Humiliated”—closely connected to the Savoy court and bound by family bonds to members of the local Confraternity of Saint Paul. The Confraternity of Saint Paul itself, in addition to having close connections with the court and with the Jesuits, and to promoting charitable activities, was involved, from 1653 to 1729, in the administration of the public debt, which gave it a strong power of decision both in the local government and in legal courts. Nicoletta Calapà's prosopographical study of this newly discovered *Libro dell'Umiltà* forms the basis for the other studies in the volume.

The introductory essay by Anna Cantaluppi reveals just how many of the female benefactors of the Confraternity of Saint Paul were connected, from as early as 1590, to the Savoy court. In her work carried out in collaboration with Pierangelo Gentile, Blythe Alice Raviola underlines how, in 1625, there was a major shift in the Compagnia dell'Umiltà when Christine Marie of France (1606–1663), daughter of King Henry IV and wife of Duke Victor Amadeus I of Savoy, joined the confraternity. The arrival of the young French bride marked the end of the Spanish “regency” in the confraternity previously embodied by the Spanish-educated Francesca Caterina of Savoy (1595–1640) and her sister Maria Apollonia of Savoy (1594–1665).

Eventually the Compagnia dell'Umiltà began to decline for a variety of reasons, as shown by Emanuele C. Colombo and Giorgio Uberti in their contribution on the economics of the confraternity. One of these

reasons is the confraternity's tendency not to invest the funds it received from bequests and donations, but to spend them to finance dowries for the girls about to get married or become nuns, in almsgiving, and in devotional activities. The state also contributed to the confraternity's decline when, in an effort to end pauperism, it took over the administration of charitable activities, as evidenced in the Crispi Law of 1890. Eventually, the confraternity, which was born in full harmony with the spirit of the society of *Ancient Régime*, was no longer in harmony with the new *geist* of the twentieth century and closed down (1934). The contributions by Davide Tabor, Marcella Maritano, and Beatrice Zucca, also have a prosopographical character. Zucca, for example, shows how the women who received dowry assistance from the confraternity came from all social levels, from poor to wealthy, from aristocratic to impoverished nobility.

Marzia Giuliani examines instead the relationship between the confraternity and the cult of St. Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary. Paolo Cozzo focuses on how the confraternity venerated several female saints named Elisabeth—St. Elisabeth, mother of Saint John the Baptist, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, and Elizabeth of Portugal (d. 1336). Rolando Bellini and Melanie Zefferino examine the iconography of the confraternity's veneration for St Elizabeth and point out that in some cases it is not clear which Elizabeth is being depicted. They also review the iconology of the saint from the medieval artist Simone Martini all the way to the works of Flemish artists. Still in an art-historical vein Giuseppina Giamportone examines the chapel of the Umiliate in the Church of the Santi Martiri in Turin. Maria Chiara Carpentieri looks at the iconography of St Elisabeth of Hungary over the centuries and points out that the thirteenth-century Elisabeth's preference for the active life seems to be highlighted, while in the fourteenth century her preference for the life of the mystic.

In the first part of their co-written article Simona Santacroce and Luisella Gioacchino examine a biography of St Elizabeth composed in 1607 by the French historian Pierre Matthieu, who based his work on a play by Lope de Vega (d. 1635) and his disciple Juan Pérez de Montalbán (d. 1638) entitled *Los Terceros de San Francisco*. In the second part, they examine the panegyrics of Emanuele Tesauro (1592–1675), in particular his *La metafisica del niente* and *Lo spettacolo*. The latter is dedicated to Saint Elisabeth, who is presented as a mirror for the education and upbringing of the women in the confraternity.

The nineteenth-century revival of the cult of St Elizabeth helped the aristocracy recover their traditional role after it had declined in the wake of the French revolution. Elisabeth could thus be considered a Cinderella *à rebours* because—as Stefania Tagliaferri suggests when exploring many artistic and literary works, from the biography of the saint published by Charles Forbes René de Montalambert (1836) to the Elisabeth of Hungary cycle painted by Moritz von Schwind in the Castle of Warburg (c. 1855)—instead of rising to the rank of princess as Cinderella did, Elizabeth of

Hungary descends from royal rank to the condition of poor “lady” in order to rehabilitate the dignity of the aristocracy.

In bringing to our attention the presence of, and work carried out by women in the Compagnia dell’Umiltà in Turin, this rich volume makes a substantial contribution to our greater understanding of women’s agency in early modern confraternities, charity, and art.

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**Cantaluppi, Anna, Walter E. Crivellin and Bruno Signorelli (eds.). *Le figlie della Compagnia. Casa del soccorso, Opera del deposito, Educatorio Duchessa Isabella fra età moderna e contemporanea*.**

**2 vols. Quaderni dell’Archivio Storico. Turin: Compagnia di San Paolo, 2011. Pp. 384, 64. ISBN 978-88-88183-09-5 (paperback). No price.**

Although much of this book will not be of primary interest to our readers, touching as it does mostly on nineteenth and twentieth century matters, its various sub-sections (in different articles) that deal with women in confraternities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries will certainly draw their attention, especially since so little is available on the place, role, and work of women in early modern lay religious associations.

Already shortly after its founding in 1563 the Compagnia di San Paolo in Turin gave its female members the opportunity to engage directly in the confraternity’s charitable work. It did so by placing the management of the “Casa del Soccorso” (house of assistance), which it founded in 1589 in order to educate and assist young women, completely into the hands of its *consorelle*. A century later, in 1683, the Compagnia also placed in their hands the newly-founded “Casa del Deposito” (house of deposit), a second enterprise specifically created to educate and assist young women. Over the four centuries of their existence, these institutions (or their reformulations under different names, but always in a direct line of descendancy from their original establishments) assisted more than 3700 young women in Turin and surrounding area. Unlike other early-modern institutions for women that sought either to remove them permanently from the marriage market (nunneries) or to redeem them after a life of immorality (Magdalene houses), the two “houses” established by the Compagnia di San Paolo sought, instead, to prepare women for a full and productive life in society by providing them with an education and professional training that would give them agency not only as wives, but also as contributors to the economy and to the well being of the family and the state. As a result, entrance into the “casa” was much sought after by young women and their families as an opportunity for the future (and not as a remedy for a present “ill” or problem). The impact these institutions thus had on the individual