

politics, education, and convents. Breaking this material into thematic units allows Black to consider some social developments, such as enclosure and the changes to women's status, from multiple perspectives, and his handling of this material remains cool, neutral, and even-handed.

The book will be of use to researchers who need a fast and reliable overview of a complex period of history.

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*La Croce di Bernardo Daddi del Museo Poldi Pezzoli. Ricerche e conservazione*, ed. Marco Ciatti. Firenze: Edizioni Edifir, 2005. 104 pp., b/w and colour illustrations. ISBN 88-7970-227-0 [Contains: Cristina Acidini Luchinat "Presentazione" p. 7; Annalisa Zanni "Presentazione" p. 9; Andrea Di Lorenzo "La Croce asile di Bernardo Daddi del Museo Poldi Pezzoli" pp. 11–30; Ludovica Sebgondoni "Riti, rituali e spazi dei confortori fiorentini" pp. 31–51; Marco Ciatti "Il restauro della Croce di Bernardo Daddi: alcune considerazioni di metodo" pp. 53–57; Caterina Toso "Tecnica e restauro" pp. 59–74; Alfredo Aldrovandi "Le indagini conoscitive" p. 75; Alfredo Aldrovandi and Ottavio Ciappi "L'indagine radiografica" pp. 77–78; Alfredo Aldrovandi and Natalia Cavalca "Indagini spettrometriche e colorimetriche" pp. 79–82; Pietro Moioli and Claudio Seccaroni "Analisi non distruttive di fluorescenza X" pp. 93–84; Fabrizio Seracini "Indagine TAC della struttura lignea e della superficie pittorica" pp. 85–89.]

This is a small but precious book concerning the artistic, historical, and social context of Bernardo Daddi's cross "astile" (heaved on a staff). This fourteenth-century masterpiece, conserved in Museo Poldi Pezzoli in Milan, has recently been restored by the highly specialized laboratories of Florence's Opificio delle pietre dure. The restoration was long and difficult, but the results are more than interesting, also because they revealed unknown details of Daddi's cross, such as a cavity that probably housed a relic. Since the cross was used to comfort those condemned to death, the discovery of the space for a relic helps to contextualize the object and its use in medieval and Renaissance Florentine society.

In his rich, precise and learned essay Andrea Di Lorenzo reconstructs the history of "croce astile" and Bernardo Daddi's life. The artist was born Florence, where he worked mainly from the beginning of the fourteenth century, and where he died in 1348 probably from the plague. We have a large enough number of sources about his activity, which is not such a common fact for an early Trecento artist. Some of his works are lost, but others are still part of the Italian art patrimony. In the *Trecento novelle* by Franco Sacchetti, composed at the end of the 1300s, Daddi is identified as a major artist together with Taddeo Gaddi, Andrea Orcagna, Giotto, and Cimabue. On the another hand, in his *Vite*, Vasari

mentioned him briefly in his section on Jacopo del Casentino stating that Bernardo was a disciple of Spinello Aretino. Strongly influenced by Giotto, Bernardo worked for the main Florentine churches of his time. Di Lorenzo provides a wide, documented, and precise overview of Daddi's biography and works. The author then follows with a discussion of the various owners of the cross up to its current one, the Museo Poldi Pezzoli. In the best style of serious and accurate art criticism, Di Lorenzo also discusses the attribution vicissitudes. First attributed by Berenson to Daddi's school, it was finally and certainly recognized as a work by Daddi by Miklós Boskowitz (University of Florence, Italy). In fact, interpreting the iconological meanings of the cross, Boskowitz assumed that it was a comforting object for those sentenced to death. The historian of medieval art also proposed that it was used by the famed Compagnia dei Neri in Florence.

After describing the structure of the cross (which is a moulded wooden cross, small, painted on both sides and perfect for carrying in a procession on a staff), Di Lorenzo illustrates the complex, even if apparently simple, iconography of this small work. On the recto side, there is an image of the Christ crucified, bleeding abundantly; at his feet a "cadavere scarnificato" (a skeletal corpse), wearing a black tunic with a large V-neck (probably an image meant to frighten the condemned who, for obvious reasons, were themselves dressed in a V-necked tunic). On the right arm of the cross there is an image of the Virgin, dressed in blue and with open arms; on the left there is St. John the Evangelist with his traditional colours: a blue garment with a red cloak. On the recto (the back side) of Daddi's cross, in the trilobated spaces of the top and of the arms of the cross, are depicted three martyrs: St. Paul, St. John the Baptist, St. James the Elder, brother of St. John the Evangelist. Far down are two Dominican saints: St. Peter the Martyr and St. Thomas Aquinas.

Di Lorenzo then describes the comforters who used this cross. They were members of the Compagnia di Santa Maria della Croce al Tempio, the so-called Confraternity dei Neri (of the Blacks) because of the black gowns and hoods they wore. The comforters assisted the condemned, helping them reconcile themselves with the sentence and with God, then accompanying them to the scaffold and, finally, giving their bodies a respectful burial. A painted tablet, or processional crosses like Daddi's one, were held by comforters right in front of condemned person's eyes along the procession to the gallows.

Concluding his brilliant essay, Di Lorenzo points out the fact that the restoration has revealed a secret hollow inside Daddi's cross meant to contain a relic, which was kissed by the sentenced to death. By kissing the relic, the condemned could obtain, *in articulo mortis*, the relevant indulgence. Because of some chronological discrepancies, Di Lorenzo doubts that the cross was commissioned by the Neri, even if it was probably later used by them. An appendix closes this valuable essay, presenting other fourteenth century tablets used to comfort those sentenced to death.

The other essay, by Ludovica Sebreondi, is just as valuable, rich and intriguing. The author reconstructs the death rituals in Florence from the Middle Ages to the eighteenth century, when the death penalty was abolished by the Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo on 30 November 1786 (Tuscany was the first State in the world to abolish the death penalty). Sebreondi's essay contextualizes the relation between Florentine inhabitants and those sentenced to death. Gallows were located outside the city walls, and a shadow of terror and superstition covered the ritual. Medieval Florentines were afraid that those sentenced to death could come back from Hell to take revenge for their execution. Lay confraternities, which started to be established in the 1100s, grew during the centuries and became an essential part of Florentine and Italian society. Sebreondi explains the importance of confraternities devoted to comfort those sentenced to death. They were the only organizations able to reconcile the town with the soul of the deceased.

The tablets used by the comforters were meant not only to convert the condemned on his way to the gallows, but also to serve as a barrier between the crowd and the eyes of the condemned – an important role since contemporary superstitions ascribed an infecting power to the glance of the condemned. Because comforters stood very close to the condemned, whom popular beliefs considered to be somehow contaminated and contaminating, they wore a black gown and hood so as not to be recognized. Although the actual sentences were brutal, the comforters tried to make the condemned as serene and compliant as possible. Tablets, or crosses like Daddi's, were the common tools of the trade for these confraternities.

One notable achievement of Sebreondi's study is the reconstruction of what, where, and how the church of Santa Maria della Croce al Tempio was furnished and decorated. One important information concerns a "Compianto del Cristo morto" (Mourning on the corpse of Christ, now in Museo of San Marco, Florence) by the Beato Angelico. It was commissioned in 1436 by Fra Sebastiano di Jacopo Rosso Benintendi for the small church of Santa Maria della Croce. According to a nineteenth-century witness, the ruins of the small church, abandoned in 1532, were found during the construction spurt that accompanied Florence's temporary role as Italy's capital (1860s). The witness, Guido Carocci, says that the façade was frescoed by Spinello Aretino.

With scientific accuracy as well detective's perseverance, Ludovica Sebreondi reconstructs the various locations of the Confraternita dei Neri, up to its final site near to Porta della Croce (today Piazza Beccaria) where the confraternity owned another building. Florentine confraternities were suppressed in 1785 by the Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo. Sebreondi's essay, which is completed by a short but consistent appendix of documents, follows the destiny of the new confraternity site up to the twentieth century.

The book ends with a full scientific description of the restoration of the cross. It is quite interesting to remember Marco Ciatti's contributions, which traces the

historical and ideological lines between the Anglo-American restoration school and the Italian one. Citti gives a precise, rigorous, and even proud summary not only of the restoration of Daddi's cross, but also of the scientific and cultural methodologies followed by the Opificio delle pietre dure of Florence. Caterina Toso describes the details, passages, and techniques of the restoration.

This book is not only a valuable contribution to the history of art, but also a stimulating publication that allows the reader to appreciate a 'minor' masterpiece such as Bernardo Daddi's "Croce astile" from a large and rich perspective.

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Jerzy Flaga, *Bractwa religijne w Rzeczypospolitej w XVII i XVIII wieku (Religious Brotherhoods in the 17th- and 18th-Century Poland)*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2004. Pp. 308. ISBN 83-7363-203-4.

This book is the fruit of long-standing research by Jerzy Flaga, professor at the Catholic University of Lublin, into confraternities in Poland. In it, the author brings the findings and works of French, Belgian and Italian historians of the confraternal movement to bear on his own archival and documentary research on Polish brotherhoods.

The volume examines five dioceses in detail (Krakow, Płock and Żmudź in the metropolitan of Gniezno, and Kamieniec and Przemyśl in the metropolitan of Lvov) and uses them to represent all of Poland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although the chronological span was determined by what the author considers to be the era "of the most intense development" of confraternities in Poland (that is, 1600–1800), on many occasions evidence is also drawn from the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century. The book consists of seven chapters plus a preface, a conclusion, and short summaries in English, French and Italian.

Flaga's research is based on a variety of sources: visitation records, confraternity books, printed books (including statutes, privileges and prayers), last wills and testaments, and Jesuit *catalogi breves* and *litterae annuae*. This source material is discussed in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 comprises a survey of ecclesiastical legislation which regulated confraternity activities in various epochs (including the significant *Quaecumque* bull of 1604). This chapter also contains a discussion of documents governing individual brotherhoods, pertaining to their foundation, erection, and canonical approval by a bishop.

The organisation and internal structure of confraternities provide the subject matter for Chapter 3. The author describes in detail the function of the promoter in confraternities which operated at both diocesan and religious churches, together with the hierarchy of lay officials, directed by a senior or seniors. In this