Booknotes / Notes de lectures

K.J.P. Lowe. *Nuns' Chronicles and Convent Culture in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. xvi, 437.

Lowe analyzes three unpublished documents: the chronicle of Santa Maria delle Vergini (Le Vergini), composed or compiled in 1523 by Augustinian canonesses in Venice; the chronicle of the Benedictine Santa Maria Annunziata (Le Murate) composed in 1598 by Suora Giustina Niccolini in Florence; and a chronicle written in 1607 by Suor Orsola Formicini about the Clarissan convent of Santi Cosma e Damiano (San Cosimato) in Rome. A concise history of both nuns' chronicles as a genre and convents as physical and social spaces grounds Lowe's study of the three texts. The connections among these chronicles are examined in detail in the last half of the book, with emphasis on ceremonial life, cultural creativity and production, and art in the convent. Forty-two illustrations enhance our understanding of convent life at the time. Contributing to the scholarship of the past decade that foregrounds nuns' writings about themselves, the book achieves its aim of demonstrating the agency and creativity of these women.

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Anthony F. D'Elia. *The Renaissance of Marriage in Fifteenth-Century Italy*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005. Pp. viii, 262.

The Renaissance of Marriage in Fifteenth-Century Italy begins with the helpful reminder that although the renewal of the institution of marriage is often associated with the Reformations, Italian humanists were already promoting the advantages of marriage by the 1420s. D'Elia's 137-page study is followed by an impressive 40-page finding list for wedding orations in the Italian Renaissance. The humanist revival of the classical tradition of the epithalamium, in Latin, serves as primary

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