

Giovanni Garzoni. *Historiae Bononienses*.

Ed. Alessandra Mantovani. Studi e Testi 2. Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2010. 552 pp. €60. ISBN: 978-88-7395-499-6.

The Bolognese humanist and physician Giovanni Garzoni (1419–1505) has been a subject of scholarly attention in recent times. In particular, R. O. Lind has edited his important epistolary collection (*The Letters of Giovanni Garzoni*, 1992), and Alison Frazier's research on Renaissance lives of saints has pointed out Garzoni's contribution on the topic (*Possible Lives. Authors and Saints in Renaissance Italy*, 2005, 395–414); moreover, she has published with a learned commentary his *Vita*

*sancti Augustini* (*Traditio*, 65.2, 2010, 232–86). Now Alessandra Mantovani, a young Bolognese scholar, gives a critical edition of the *Bolognese Histories*, preceded by a biographical sketch and a rationale of her editorial criteria. She sums up and supplements the previous knowledge on the author. In one of his letters Garzoni refers to have seen Leonardo Bruni in Florence at the time of the Church's council in 1439; more importantly, in the Roman curia of the Pope Callixtus III he was familiar with Lorenzo Valla, not as a teacher but, as he writes, as a fellow and an assistant (“*usus sum [Valla] socio atque adiutore,*” 13). To Valla he would maintain a lifelong fidelity, as a great master of rhetoric up to Cicero's height, but also defending him against ecclesiastical criticism (21). What matters to us now is the fact that both Bruni and Valla were influential to Garzoni's *Bolognese Histories*. As with Bruni in his *Histories of the Florentine People*, Garzoni too aims at writing the history of the Bolognese people (a term equivalent to *state*) in its emphasis on liberty and power. Moreover, like Bruni, Garzoni dislikes antiquity's legends and ecclesiastical history: he writes about the political history of modern and contemporary times, beginning with the struggles against the German emperors and ending up with praise of the Bentivoglio regime; and like Bruni (and afterwards Guicciardini) he supports the aristocratic regime against the popular one. As with Valla, Garzoni is an opponent of ecclesiastical secular power, to which Bologna reluctantly submitted in 1278 because of civic contentions. His actual aims are directed toward a regime, as Giovanni Bentivoglio's was, strong enough to counterbalance ecclesiastical governors. In this sense the destruction by Hannibal Bentivoglio in 1443 of the fortress of Porta Galliera, the very stronghold of Papal Legates, is in Garzoni's *History* an epoch-making event (see 455–56).

More than a harmonious exposition, Garzoni's *History* is a collection of different compositions on particular events and characters. Only later on, in the nineties, the author aimed at giving his histories a more unifying outline, not always, I would say, with full success. Mantovani explains at length the stages of composition of the text and adds three useful appendixes. Her meritorious work would have been even more useful if she had also supplied the text with a recognition of its historical sources.

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