

writings uses different genres, such as dialogue and lyric poetry, to establish the compatibility of contingent monastic chores and the longing for a spiritual contemplative life. Le Roy addresses the nuns of his order but also educated laic women, using the language and images characteristic of love poetry in an attempt to translate the mystical spiritual experience, which would prove to be a lasting influence in the writings of Marguerite de Navarre.

The third and final part of the book revolves around the transition from religious literature to personal spiritual lyric poetry as exemplified by the models established by Guillaume Crétin (1460?–1525), Charles Fontaine (1514–70?), and Jean Bouchet (1476–1557). Passot-Mannoorettonil illustrates the complex influence of Catholic production on the development of the spiritual lyric poetry of the first half of the sixteenth century. Passot-Mannoorettonil succeeds at showing this intertextuality at play in the poetry of Marguerite de Navarre and her entourage. Surprisingly, this demonstration leads the author to the denial of the evangelical tendencies of the queen of Navarre, and claims her unflinching allegiance to the Catholic faith. Such a unilateral and controversial assertion is sure to stimulate debates among experts.

Philippe Baillargeon, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*
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I monaci Silvestrini e la Toscana (XIII–XVII secolo). Francesco Salvestrini, ed. Studi sulle abbazie storiche e ordini religiosi della Toscana 5. Florence: Olschki, 2020. vi + 200 pp. + color pls. €26.

This book is a collection of eight essays, with an introduction by Michael Kelly, abbot general emeritus of the Sylvestrines, and covers the history of the order in Tuscany between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries. Three of its chapters focus exclusively or in part on Montepulciano (site of a 2017 symposium from which this volume was published); other areas represented include Chiusi, Petroio, and Florence, with references to regions in Marche. It thus establishes itself as not merely another study of religious orders in Renaissance and early modern Florence, but as an examination of the local and regional history of a Benedictine congregation important to Central Italian life between 1299 and 1658.

Francesco Salvestrini's opening chapter provides a careful historical and historiographic introduction to the order and its founder, with particular attention to his spirituality in the political and local context (i.e., the relationship to other observances, the papacy, and diocesan and civic structure). This theme is also important for the expansion of the Sylvestrines from Marche into Tuscany, particularly to Florence, where in 1299 they took up residence in San Marco, a church they were forced to cede to the Dominicans in 1436. Isabella Gagliardi takes up the story in Florence in the second

chapter, explaining how the order was established in such an important sector of the city, and how they created not just a physical but also a spiritual space there. This included a female branch, started in 1308 and suppressed in 1435, just before the loss of San Marco. After a brief stay with the Servites in 1436 and some attempts to recover San Marco, the Sylvestrines withdrew to San Giorgio, in the Oltrarno.

Michele Pellegrini follows this up with the story of Sienese Trecento Sylvestrines who occupied Santo Spirito in that city from 1311 through 1437. Pellegrini examines the political and social situation of the city at the time the order arrived—a period of significant economic upheaval and conflict between Italian city-states and the Holy Roman Empire, which Pellegrini characterizes as “years of particular [religious] vitality” (66). From Siena, the volume turns to Chiusi, in a study by Giovanni Mignoni. The Sylvestrines arrived there quite late, in 1637, and lasted less than two decades. Ugo Paoli’s chapter on the unification of the Sylvestrines and Vallombrosians in 1662 provides an answer to why several of the churches passed into the hands of the latter upon suppression of the former. The Medici grand dukes were opposed to this move, which nonetheless succeeded, albeit briefly (Clement IX separated the two in 1667).

The emphasis on Montepulciano for much of the remainder of the book is explained succinctly at the beginning of Francesco Sebastianelli’s chapter: the Sylvestrines occupied San Giovanni del Poggiolo there for over 320 years. In this section, the reader learns of the relationship between the order and the (grand) dukes, and the role that its members played in the changing political and demographic situation of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Riccardo Pizzinelli’s chapter on Polizian Sylvestrines analyzes three documents from the suppression of the order, including descriptions of their church and its fate after 1653. In the closing chapter, Raffaele Argenziano explores the frescoes from the Oratorio di San Giovanni in Poggiolo, painted in the 1410s and restored in 1988. There is, alas, no contextualizing conclusion.

The book includes thirty-two plates, all but two in full color, reproducing art from private and church collections, largely but not exclusively emphasizing the Oratory of San Giovanni in Poggiolo (Montepulciano)—a small, deconsecrated church, easily missed. The plates, which include helpful detailed views, are therefore of great value to those with interest in art of the Sienese school of the Renaissance. In addition, Mignoni’s article includes lengthy sections of multiple documents, a real bonus considering the general difficulties of archive access in Italy and the specific problems associated with the ongoing pandemic. At less than two hundred pages of text, this collection admirably fills a gap in the religious history of both Florence and the rest of Tuscany between the Renaissance and the Baroque.

Kathleen M. Comerford, *Georgia Southern University*
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