

Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



Pertici, Petra. Siena Quattrocentesca: Gli anni del Pellegrinaio nell'Ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala. Preface by Riccardo Fubini, with an essay by Maria Antonietta Rovida

Johnny L. Bertolio

Volume 36, numéro 3, été 2013

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1091048ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v36i3.20566>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Bertolio, J. (2013). Compte rendu de [Pertici, Petra. Siena Quattrocentesca: Gli anni del Pellegrinaio nell'Ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala. Preface by Riccardo Fubini, with an essay by Maria Antonietta Rovida]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 36(3), 192–195.
<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v36i3.20566>

© Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies / Société canadienne d'études de la Renaissance; Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society; Toronto Renaissance and Reformation Colloquium; Victoria University Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2013

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

érudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

In the fifth chapter, Mayer examines the procedures followed by the Inquisition as it moved through the stages of the process known as *inquisitio*, including denunciation, preliminary investigation, citation, interrogation, repetition, defence, and sentence. He bases this analysis on over twenty sources left by medieval and early modern inquisitors and canonists, most notably Francisco Peña, Pietro Follerio, and Prospero Farinacci. His discussion is intricate and at times technical, with point and counterpoint provided from the wide number of commentators.

Mayer's book, detailed and balanced in its arguments and buttressed by an incredible number of endnotes, will appeal more to the specialist in studies of the Italian courts than to the generalist, but is nevertheless a worthy addition to the scholarship on the Inquisition. It will serve as a handbook of information on previously little-known members of the Inquisition and on the inner workings of the secretive and much maligned institution. A number of his points require further research, such as his claim that the Congregation of the Holy Office became the single most important instrument of the papal bureaucracy, used by the popes "in just about any way that pleased them" (11). Mayer promises to follow this book with a study of the relations of the Roman Inquisition with Venice, Florence, and Naples, and a new analysis of the trial of Galileo. To judge from the expertise demonstrated in this book, they too will be welcome additions to our knowledge of the personnel and procedures of the Holy Office.

THOMAS B. DEUTSCHER, *St. Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan*

Pertici, Petra.

***Siena Quattrocentesca: Gli anni del Pellegrinaio nell'Ospedale di Santa Maria della Scala.* Preface by Riccardo Fubini, with an essay by Maria Antonietta Rovida.**

Piccola Biblioteca di Ricerca Storica 16. Siena: Protagon Editori, 2012. Pp. 398. ISBN 978-88-8024-323-6 (paperback) € 30.

With her new book on Siena, Petra Pertici examines the history and society of that city during the first Renaissance. Her analysis of the frescoes painted in the Pilgrims' Hall (Pellegrinaio) of the Hospital of Santa Maria della Scala offers

the starting point for an examination of a ruling group that sought to celebrate itself through those paintings. The hall, which led to the Chapel of the Mantle, was used as an infirmary, but could also be used as a boardroom.

The book is divided into five chapters: the first, and longest, gives a historical introduction; the second includes a digression on various portraits, in both positive and negative terms, of several famous Sienese citizens; the third and fourth chapters appear to be symmetrical, one being devoted to the emperor, the other to the pope; the fifth is more expressly dedicated to the pictorial cycle. A final essay by M. A. Rovida examines the use of space inside the frescoes, its propagandistic meaning, and the possible links to other Italian architectural works—especially Brunelleschi’s projects in Florence and Visconti’s plans for Pavia.

As Fubini points out in the preface (xiii), the usual sources for this period (in particular, S. Tizio and O. Malavolti) date from the sixteenth century and the Medici regime that governed Siena; they thus blame the previous century’s government, dominated as it was by an oligarchic regime whose leading role was taken by the Petrucci family and its allies. Pertici, however, goes beyond these traditional historical paradigms and, by using archival data, rebuilds the original social context of Siena’s successful fifteenth-century expansion.

The Pellegrinaio frescoes consist of eight scenes painted by three different artists in a very short period (1441–44): Lorenzo di Pietro, also known as Vecchietta (1410–80), Priamo della Quercia (d. 1467/68), brother of the more famous Jacopo, and Domenico di Bartolo Ghezzi (1400–44/45), who contributed six out of eight scenes in the cycle. Pertici adopts the original titles of the frescoes rather than the eighteenth-century ones: “The history of Sorore”; “Increasing the hospital with walls”; “The Blessed Augustine Novello delivers the uniform to the Rector”; “The Pope allows the indulgence”; “The administration of ill people”; “The alms”; “Marrying the girls”; “The charity of the Corticella room.”

Behind the iconographical program, Pertici sees the entire Sienese ruling group gathered around the noble Antonio di Checco Rosso Petrucci. He seems even to have been immortalized in one if not two frescos of the Pellegrinaio Hall, wearing the very sumptuous clothes he wore in life (276). Pertici sees the same Antonio behind the (until now) mysterious collection of tales by the so-called “Gentile Sermini” (*Archivio storico italiano* 169.4 [2011], 679–706).

More generally, however, the frescoes seek to celebrate the role of Santa Maria della Scala and the atmosphere of pacification laboriously established in the 1440s, when Siena was reconciled with Pope Eugenius IV. Eugenius IV was not unfamiliar with Siena—as a young man of 25 he had been appointed bishop of Siena (1407), but had retained terrible memories of that period. Tensions between him and Siena continued during his pontificate, this time for political reasons touching on military alliances, appointments, and financial matters. Eugenius IV's attitude towards Siena was changed as a result of Siennese relations with their traditional ally, the Visconti of Milan, and with the famous condottiere Niccolò Piccinino (1380–1444).

The modernity of the cycle derives also from the pictorial techniques adopted by the painters: in particular, they abandoned the gold background and set the scenes in a recognizable urban context; i.e., near the hall itself, just outside its doors and windows. This created an original sense of *trompe l'œil* and the illusionistic idea of breaking through a wall. In addition, the search for realism is evident in the clothes worn by the figures depicted in the cycle: the Siennese characters wear elegant clothes, probably made in local factories, while several clearly non-Siennese individuals wear garments that suggest they have arrived from the Orient. In fact, in 1439–40 the Council of Florence had welcomed legates from the Orthodox Church and the emperor of Byzantium, John VIII Paleologus. The Pellegrinaio painters were fascinated by the visitors' clothes, as were their Florentine colleagues Benozzo Gozzoli (*The Arrival of the Three Wise Men*) and Masaccio (Brancacci Chapel).

The sources used by Pertici belong to different fields: literary texts, archival data, historical documents, daily writings. The cycle itself becomes a “text to be read” (229) alongside an impressive number of other texts. The personality and works of Saint Bernardino of Siena, for example, played a notable role: the severe warnings contained in his sermons add a useful interpretation to the scenes. As Lina Bolzoni explains (*La rete delle immagini* [Turin: Einaudi, 2002], 145–242), Bernardino took advantage of local art works to make his ideas and concepts clearer to the audience and easier to be remembered. Pertici takes this notion a step further when she analyzes the cycle through (and after) Saint Bernardino's sermons.

Thanks to her profound knowledge of fifteenth-century Siena, and with an almost visionary power, Petra Pertici firmly connects the Pellegrinaio cycle with Siennese history and the city's ruling class; and, in so doing, demonstrates

the variety of reasons and goals that gave birth to this fascinating series of frescoes.

JOHNNY L. BERTOLIO, *University of Toronto*

Quinlan-McGrath, Mary.

Influences: Art, Optics, and Astrology in the Italian Renaissance.

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. Pp. xi, 284 + 26 ill. ISBN 978-0-226-92284-3 (hardcover) \$35.

Mary Quinlan-McGrath, professor of art history, succinctly states in the opening pages that her book interrogates “why the learned believed in astrology and how art participated within its practices” (7). Over the next several hundred pages, she ambitiously attempts to investigate the importance of astrology as it pertains to astronomy and theology. Quinlan-McGrath structures her text around four basic points derived from Plato’s *Timaeus*: the study of heavens as it relates to the work of a “single creator”; how the creator gave humans alone a share of the divine intelligence to allow them to see and understand cosmic patterns; the idea of vision as “the threshold for the study of the heavens,” the latter capable of being rendered in the visual arts; and a consideration of how the study of the heavens related to spiritual and intellectual pursuits. Such a structuring allows Quinlan-McGrath to trace a clear and logical evolution of thought relating to the corollaries among theology, astronomy, and astrology, which she derives from the treatises of Plato, Vitruvius, Plotinus, St. Augustine, Marsilio Ficino, Ptolemy, Roger Bacon, Alberti, and al-Kindi.

To explore these themes, *Influences* is divided into eight chapters, each of which examines topics related to the history of astronomy and astrology, followed by tangential discussions of their effects on urbanism, their relevancy to Renaissance treatises, particularly Ficino’s, and three painted Roman vaults: the Sala della Cosmografia (Palazzo Farnese, Rome), the astrological vault at the villa of Agostino Chigi (Rome), and the astrological vault of the Sala dei Pontefici (Vatican, Rome). Of these chapters, the last is the only one dedicated to art historical analyses. Despite the diversity of the chapters, each is divided into sections that outline the nuances among specific terms and their usages