

Reviews

Carla Bino. *Dal trionfo al pianto. La fondazione del 'teatro della misericordia' nel Medioevo (V–VII secolo)*. Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2008. Pp. xvi, 466 + 19 ill, 1 fold-out chart. ISBN 978-88-343-1628-3. Euro 35.

Carla Bino's multifaceted and interdisciplinary study is a striking work of scholarship for the quality, quantity and variety of literary texts and liturgical rites, contemplative and devotional practices, theological debates and their protagonists not to mention figural works and socio-political particularities of Church history that the author treats in detail in each of the five main chapters comprising her study. In them, Bino successfully traces the roots and development of the "Theatre of Mercy" (an entirely lay production) from its origins in theological considerations surrounding the Passion of Christ during the patristic era through the various meanings the Passion assumed and the expressions to which it gave rise during the medieval period as this is evident in the changing iconographies of the cross and the crucifixion as well as in the evolution of devotional and liturgical practices.

Following a beautiful preface by Claudio Bernardi on what it is that moves humans to compassionate action on behalf of others, Bino provides a brief but important introduction to her study and the goals of its constituent parts. Emphasizing that the degree of realism, emotional engagement and identification experienced by audience members of a *teatro della misericordia* performance sets it apart both from theatre proper and liturgical ceremony, the author explains that the present work of scholarship grew out of a personal analysis of codices from Northern Italian confraternities of *disciplinati* that she had consulted with an eye to understanding the dramaturgical developments that culminated in Passion plays in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In conducting this research, Bino discovered that hymns, prayers, meditations and offices for Lent and Holy week tended to focus on one of two elements: the violence done to Christ and Mary's tearful inconsolability. *Dal trionfo al pianto* reconstructs the historical development of these twin aspects of medieval spirituality—of the forms they assumed and the functions they served—as they grew into the dramaturgical productions collectively known as *teatro della misericordia*.

In chapter one, Bino explores the theological debates on the divinity of Christ and the attendant challenges of developing the Christological dimension of Christian faith in the Jewish and Pagan social context of the early Church. The author methodically treats the various means of understanding the Passion that were explored at the time. She thus reveals how the birth of crucifix iconography coincided with the founding of Holy Week liturgy. Chapter two explores the controversies and debates through which the Carolingian Church came to define and defend the cross as mystery and sacred object, thus establishing its legitimacy as an object of worship. Imagining Christ on the cross and figural representations of him on it became a part of prayer and worship. Bino shows how in a liturgical context this

translated into the ritual of the *Adoratio* on Good Friday that placed the cross as relic and thus instrument of salvation at the centre of what became an extended ceremony focusing on the Passion, which was no longer celebrated together with Resurrection at the same Mass. Bino reveals how during this Carolingian period there co-existed two typologies of the crucified Christ: 1) Christ as a divine and victorious king (popular in courtly and intellectual contexts); and 2) Christ as martyr. Christ's wounded body became a point of meditational focus as the blood shed by Christ came to stand for the true meaning of the crucifixion.

In her third chapter, Bino explores the subject of meditative prayer and how it became important to "feel the presence" of the Passion by recreating the details of the past in the present through the use of mnemonic devices and of memory not simply as tools of recollection, but as a type of inventive cognition through which certain active images could lead to reflection on and sentimental engagement with the events of the crucifixion from a variety of spatial perspectives and interpretive prisms (such as visualizing the cross from below, from above as if through God's eyes, through the eyes of Maria). The author engages in a detailed analysis of the images used to visualize the Passion of Christ and how they were organized in writings of Peter Damiani, Giovanni da Fécamp, and Anselm of Canterbury.

As the year 1000 approached, the desire for penance and for rapid individual and collective reform grew pressingly acute, worship of the crucifixion assumed the mystical tones associated with the work of Bernard of Clairvaux. In chapters four and five, Bino continues her examination of meditative practices and rites of public worship. She shows how there was a shift in focus from Christ's misery to his mercy as the Passion experienced by Christ became a paradigm for how to love even one's enemies compassionately. In meditative prayer, mnemonic practices evolved into the construction of true inner dramas where contemplatives were encouraged first to insert themselves as protagonists into Passion history, and then to imagine themselves suffering like Christ on the cross. Ultimately there was a shift in focus to Mary's role as an empathic sufferer with Christ. Bino examines various laments and four Passion plays (among other literary works) for their content and dramaturgical particularities. The study concludes with a discussion of the individual, collective and public ways of remembering the Passion.

Sarah Melanie Rolfe, *University of Toronto*

Nel nome di Bologna. Consulta tra antiche istituzioni bolognesi. Ed. Guglielmo Franchi Scarselli. Introduction by Mario Fanti. Bologna: Edizioni L'inchiestroblu, 2007. Pp. 128; 186 colour illustrations. ISBN 978-88-88260-15-0. Euros 27.

This volume arose out of a collaboration begun in 2002 by twenty-six Bolognese charitable and philanthropic organizations that could trace their origins to confraternal or clerical groups dating from the thirteenth to the twentieth centuries. Each chapter provides a brief illustrated guide to a particular group's activity, together with a