

Reviews

Bernardi, Claudio. *Carnevale, Quaresima, Pasqua. Rito e dramma nell'età moderna (1500–1900)*. Milano: Euresis, 1994. 110 pp.

The five chapters which comprise this volume are essays that have been previously presented at various local and international colloquia dedicated to ritualistic, historical and other aspects of Carnival and the feast. They are, respectively, “Carnevale, Quaresima, Pasqua” (9–26); “Il teatro tra scena e ritualità” (27–52); “Un ‘puritano’ a Milano. San Carlo Borromeo e il Carnevale” (53–69); “Il sepolcro glorioso. Il teatro della morte nelle celebrazioni dell’Entierro a Milano” (70–83); “Il dramma del rito” (84–96); and “La festa virtuale” (97–110).

The author’s first essay concentrates on the symbolism of the struggle between Carnival and Lent that was performed throughout European centres during the Easter period. The oppositional nature of the conflict is seen as the natural result of the confluence of fundamental anthropological concepts in western culture, that is pagan Carnival and Christian Lent. The instrumentalization and manipulation of rites and festivals by Reformation and Counter Reformation forces that is first addressed here carries over into the succeeding chapters. Chapter two looks at the practices of Post-Tridentine policies of interpretation on popular culture, theatrical representations, and the Catholic Liturgy. Cardinal Carlo Borromeo figures prominently here and in the next chapter with regard to the attempts of the Catholic Church to “sacralize” the profane cultural elements of much of society, particularly the theatre.

With “Il sepolcro glorioso”, Bernardi enters into a discussion of the role of confraternities, specifically the Milanese congregation of the church of S. Fedele, entitled that of the Santo Sepolcro (Holy Sepulchre), the Spanish *Entierro*. From its inception by Jesuits in 1633, the *congregazione dell’Entierro* was of considerable influence in the Italian peninsula since it included Philip IV of Spain and many other members drawn from the Spanish, Milanese, and Austrian nobility. Like other confraternities, the *Entierro* performed many services of social assistance, prayers for the salvation of its adherents souls, and the staging of theatrical productions of Biblical subject matter. However, it was its distinguished membership that particularly set the *Entierro* apart. This bestowed upon the congregation the additional role of assuming a political function, reflecting the plurinational quality of the Hapsburg monarchy. Such important cultural contributions as the concerts, oratories, musical productions during Lent, and in particular the Good Friday Procession, are shown to have been significant to the life of the confraternity.

The final two chapters place the festivities of Carnival, Lent and Easter into historical perspective by mentioning the changes that the Enlightenment, Romantic, Industrial, Imperial, and Revolutionary movements exerted on them. These are brought into broader anthropological perspective, in relation to such important social issues as Vatican II, the student movements, the AIDS crisis, and the current spate of religious and tribal violence.

Despite the repetition of certain themes which may perhaps detract from the overall effectiveness of this somewhat slim volume, Bernardi has produced an

intriguing and thought-provoking study of fundamentally important rituals in western society and their various manifestations throughout the ages. While at times it does seem slanted toward the Catholic camp as the champion of true collective values, the author never retreats from criticism of Rome or of certain practices and/or corruptions. By means of an analysis that encompasses historical, anthropological, philosophical, and literary criticism (conscientiously documented in the notes) while also addressing contemporary issues, Bernardi has put together an engaging study that enriches confraternity studies, and indeed goes well beyond.

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Il Complesso del Baraccano. Il restauro per il recupero a sede del Centro Civico e del futuro Museo. La storia da santuario dei Bentivoglio a 'conservatorio femminile'. Bologna: Edizioni Bologna, 1995. 93 pp.

In this volume, only one article is of significant interest to the study of confraternities: Mario Fanti's "La Madonna del Baraccano: il santuario dei Bentivoglio nella Bologna del Quattrocento e del primo Cinquecento". This article details the development of the church and confraternity of Madonna del Baraccano over the course of the fifteenth century. Fanti demonstrates that the church and later the confraternity attached to it depended on the patronage of the Bentivoglio family, a relationship which began with the rise of Giovanni I Bentivoglio, the first true signore of Bologna, in the early fifteenth century. (36) Fanti traces the support of the Bentivoglio for the church by examining records of ex votos offered to the Madonna by the Bentivoglio throughout the century. The significance of the support of the Bentivoglio to the church is proved conclusively by the fact that the fall of the family in 1512 was accompanied by the end of all devotional activity at the church for three years.

More interesting for our purposes is the information Fanti provides about the confraternity linked to the church, which appeared in the first years of the fifteenth century. The members of the confraternity participated in traditional devotional activities, including administering a hospital for pilgrims, which seems to have opened in the decade after the foundation of the confraternity. (46) The membership of the confraternity was divided into two groups, the "larga" and the "stretta", or wide and narrow. Such a division, which reflected the popularity of the *devotio moderna* and its emphasis on the possibility of more than one way to live a Christian life, had not been seen in Bologna before this period. Members of the smaller "stretta" group were ruled by their own statutes, whose rigid devotional guidelines emphasized "spirituality and asceticism". (47/48) The statutes which governed their "larga" counterparts, on the other hand, concentrated on daily tasks and collective activities which members could engage in. Another difference between the two groups was that while the membership of the "stretta" was limited to men, the "larga" group was open to both men and women. (51)

Fanti notes that a change in the spiritual outlook of the confraternity towards more active charitable activities in the early sixteenth century was probably responsible for the development of the pilgrims' hospital as a boarding-school for poor girls