ing array of motifs and situations. Yet, despite its heterogeneity, the poem holds together well and works. Under Parker's scrutiny 'Il piato' serves as an illustration of Bronzino's fecund allegorical imagination, pointing the way to how the artist handles symbolic representation, manipulating the traditional sources and moving far beyond them. An extraordinary work in its own right, the poem epitomizes the profound sense of equivocation that, by the time we reach the final pages of the book, has clearly become the hallmark of Parker's own view of Bronzino's aesthetics.

In her brief conclusion Parker asks "To what does an art like Bronzino's point?" The answer, she posits, lies in the two very different worlds around which Bronzino's poetry revolves: the idyllic realm of noble sentiments, on one side, that emanates from the Petrarchan lyrics and in which Bronzino is part of an amiable coterie of gifted friends, and the carnivalesque cacophony of the burlesque capitoli on the other side, where anything is fair game for a rebellious Bronzino who spares nothing and no-one from his witticisms. Parker concludes that Bronzino's simultaneous pursuit of two such different poetic venues should inspire us to approach his works not as the reflection of a single aesthetic ideal, but as the fluid creative process born of two very different, but intensely personal forms of expression.

Parker's contribution certainly advances our understanding of Bronzino as a poet and as a painter. It proposes an interpretive model based on the artist's complex and contradictory personality and attuned to the diversity inherent in the cultural world of mid-sixteenth-century Florence. After reading Parker's book it will be difficult to look at a Bronzino portrait again and not see the poet-artist smiling at the viewer from behind the canvas.

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The eleven interdisciplinary essays in this collection are devoted to the study of confraternal painting, sculpture, architecture and religious theatre in Italy and span the period from the Quattrocento to the beginning of the seventeenth century. Although some Renaissance confraternities were devoted exclusively to youths or to women, most were made up of men and women of varying ages and from a range
of social classes who directed their group dynamic towards the achievement of devotional, charitable, and social goals. The study of confraternal art therefore permits an accurate insight into the ways that the sodalities used visual culture to further their aims in the religious, social and urban environment. By studying an array of confraternal icons and altarpieces, church decoration, the architecture of hospitals, monastic complexes and private oratories, as well as the more ephemeral art used to animate multi-media public festivals, sacred theatre and processions, the authors explore the corporate mentalities behind such commissions and offer valuable insights into the cultural economy of salvation.

Louise Marshall examines the iconography and the commissioning of plague altarpieces by Quattrocento confraternities in Genoa, Perugia and Arezzo. She details the explicit function of such altarpieces in nurturing the healthy civic body. By engaging civic authorities in the creation of plague images, confraternities were performing a public service, and Marshall effectively demonstrates that such images were created not merely as responses to disease, but were considered effective strategies for salvation.

The next three essays are studies of male youth confraternities in Florence. Although there is some disagreement about the extent to which these adolescent sodalities were governed by adult cells, the youth confraternities seemed to flourish under the independent impetus of the young men who banded together to engage in the study of church doctrine and the practice of religious ritual as preparation for their adult roles in society. Diane Cole Ahl examines the art and devotional practices of the youths of the Compagnia della Purificazione e di San Zanobi in Florence, while Ann Matchette discusses the architecture of that company’s residence near the Medici-sponsored Dominican monastery of San Marco. Ahl is concerned with Benozzo Gozzoli’s Altarpiece of the Purification, particularly how its inclusion of Medici and Florentine saints “encoded the group’s spiritual and political images as well as focused its ritual behaviour” (52). Placed on the main altar of the group’s oratory, the altarpiece was the decorative focus of the circumscribed architectural spaces described in the next essay by Matchette. She demonstrates how the entire architectural corpus of the Purificazione’s complex embodied its interactive strategy with Medici patrons and with the city at large. Her revelation that the brotherhood stored the ephemeral works of art used in their processions in the sacristy of their oratory nicely highlights the ways in which confraternities bridged the private and public spheres.

Examining the art patronage of the youth confraternity of the Compagnia dell’Arcangelo Raffaello, Konrad Eisenbichler analyzes surviving inventories that detail their acquisition of works of art over time. He demonstrates that the youths not only inherited furniture and ritual objects from adult confraternities, but that they
occasionally adapted the iconography of existing painted altarpieces to suit their own representational needs. This last point offers a unique insight into the life-cycle of religious paintings in general, suggesting a contemporary flexibility toward their modification and renewal.

The next two essays explore the fertile documentary trail of the confraternities in Bologna. As organizations aspiring to the achievement of miracles in everyday life, confraternities devoted much of their charitable activity to the building of hospitals and to the care of the sick and dying. Nicholas Terpstra studies five hospitals built in Bologna in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries at the instigation of aristocratic patrons who had joined the confraternal orders. Their philanthropic efforts to ‘rationalize’ health-care programs through the sponsorship of different kinds of institutions (foundling homes, orphanages, infirmaries) certainly altered the Bolognese urban profile and did much to reflect their own qualità or social standing, but the institutions themselves ultimately did little to alleviate the real sufferings of the poor. The alleviation of suffering through symbolic means is the subject of Randi Klebanoff’s study of the life-size terracotta group depicting the Lamentation Over the Dead Christ, by Niccolò dell’Arca, installed in the Church of Santa Maria della Vita in Bologna in 1463. She examines the individual participants in this sacred drama as representatives of the whole spectrum of human suffering over disease and death. By linking the creation of the Lamentation to the meditation on the Passion prescribed by the order’s statutes regarding the terminally ill, Klebanoff demonstrates that the group functioned as “an encyclopedic register of the stages and character of mourning” (146). Her reconstruction of the original arrangement of the figures in the chapel evokes the intense emotional impact the tableau must have had on contemporary viewers who saw it as a form of public instruction on the social enactment of grief.

The final five essays are devoted to confraternal art in Rome. Nerida Newbigin examines the public religious spectacles held by the Confraternity of the Gonfalone in the Colosseum, while Barbara Wisch examines that group’s Crucifixion altarpiece by Roviale Spagnuolo, made for their oratory in Rome. Again, public spectacle and private devotional objects are given separate but interconnected identities in the examination of the civic and devotional roles the confraternity played within the much larger political and urban context of the city.

The remaining essays examine the role of women in the Roman sodalities under papal sponsorship and offer a nice counterpart to the earlier essays devoted to male youth confraternities in Florence. The complex at Santo Spirito in Sassia housed the most important hospital in Europe during the Renaissance; Eunice D. Howe offers a fascinating study of the gendered activities of its consorelle who cared for orphans, sick females and pregnant women in need of shelter. She explains how such gendered care eventually demanded the physical redefinition of the spaces inhabited by
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frati and suore and discusses the important role played by Pope Sixtus IV in the architectural and decorative modifications of the complex. She also details the fascinating ritual role of the architecture as a staging-ground for the parade of eligible virgins offered as prospective brides to the assembled Roman citizenry in a spectacular annual procession. Howe's analysis of the complex and how its architecture reinforced the activities of its women is an extremely important contribution to the study of gender and architecture in the Renaissance.

Charity directed to women in post-Reformation Rome was primarily concerned with meeting Tridentine edicts minimizing the public profile of courtesan culture, particularly with respect to the care and education of female orphans who were sheltered from the practice of prostitution. The essays by Lance Lazar and the late Louise Smith Bross discuss the orphanage founded by the Jesuit Compagnia delle Vergini Miserabili of Santa Caterina della Rosa in Rome. Lazar outlines the programme of social welfare instituted by the company, which provided its charges with education and skills that equipped them for marriage or the monastery. Smith Bross examines the iconography of the church decoration, devoted to the life of St. Catherine, who was presented by the sodality's authorities as the role model for their female charges. These essays demonstrate that confraternities used visual culture to shape the gradual institutionalization of public health care and social welfare in the evolving urban context, and considerably broaden our understanding of the dynamic role that corporate sponsorship played in bridging the private and public spheres of Renaissance devotional life.

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Questo è uno studio importante sulla natura e genere del dialogo nella sua evoluzione dalle origini ciceroniane al dialogo umanistico del Quattrocento, fino al dialogo cortigiano di Castiglione, in un esame dei ripieghi e delle svolte a cui viene sottoposta la forma dialogica durante la sua evoluzione ed integrazione storica.

Cicerone piuttosto che Platone, la retorica piuttosto che la dialettica, sembrano dare lo stampo al dialogo umanistico e a quello del primocinquecento. Il dialogo basato sulla retorica è un confronto aperto tra opinioni e crea la possibilità di uguale