Christopher Carlsmith. *A Renaissance Education. Schooling in Bergamo and the Venetian Republic, 1500-1650*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010. Pp. xviii, 435 + illustrations and maps. ISBN 978-0-8020-9254-0 (hardbound). \$ 75.

This excellent book is a study of schooling in the provincial city of Bergamo in the late Renaissance. Bergamo was part of the mainland empire of the Republic of Venice but geographically closer to Milan, and somewhat subject to Milanese religious influence. It had a surprising variety of schools.

Carlsmith classifies the schools according to their sponsors. Public education, meaning that the city government called the commune appointed and paid the teacher and oversaw the school, came first. Bergamo's public school enthusiastically embraced the new curriculum of humanistic studies based on the study of the classics of ancient Rome and Greece introduced by fifteenth-century humanist pedagogues. Carlsmith affirms the importance of humanism in transforming pre-university education. Bergamo tried and often succeeded in hiring humanist masters who had strong reputations in their own times. In addition, the commune provided a little legal education by paying a legist to deliver a course in civil law. The law lectures prepared Bergamasque youths for university study in law and helped train local lawyers and notaries. As with the humanistic public school, the commune's support was strong but not always consistent.

Lay confraternities, especially the largest and most important in Bergamo, the *Misericordia Maggiore* (Confraternity and Fraternity of Saint Mary of Mercy), founded several different kinds of schools over the years. Its schools trained laymen and priests; the *Misericordia Maggiore* also founded a residential college in Padua for young men from Bergamo wishing to attend the University of Padua. And it provided scholarships enabling local youths to go elsewhere to learn. Although little noted, scholarships provided by confraternities and similar groups in centuries past have had far-reaching consequences for Italian culture. For example, in 1832 the Monte di Pietà of Busseto, a tiny hamlet in south-eastern Lombardy, awarded a grant to a nineteen-year-old youth so that he could study music in Milan. The young man's name was Giuseppe Verdi. The role of the *Misericordia Maggiore* was large and diverse in Bergamo, and Carlsmith devotes some of his most important and interesting pages to it.

The Schools of Christian Doctrine (catechism schools) provided elementary mass literacy to numerous boys and girls who may have had few or no other educational opportunities. The catechetical movement began in the late 1530s in Milan and quickly spread across Italy. On Sundays and religious holidays, about eighty-five days a year, boys and girls went to the parish churches of Bergamo to learn. Boys went to one church, girls to another; if they had to share a church, they gathered in opposite wings. Lay men taught boys, lay women taught girls. The children and young people learned prayers, elementary Catholic doctrine, and rudimentary reading and writing skills. Every parish of Bergamo had a catechism school and the numbers were astonishing. In 1609, for example, 377 lay men taught 1,466 boys, while 810 lay women taught 2,719 girls. Since Bergamo had

about 30,000 people at this time, some 18 % (5,732 boys, girls, men, and women) participated in the Schools of Christian Doctrine. The very high teacher-pupil ratio (one teacher to three or four students) may have made them effective conveyers of rudimentary literacy.

Carlsmith also chronicles the schools of the new religious orders. As public education declined in numbers and importance in the late sixteenth century, the schools of the new religious orders of the Catholic Reformation grew. The Somaschans (Clerks Regular of Somasca, who took their name from their mother-house at Somasca, a tiny hamlet near Bergamo) managed orphanages and schools in Bergamo. By contrast, the Jesuits did not succeed in establishing a school in Bergamo until 1711. Carlsmith emphasizes the importance of local connections as a key factor determining whether a religious order could gain a foothold. The Somaschans had local ties, the Jesuits did not. Carlsmith's research also points to the importance of bequests, especially in tiny hamlets. A clergyman or layman who wished to expand educational opportunities left money for a school or a scholarship.

After a detailed analysis of Bergamo, Carlsmith offers important and useful comparative data from nearby villages, other Veneto cities, and Venice. Their experiences were often similar. For example, Bergamo, Brescia, Verona, and Vicenza all embraced the humanistic curriculum for their public schools, but did not always provide steady financial support. Like Bergamo, they eventually turned to religious orders to teach the humanities. On the other hand, the major role of Bergamo's Misericordia Maggiore had no counterpart. A major conclusion from this book is that there was more educational opportunity than scholars previously thought existed in small cities and villages. The complete story must be ferreted out by diligent and persistent research in local archives and libraries, and sometimes from the neglected research of local antiquarian scholars. Carlsmith demonstrates how to do it.

The book is based on a great deal of archival and manuscript research in Bergamo, Padua, Venice, Rome and elsewhere. The reading in primary and secondary literature is comprehensive and perceptive. The book is written in a clear style. The publisher has produced an attractive book in a large enough font for easy reading. On the other hand, the notes are placed at the back of the book. No scholar of Renaissance and Catholic Reformation education can afford to miss this important work.

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Federica G. Pedriali. *Altre carceri d'invenzione. Studi gaddiani.* Ravenna: Longo, 2007. Pp. 304. ISBN 978-88-8063-563-5 (paper). Euro 20.

Federica Pedriali's *Altre carceri d'invenzione* is manifestly an essential addition to the field of Gadda studies. The text is comprised, for the most part, of articles pub-