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Frugoni, Chiara. *A Distant City; Images of Urban Experience in the Medieval World*. Tr. William McCuaig. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991. Pp. xv, 206.105 black and white plates. \$35.00 (U.S.)

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tainty in the merits of Christ's passion to save, while at the same time desiring the Virgin and saints in Heaven to intercede and pray for them." It was prudent for London citizens, even on their deathbed, to affirm in both Catholic and Protestant orthodoxy, and many did.

One of the fundamental effects of the emergence of the reformed piety and theology was on relations between the clerical and lay estates. "In a new world where the word was, at least for some, more central than the sacraments, the status and function of the clergy had been profoundly challenged and transformed." Brigden is right to point to the clergy as being among the major losers from the Reformation, though she might have pointed out that the battle between the two estates would be joined at least once more before the clerical estate would accept a position of permanent subservience to their lay benefactors. When the other Long Parliament, not the Reformation one but that of 1640, met, it was animated more by a widely shared outrage at Laudian clericalism than at anything else.

Susan Brigden has written a good book that charts the swirls and eddies of official and popular religious belief during forty years of London's history. She describes beliefs and tells how they changed, but she draws back from explaining why. She says a little about the demographic and other social changes occurring in London during this period, but does not try hard enough to establish connections between the processes of social change and the ultimate triumph of reform. She suggests early in her study that "demographic changes would be of the greatest consequence for the religion and politics of London," but unfortunately this is not a subject that the author explores at any length.

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Frugoni, Chiara. *A Distant City: Images of Urban Experience in the Medieval World*. Tr. William McCuaig. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991. Pp. xv, 206. 105 black and white plates. \$35.00 (U.S.)

For students of urban history, *A Distant City: Images of Urban Experience in the Medieval World*, by Chiara Frugoni, will prove to be a surprise. Although its contents reflect the author's knowledge of medieval civic society and politics, the true nature of this book is iconography, more commonly the tool of art historians. This fact is not indicated by the title, nor is the reader made aware of it in advance since the book contains no introduction.

In the course of her narrative describing images, both literary and visual, of the medieval city from the fourth through the fourteenth centuries, Frugoni moves the general to the specific. Beginning in the early chapters with an almost overwhelming number of examples of cities as fortresses, as personified images, as churches, as people and as geographical centres, she gradually focuses attention on Siena in the late Middle Ages. Siena in the fourteenth century underwent a revolt against the old political and social order, referred to as an "urban takeoff" by Frugoni. These events resulted in a new attention to the individual and new expressions of community and civic life.

The most accessible of these tangible results of political change was the series of frescoes painted in a hall of the Palazzo Pubblico by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in 1338-39. These works, images of *Buon Governo* and *Mal Governo* (Good and Bad Government), were commissioned by the Sienese government of the day; they consist of allegorical figures and panels depicting the practical effects of both. These frescoes have today suffered some minor damage (and restoration) but nevertheless remain as a very complete and beautiful cycle of late medieval painting.

By far the longest chapter of the book is dedicated to a detailed iconographical analysis of the Lorenzetti frescoes. In this section, Frugoni utilizes the traditional methods of art historians to relate the sources of Lorenzetti's visual images to earlier medieval art and literature. In addition, she also explains the frescoes as reflections of the political situation of Siena at the time, suggesting that they served, among other things, as propaganda for the ruling authorities, the Nine. As such, the works emphasized the new secular concept of the common good but with the religious overtones which characterized earlier Italian art.

The detailed analysis of the Lorenzetti frescoes from Siena is in itself not a new subject. These works have been frequently studied since the fourteenth century. In fact, in an appendix in this edition (and obviously not included in the earlier Italian edition of 1983), Frugoni replies to comments of another author who criticized her interpretation in his own article of 1986. What is of interest in *A Distant City* is the remarkable breadth of Frugoni's knowledge of medieval literary and visual sources coupled with a comprehension of the social and political changes which shaped urban life in fourteenth century Italy. Her emphasis is on the former.

Because it deals so extensively with Siena, this book is less general than its title implies. It is particularly useful for a reader interested in methodology, because it juxtaposes conventional art historical analysis with the broader tools of social history. For the urban historian, however, it offers insight into how visual images can be seen to reflect the growth of cities in the later Middle Ages.

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