Sarah Rubin Blanshei, ed.

A Companion to Medieval and Renaissance Bologna. Leiden: Brill, 2018. Pp. xviii + 623. Hb, \$261.

Volume 14 of Brill's *Companions to European History* contains twenty-one essays preceded by an introduction. The contributors hail from Bologna and other parts of Italy, the United States, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Canada. They present research on a variety of subjects, including the availability and richness of sources, urban planning, public health, banking, criminal justice, the religious life of clergy and laypeople, literature, art, education, government, and linguistics.

Sarah Rubin Blanshei's introduction notes that Bologna—unlike Florence, Milan, Rome, and Venice—was governed by a combination of local and papal leadership. This mixed arrangement was unknown in the other major cities of central and northern Italy, which have been studied in far greater depth. Thus, the first task in understanding the history of the prosperous university center must be understanding how it viewed its own identity. Blanshei provides a lesson in the historiography of Bologna, noting a weak early tradition of native chroniclers and a late development of literary expressions of civic pride. The violence of the late Duecento overshadows most studies of the city, even those from the late Renaissance, which argue that this period ushered in two kinds of destruction: first, of everyday life, and second, of a desire for creativity. The stability finally achieved in the mid-fifteenth century, in this understanding, came as a result of stagnation and the loss of liberty associated with the papal takeover, in 1506. The convention of viewing Bologna as the victim of cultural indolence has stuck through the modern period, leading to, for example, dismissals of the medieval and Renaissance architecture of the city and a widespread lack of interest in its history—and the accompanying lack of published scholarship—outside the Italian peninsula. Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, Gina Fasoli and her students began the correction, and interest continues to rise, particularly in the fields of political, criminal justice, and urban history, as well as art history and literature. This collection aims at continuing the correction.

Here, there is only space to provide a superficial discussion of the many themes under consideration. Several essays shed light on how new methodologies can aid scholars in their exploration of historical sites. In addition to street-level and aerial photography, and archival documents, for example, Francesca Bocchi's chapter on the physical space of the city contains a still photograph of a digital reconstruction of the via Mercato di Mezzo (now via Rizzoli) created by the Gina Fasoli Center for the Study of Cities at the University of Bologna.

David Lines observes that the ability of computer programs to analyze large data sets will provide scholars with the ability to understand both student life and teaching in ways which were previously impossible to imagine.

Other contributions call the reader's attention to under-explored aspects of the documentary history of the city. Diana Tura and Rosa Smurra provide in-depth discussions of archival sources in their chapters, suggesting many possibilities for future study. Geltner's study of governmental public health activities focuses on the vast documentary record left by *fango* (mud) officials, who oversaw activities related to the safety and sanitation of city buildings, bridges, walls, and streets. Massimo Giansante takes advantage of the extensive archival sources related to finance (public, private, and business) beginning in the mid-thirteenth century. In addition to discussing the economic life of the city, its investors, and those who passed through on their way to larger markets, Giansante uses the documentary sources to consider ethics. Andrea Gardi, seeking a deeper understanding of the economic lives of the ruling classes, uses a combination of chronicles and laws to determine both what were considered the ideal behaviors of the oligarchs and the manner in which real people conformed to those ideals. Armando Antonelli and Vincenzo Cassi discuss the importance of the Bolognese vernacular via exploring long-neglected documents from the Duecento. The creativity of that century (and the one which followed) also forms a central part of the argument advanced by Gian Mario Anselmi and Stefano Scioli.

A third group of essays takes the approach of looking beyond received understandings to find more nuanced interpretations of the history of Bologna. Giulio Milani argues (*pace* John Najemy in Florence) that economic relationships within the cities depended in part on alliances chosen by guilds seeking their own advancement and protection, and that professionals were able to parlay their "cultural wealth" into long-lasting power. Blanshei and Sara Cucini mine the criminal justice sources to trace developments in both accusation and inquisition trials. Riccardo Parmeggiani, lamenting the lack of synthetic historiography of mendicant orders and the continued reliance on studies of foundations, explores the suppression of heresy in medieval Bologna to understand the relationships between Dominicans and Franciscans, and the relationships of both to civic society. Lines examines town/gown relationships in a broader sense than usual, looking at interconnected institutional and cultural developments, concentrating on the period between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. His is the only essay which addresses the Jesuit presence in the city, noting the competition between the Society and the university, and the role of religious orders in the suppression of heresy.

Like Blanshei, Tommaso Duranti and Angelo De Benedictis consider the development of a Bolognese identity. Both use linguistic and literary interpretations of chronicles to understand the political culture. Gabriella Zarri and Nicholas Terpstra take up the topic from a religious point of view, examining the cult of St. Petronius and the role of confraternities in creating a civic religion. Raffaella Pini and David Drogin focus on a more specific identity, within the artistic community.

Blanshei addresses the weaknesses of current historiography, and of this volume, in the introduction: disputes over periodization can make it difficult to discuss certain artistic trends; although multiple essays confront gender topics, the collection does not contain a chapter dedicated to gender, marriage, or the family; and only certain aspects of material culture can be handled in any given publication. To these I would add two criticisms: the neglect of music, and the uneven index, which has multiple omissions. Among its many strengths, on the other hand, are essays specifically on archives, extensive bibliographies throughout, and high-quality graphics, not just color photographs and reproductions of art, but also maps and charts. I highly recommend this volume for those who teach and research both Bologna and other Renaissance regions.

Kathleen M. Comerford

Georgia Southern University

kcomerfo@georgiasouthern.edu

DOI:10.1163/22141332-00504010-07