



**David D'Andrea and Salvatore Marino, eds. Confraternities in Southern Italy: Art, Politics, and Religion (1100–1800)**

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## Reviews

David D'Andrea and Salvatore Marino, eds. *Confraternities in Southern Italy: Art, Politics, and Religion (1100–1800)*. Essays and Studies, 52. Toronto: Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2022. Pp. 579 + 101 ill. ISBN 978-0-7727-2220-1 (print); 978-0-7727-2222-5 (PDF) \$59.95.

This innovative collection, bringing together fifteen articles exploring seven centuries of confraternities in Southern Italy, is the first English language volume to examine the lay sodalities of the *Mezzogiorno*. As a result, it will resonate with potential, neophyte, and accomplished confraternity scholars alike, and offer the most comprehensive evaluation of confraternal activities in those geographical areas that were once the Kingdoms of Naples and Sicily.

As its two editors, David D'Andrea and Salvatore Marino, point out, its main goals are to “expand the geographic scope of confraternity studies beyond its original focus on northern Italian *signorie* and republics” and to “introduce early modern scholars [...] to the breadth and depth of southern Italian confraternities” (9). The volume achieves these objectives and more, as will become evident as this review progresses.

Before moving on to the main body of research works, which offers readers an original review of southern Italy's vital and extensive confraternal system while also presenting “correctives to popular stereotypes and academic assumptions regarding [the region's] [...] cultural poverty,” the volume treats its reader with a useful glossary of terms compiled by Marco Piana. This additional introductory chapter is a thoughtful, expedient addition to the book. Most of the original essays (except those penned by D'Ovidio, D'Andrea, Colesanti, and Sakellariou) were translated from Italian to English by Piana who, in order to maintain the integrity and “original beauty” of the Italian lexis, retained the names of lay associations and terms that were considered “untranslatable without a relevant loss [...] of meaning,” but then explained them in the glossary (31).

The main body of the collection is divided into three sections: Part I. Naples; Part II. Southern Italian Mainland and Part III. Southern Italian Islands. Each section is then organised chronologically.

The first section opens with Stefano D'Ovidio's “Sacred Imagery, Confraternities, and Urban Space in Medieval Naples.” In this contribution, D'Ovidio surveys a trio of sacred image categories and assesses the objects' relationships with various Neapolitan lay associations. The article's first two subsections enunciate D'Ovidio's aims: to describe the types of material objects that ensured confraternities' visibility and individuality and explain the “role of images as intermediaries between the laity and the sacred” (46). The author then moves on to pay particular attention to *staurite* companies: ancient lay sodalities that normally gleaned their membership from the immediate geographical area surrounding the local churches to which these companies

were attached. D'Ovidio devotes a further portion of his assessment to three case studies: the ancient *Disciplina della Croce*; the *Trecento Annunziata* and a pair of *Quattrocento* confraternities linked to the Dominicans. D'Ovidio is also able to present a brief, but impactful picture of how “sacred imagery permeated the religious experience of lay people in medieval Naples” and how the public rituals surrounding devotional objects aided the enmeshment of confraternity and municipality (67).

This is followed by Luciana Mocciola's essay, which discusses “The Art of Power: The Confraternity of Santa Maria in Naples During the Reign of the Angiò-Durazzo.” Beginning with a richly contextualised introduction, this essay illustrates how Queen Giovanna II of Naples first commissioned folios containing her family members' regalia, and then donated them to the Neapolitan confraternity of Santa Marta. Collectively known as the *Codice di Santa Marta*, the seventy-two surviving folios, “containing the coats of arms of the most illustrious members of the confraternity,” are fronted with the coat of arms of Carlo III, Giovanna's father (105). Mocciola discusses the codex in some detail, showing how disparate visual and literary documents, alongside Giovanna II's commission of the *Codice di Santa Marta*, suggest the queen's obligations to the confraternity. Other related extant documents and numerous secondary sources allow Mocciola to also examine the construction of the church of Santa Marta and the administration and activities of its associated confraternity.

The third essay on Naples is Giovanni Lombardi's “Chivalric Ideals and Popular Piety in an Early Modern Metropolis: The Confraternita dei Pellegrini and its Hospital.” This contribution examines the foundation of the titular associations and highlights the various external factors that moulded the city's network of piety and charity. Using evidence from archives in France, Malta, and Italy, Lombardi provides a detailed overview of the founding of the hospital, the establishment of the initial confraternity and its subsequent aggregation – eventually becoming the *Arciconfraternita della SS. Trinità dei Pellegrini e Convalescenti*. Lombardi's research benefits from a dedicated confraternity archive, meaning that he is able to discuss the hierarchy, operations, and responsibilities of this lay association in some detail. In brief, Lombardi capably traces the Pellegrini from its inception to its reinvention “in light of Tridentine ideals” and the altercations of empires, eastern and western (150).

Given that Naples was subject to Spanish rule during the entire Early Modern period, Ida Mauro and Elisa Novi Chavarría's “‘Spanish’ Confraternities in Early Modern Naples” is a welcome and timely addition to this volume. Seeking to provide a survey of previously studied “Spanish nation” sodalities that existed in Naples during this period, their intentions are threefold (171): first, to illuminate the religious and cultural aspects of Spanish confraternities in Naples, second, to explore the external influences that affected such sodalities, and third, to analyse the nexus between “Spanish nation” organisations and similar associations “directly or indirectly influenced by the Hapsburgs”

(171). Beginning with a working definition of what the term “Spanish nation” means, the authors go on to successfully recognise and outline lay confraternities founded on Spanish royal patronage and create an understanding of how Spanish lay piety (and those spiritual aspects that particularly interested the Madrid court) became subsumed into urban Neapolitan society. Like many of the other contributors to this collection, the authors are also transparent about the limitations of their study, so their concluding remarks present no less than four areas that are ripe for further research.

The second section in the collection concentrates on confraternities of the Southern Italian mainland and opens with Gemma T. Colesanti and Eleni Sakellariou’s discussion of confraternities in Benevento during the Middle Ages. Alongside their “review of recent scholarship,” supplemented by data from freshly uncovered documents, the two authors also provide a useful context to the study in the form of a summary of Benevento’s political history (204). This historiographical assessment, fleshed out by additional information gleaned from notarial and apostolic records, allows them to offer the reader an interim understanding of how confraternities developed in Benevento and the prospects that these lay associations offered their members in terms of their own piety, social positions, and institutional management.

The second article in this section also examines medieval confraternities, but this time in Abruzzo. Penned by Salvatore Marino, one of this volume’s co-editors, this contribution has two main aims: first, to provide an unprecedented overview of “the confraternity phenomenon in some of the main cities of medieval Abruzzo” and second, to carry out a detailed, critical case study of the *Confraternita della Misericordia* in Penne. Given that this investigation is challenging on a few fronts (the dearth of previous studies; the nonexistence of a written history of medieval confraternities in this region, and an absence of direct primary sources), Marino deftly turns to a variety of “indirect documentation” in order to collect relevant data (233). The result is a richly informative and descriptive synopsis of the sodalities of Abruzzo Citra and Abruzzo Ultra – recording founding dates (when these are available), opining on geographical locations, setting out confraternal typologies, hierarchies, rules, customs, obligations, patronage, and rituals. This exercise, in tandem with the equally illuminating case study of the *Confraternita della Misericordia* in Penne, allows Marino to make important socio-political, lay religious, and fiscal comparisons between the two regions under consideration. Like the contributors before him, Marino also concludes by setting out several new research venues requiring urgent attention.

Continuing the scrutiny of confraternities in the Abruzzi, Valeria Cocozza expands the geographical and chronological remit of the previous article with her essay “Confraternities in Abruzzo and Molise Between the Sixteenth and Eighteenth Centuries.” Her aim is to juxtapose the two regions in order to achieve three goals: first, to uncover the roles of “new confraternities that spread in the wake of Tridentine reforms;” second, to reveal the

endurance of customary pieties that distinguished parochial histories, and third, to describe the disinclination of “established authorities” to accept the growing prominence of lay sodalities (269). Using an eighteen-century episcopal survey of sodalities in the Abruzzi, plus a range of fragmentary evidence pertaining to Molise confraternities, she is able to produce “the first quantitative analysis” of such companies, with the published data hinting at a “socio-cultural and socio-religious” nexus between the two regions (277). Coccozza also organises the confraternities by their devotional identities in order to understand the various external factors that encouraged specific devotions and appreciate how these dedications were disseminated from the urban sprawl to isolated rural settlements.

Giulio Sodano’s contribution takes the reader across the border to Terra di Lavoro for an investigation of religious sociability in this region. Focussing on the diocese of Aversa and taking into consideration the cities of Aversa, Capua, and Caserta, Sodano seeks to classify the confraternities of the area – noting in particular their foundation dates, dedications, membership typology, and the nature of their socio-religious commitments (307). The gathering of such data allows him to compare guild fraternities to lay confraternities and map out similarities and differences between the operations, alongside the motivations and challenges experienced by the two types of sodalities. He is also able to describe how confraternities stimulated life beyond the fraternal cosmos and affected the macrocosm of human existence through the “construction of local identities” and their wider effects on “the historical-anthropological identity of southern Italy” (321).

At this point the other co-editor, David D’Andrea, takes up the literary reins in order to discuss “Confraternities and Historical Memory in the Principato Citra.” After introducing the article with a theme that, quite rightly, recurs throughout this volume – the dearth of scholarship concerning the history of confraternities in Southern Italy – D’Andrea sets out the aim of his piece, which is to present an overview of the undertakings, operations, and heritage of the confraternities and hospitals of Santa Caterina in Nocera Superiore and Santa Maria dell’ Olmo in Cava dei Tirreni. Skilfully gathering information from disparate sources, including archaeological data, visual sources, episcopal documents, and archived manuscripts, D’Andrea provides a fresh and innovative insight into the aforementioned hospitals and confraternities. In so doing, he opens an academic dialogue that suggests the possibility of “co-ordination among early modern hospitals” (342). And like many of his fellow contributors, he helpfully proposes other related topics that beg to be explored. In closing, D’Andrea advocates for the importance of interdisciplinary research, which is a vital consideration when dealing with an absence of rich documentary primary sources. He also speaks of “the ongoing struggle to preserve, document, and retell” confraternity histories and is unapologetic as he states that if we understand the “chronological aspect” of southern Italian confraternity studies – the “how,” and the “when” – we will

be better equipped to appreciate the myriad of inter-confraternal networks and exchanges that, at present, the discipline is merely touching upon (343).

Advancing south to the very toe of Italy's boot, in a piece entitled, "The Religion of the Laity: The Confraternities of Reggio in the Sixteen and Seventeenth Centuries," Mirella Vera Mafri provides an outline of the confraternities of the metropolitan core of Reggio. Keeping in mind pre- and post-Tridentine considerations and reforms and using mainly ecclesiastical and notarial sources, she explores how episcopal visits to lay associations touched on the sodalities' autonomy, statutes, and operations and how this attention affected members and their charitable undertakings. Beginning with the oldest confraternity (established prior to the mid-*Quattrocento*), Mafri works through artisan and craft fraternities, sodalities for professionals, confraternities for the nobility and those benefitting from middle-class membership. She also touches, quite interestingly, on lay associations that are rarely mentioned, such as those dedicated to fishermen and artillerymen (370). Exploring the festive, charitable, and ritualistic aspects of confraternities, Mafri paints a literary picture of Reggio's vibrant confraternal life underpinned by the stability and sociability that lay associations provided. She concludes that while these confraternities were "certainly dominated by the nobility and ruling urban classes of the time," their charitable work was an essential and far-reaching tool attuned to "the varied and complex needs of the poor and marginalized" (383).

Angela Carbone's essay, "An Early Modern Apulian Confraternity: The Real Monte di Pietà in Barletta (c. 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> Centuries)" uses a survey format to examine unpublished documentary sources from the confraternity's dedicated archive alongside documents from the diocesan archive in Barletta. Her aim is to explain changes in "the charity and welfare models pursued by the brotherhood" (393). Initially setting out the contextual aspects of the confraternity (foundation, location, and charitable works), Carbone then goes on to show how the Monte expanded its initial activities, which involved pawn brokerage and a wide range of charitable works (based on the Corporal Works of Mercy) to include the support of penitent female sex workers. She further shows how, as the Counter Reformation played out, the confraternity shadowed the movement's objectives, setting up a *conservatorio* where girls whose immortal souls were endangered by their family circumstances could preserve their honour and spiritual well-being through appropriate work and prayer. She then shows how, by the mid-eighteenth century, as the Enlightenment swept across Europe, the "Monte Vecchio gave way to the new orphanage of Real Monte" (400). The true value of Carbone's research however is yet to be seen, as the parameters of this essay, while allowing the author to guide the reader to a deeper understanding of the history of the Real Monte, do not allow her to expand on other histories that she considers critical – those of the traditionally silent *conservatorio* girls.

Paola Avallone and Raffaella Salvemini's essay, "Beyond the Capital: An Eighteenth-Century Survey of Charitable Institutions in the Kingdom of Naples" brings this section to a close. Their aim is to examine data from a census of lay associations conducted in 1788 by Bourbon royal decree and to show how confraternities and other religious fraternities reacted to the changing fiscal, political, social, and religious landscape of the Kingdom of Naples. Tracing the formation, location, and typology of these lay associations, Avallone and Salvemini paint a comprehensive picture of confraternal life in the region. Illustrated with various charts, in themselves rich and useful sources of quantitative data, this study reveals how the spread of confraternities was a diverse occurrence, "influenced according to time and place" (438). The region's many histories are, however, mainly yet to be rediscovered, despite the authors' valiant and effective attempts to make the confraternities of the *Mezzogiorno* visible and their valuable stories known in the twenty-first century.

Moving to the final section of this collection, the reader is brought back to the medieval era with Vita Russo and Daniela Santoro's "Medieval Confraternities in Palermo." Emanating from Russo's previous research and knowledge of the Palermo archives, this article begins by providing contextual information on the development of confraternities in Sicily and advances to concentrate on the confraternities of Palermo, tracing their establishment to coincide with the penitential movements that reached the island at the dawn of the twelfth century. Reiterating Konrad Eisenbichler's sage statement on the omnipresence of confraternities in everyday early modern life, the authors lead the reader through the next two centuries of Sicily's mostly "hidden" confraternal histories (450). Touching on changes in the confraternal landscape – those encouraged by migrants who not only brought their vocational skills to the island but also expressed their need to replicate native lay associations in Sicily –, Russo and Santoro describe the Sicilian confraternal organisation as "a human space that made relationships more immediate and accessible" (455). The third subsection, which is perhaps influenced by the work of Barbara Wisch and Diane Cole Ahl, propounds the importance of interdisciplinary research, particularly one that uses data derived from "archival and iconographic sources" (460). Gathering and amalgamating data from material objects, wills, company inventories, and founding documents, allows the authors to further animate their "synthetic picture of Palermitan confraternities" and convince the reader that lay sodalities were critical players in the community – socially, politically, economically, and spiritually (467).

In their "Confraternities and Public Display in Messina: From Antonello to the Arciconfraternita degli Azzurri and the Arciconfraternita dei Rossi" Salvatore Bottari and Alessandro Abbate show how lay associations endeavoured to demonstrate their character and prestige "in the contested urban space of Messina" (477). To do so, they innovatively and interestingly focus on the lost *gonfaloni* commissioned from Antonello da Messina. Traces of these missing banners can be found in descriptions extant in archival documents



and these can then be compared to similar, extant commissions completed by other artists. The authors use these data to also illuminate the political influence and communal vibrancy of confraternities. Further sub-sections concentrate on Messina's two most influential confraternities: the Arciconfraternita degli Azzurri and the Arciconfraternita dei Rossi. While art historians, initially excited by the title of this piece, would perhaps be disappointed by the lack of formal iconographic analyses within the limited section concentrating on the *gonfaloni* (which is somewhat understandable when considering the special limitations of an edited volume of this kind), it is clear that the authors correctly anticipate that these publicly displayed and carefully considered objects confirm the individuality of confraternities and announce their place in the confraternal hierarchy.

The final offering is Mariangela Rapetti's "Medieval and Early Modern Confraternities in Sardinia." Reiterating themes that have, quite correctly, recurred throughout the volume – dearth of sources and a limited historiography – Rapetti offers an outline of Sardinian confraternities existing “between the late Middle Ages and 1700” (508). So as to tender a more complete picture of the state of Sardinian confraternity studies, she also opines on current scholarship and local archives. Moving her focus from confraternities in Cagliari through those in Iglesias, Oristano, Bosa, Alghero, Sassari and on to Castelsardo, Tempo, Ozieri, and Nuoro, Rapetti provides a rich, detailed synthesis of what lay associations existed and the state of play with regard to our present understanding of them. Her final section on the Sardinian archives and other sources useful to confraternity scholars is the gift that every researcher wishes to receive prior to embarking on the investigation of a new topic. Filled with useful details concerning physical archives and digital databases, Rapetti's transparency and scholarly generosity will undoubtedly expediate further studies on Sardinian confraternities. And the acceleration of such studies will perhaps rectify the reiteration of “well-established” confraternal tales that exist only through repetition and without any actual documentary foundation for them (531). As Rapetti points out, “the history of confraternities of Cagliari does not need to be rewritten, but the histories of confraternities need to be reread and expanded based on archival documents” (532).

Given that this collection spans seven centuries of confraternal history, covers a wide geographical area, and takes into consideration a variety of lay associations, the co-editors, David D'Andrea and Salvatore Marino, are to be commended for having succeeded in gathering a group of research papers that develop the range of confraternity studies beyond northern Italy and invite readers to expand their knowledge of the cultural richness of confraternal life in the south of the peninsula and on the islands. The majority of the articles offer overviews or surveys of lay associations and confraternal life, which is absolutely understandable when dealing with research topics that are in their infancy, but they also provide “the first general panorama of confraternal life



in southern Italy” and, in so doing, establish a solid foundation upon which to build (23). The strength of this collection also lies in its diversity and nuanced analyses. As is usual with volumes of this type, some contributions are more analytically robust than others, but nonetheless critical conversations are opened, stereotypes are questioned (and some are overturned), and geographical and cultural distortions begin to be refocussed. In short, this collection is ambitious, brave, and avant-garde, thus making a substantial contribution to confraternity studies.

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