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Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy

Maya Corry, Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin - 978-90-04-37587-1
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Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy

Edited by

Maya Corry
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Contents

Acknowledgments ix
List of Illustrations x
Notes on the Editors xviii
Notes on the Contributors xx

Introduction 1
Maya Corry, Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin

PART 1
The Unbounded Nature of Domestic Space

1 Singing on the Street and in the Home in Times of Pestilence: Lessons from the 1576–78 Plague of Milan 27
Remi Chiu

2 The Ex Voto between Domestic and Public Space: From Personal Testimony to Collective Memory 45
Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser

3 Spaces for Domestic Devotion in the Noble Residences of Palermo in the Age of Catholic Reform 63
Valeria Viola

4 Music and Domestic Devotion in the Age of Reform 89
Iain Fenlon

PART 2
Domesticating the Divine

5 Domestic Portraiture in Early Modern Venice: Devotion to Family and Faith 117
Margaret A. Morse

6 Domestic Religion and Connected Spaces: Isabella della Rovere, Princess of Bisignano (1552–1619) 139
Elisa Novi Chavarria

Maya Corry, Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin - 978-90-04-37587-1
Downloaded from Brill.com05/28/2020 03:40:38PM
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7 "And the Word Dwelt amongst Us": Experiencing the Nativity in the Italian Renaissance Home 163
Zuzanna Sarnecka

PART 3
The Materiality of Devotion

8 Religious Subjects on Sixteenth-Century Deruta *Piatti da Pompa* 187
Michael J. Brody

9 Investigating the 'Case' of the *Agnus Dei* in Sixteenth-Century Italian Homes 220
Irene Galandra Cooper

10 Material Prayers and Maternity in Early Modern Italy: Signed, Sealed, Delivered 244
Katherine M. Tycz

11 Devotional Panels as Sites of Intercultural Exchange 272
Michele Bacci

PART 4
Prayer and Meditation

12 Creating Domestic Sacred Space: Religious Reading in Late Medieval and Early Modern Italy 295
Sabrina Corbellini

13 Delight in Painted Companions: Shaping the Soul from Birth in Early Modern Italy 310
Maya Corry

14 Literary and Visual Forms of a Domestic Devotion: The Rosary in Renaissance Italy 342
Erminia Ardissino

Maya Corry, Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin - 978-90-04-37587-1
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PART 5
Conflict and Control

15 Domestic Prayers and Miracles in Renaissance Italy: The Case of Savonarola and His Cult 375
Stefano Dall'Aglio

16 Private and Public Devotion in Late Renaissance Italy: The Role of Church Censorship 389
Giorgio Caravale

17 Contested Devotions: Space, Identities and Religious Dissent in the Apothecary's Home 408
Joanna Kostylo

Index Nominum 437

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Acknowledgments

The impetus for *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy* (and for its partner volume *Domestic Devotions in the Early Modern World*) came from two events: a 2014 workshop for invited participants held at Jesus College, Cambridge, and the 2015 international interdisciplinary conference *Domestic Devotions: The Place of Piety in the Italian Renaissance Home, 1400–1600* held at St Catharine's College, Cambridge. We are grateful for the enthusiastic participation of all the attendees of these events, which made them both a great success. These events were hosted and generously supported by the 2013 to 2017 research project *Domestic Devotions: the Place of Piety in the Italian Renaissance Home, 1400–1600*. This project received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007–2013) / ERC grant agreement n° 319475. For help with the organisation of the workshop and conference, and for the use of their excellent facilities, we owe a debt of thanks to Jesus College and St Catharine's College. We are grateful to Rachel Burgess, administrator of the *Domestic Devotions* project, who facilitated many practical aspects of these events. We would also like to thank the Principal Investigators of the *Domestic Devotions* project: Professor Deborah Howard of the Department of Architecture and the History of Art, Dr Abigail Brundin of the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages, and Professor Mary Laven of the Faculty of History for their intellectual generosity and support over the course of the research project, for their help in the running of the workshop and conference, and for their assistance in the production of this volume.

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Illustrations

1.1 Excerpt from Litany of the Saints (*Liber usualis*) 33
2.1 Ex votos at the sanctuary of the Madonna of Montenero, Livorno. Photograph by the authors 48
2.2 Ex voto at the sanctuary of Santa Maria di Castello, Genoa. Photograph by the authors 55
2.3 Ex voto at the sanctuary of Santa Maria di Castello, Genoa. Photograph by the authors 58
2.4 Devotees at the garden shrine of the Madonna dell'Orto, Chiavari (commemorative image). Oil on wood. Cathedral and sanctuary of the Madonna dell'Orto. Photograph by the authors 59
2.5 The Madonna dell'Orto. Fresco, ca. 1490, formerly on a garden wall, in its transposed, 17th-century setting. Photograph by the authors 61
3.1 Villa Cattolica, Bagheria (Palermo), the geometrical *disegno* of outbuildings is highlighted in green, the oratory is in red. Manipulation by the author of a Google Earth image 69
3.2 Oratory of Villa Cattolica, entrance from the street, Bagheria (Palermo). Photograph by the author 70
3.3 Oratory of Villa Cattolica, entrance from the inner garden, Bagheria (Palermo). Photograph by the author 71
3.4 Villa La Grua, Palermo, the oratory is highlighted in red. Manipulation by the author of a Google Earth image 72
3.5 Chapel on the ground floor of Villa La Grua. Photograph by the author, by kind permission of Gustavo Wirz 73
3.6 Patricia Waddy's scheme for the apartment in seventeenth-century Rome. The chapel is highlighted in red by the author, whilst the bedroom area is coloured in light red. Scheme from: Waddy P., *Seventeenth-century Roman Palaces: use and the art of the plan* (New York and Cambridge: 1990), 5 77
3.7 Scheme of the apartment in late seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century Palermo by the author, based on the description by G.B. Amico. The chapel is highlighted in red, whilst the bedroom area is coloured in light red 78
3.8 Scheme based on the description by G.B. Amico. The rooms shaded yellow represent the spaces that were most public, those in blue the most private, and those in red the more liminal. The red line indicates the limit to an outsider's gaze 79
3.9 Chapel and salon on the first floor of Palazzo Raffadali. Photograph by the author, by kind permission of Maria Teresa Panzera 81
3.10 Altar closet in Palazzo Termine. Photograph by the author, by kind permission of Signoretta Alliata 82

Maya Corry, Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin - 978-90-04-37587-1
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via free access

4.1 Marietta Robusti, "Self Portrait", ca. 1580. Oil on canvas, 93.5 × 91.5 cm. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi. © Scala Picture Library, Florence 91
4.2 Jacopo Tintoretto, "Women making music", after 1566. Oil on canvas, 142 × 214 cm. Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen. © Elke Estel/Hans-Peter Klut 92
4.3 Wendelin Tieffenbrucker, *Chitarrone* (probably originally a lute but later converted), made in Padua, 1592. Pinewood with ebony and ivory, 170 × 34 cm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London 95
4.4 *Madonna Nicopeia*, 12th century, Byzantine. Tempera on wood, 58 × 55 cm. Venice, Basilica di San Marco. © Cameraphoto Arte, Venice 101
4.5 *Compendium musices confectum ad faciliorem instructionem cantum choralem* [...] (Venice: Lucantonium de Giunta, 1513). V&A Libraries, Special Collections, 87.D.28. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London 110
5.1 Titian, "Nobleman of the Maltese Order", 1510–1515. Oil on canvas, 80 × 64 cm. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. Photo: Nicola Lorusso. © Alinari / Art Resource, NY 118
5.2 Palma il Vecchio (Jacopo d'Antonio Negretti), "Portrait of a Gentleman", ca. 1520–1525. Oil on panel transferred to canvas, 69.5 × 55.6 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art. © John G. Johnson Collection, 1917 121
5.3 Anonymous Cretan painter, "Virgin and Child", late 15th or early 16th century. Oil on wood, 332 × 332 cm. Louvre, Paris, France. © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource 124
5.4 Lorenzo Lotto, "Madonna and Child with Two Donors", ca. 1525–1530. Oil on canvas, 87.6 × 118.1 cm. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA. Digital Image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program 127
5.5 Antonello da Messina, "Ecce Homo", 1475. Oil on wood, 48.5 × 38 cm. Museo Civico, Piacenza, Italy. © Scala / Art Resource, NY 130
5.6 Antonello da Messina, "Portrait of a Man (Il Condottiero)", 1475. Oil on wood, 36.2 × 30 cm. Louvre, Paris, France. © Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY 131
6.1 The Church of Gesù Nuovo, Naples, 16th–18th centuries. Photograph by the author 144
6.2 The epigraph on the *timpanum* of the *Casa Professa*. Photograph by the author 146
6.3 Portrait of Francesco Teodoro Sanseverino, BNN, ms. I B 36 G.B. Masculo (S.J.), *Isabellae Feltriae Roboreaque principis Bisiniani* [...] (Naples 1619). © Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli 148
6.4 Portrait of Isabella della Rovere, BNN, ms. I B 36, G.B. Masculo (S.J.), *Isabellae Feltriae Roboreaque principis Bisiniani* [...] (Naples 1619). © Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli 149

Maya Corry, Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin - 978-90-04-37587-1
Downloaded from Brill.com05/28/2020 03:40:38PM
via free access

6.5 P. Campollonio, *Stanze di Pietro Campollonio di Napoli, alla illustrissima et eccellentissima signora Isabella Feltria della Rovere* [...] (Naples 1580) 150
6.6 Friar Emanuele from Naples, *Vita del venerabile servo di Dio Frate Geremia da Valacchia de' Minori Cappuccini della Provincia di Napoli* (Naples 1761) 154
6.7 The vision of Madonna, BNN, ms. XI A 52, ca. n.n. © Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli 155
7.1 Pietro and Giovanni Alemanno, polychromy Francesco Felice, "Presepe", 1478. Polychromed poplar wood. Naples, Museo di Certosa di San Martino. Photograph by the author 165
7.2 Andrea della Robbia's workshop, "Christ Child", ca. 1500. Glazed terracotta, h: 45.7 cm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum (Inv. no. 7702–1861). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London 168
7.3 Giovanni di Nicola di Manzoni di Colle (?), "The Adoration of the Magi", ca. 1509–1515. Glazed terracotta, 25.5 × 34.5 cm. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum (Inv. no. C.2180–1928). © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge 171
7.4 Giovanni di Nicola di Manzoni (?), "Nativity Inkstand", ca. 1509. Glazed terracotta, 24 × 23 × 22 cm. Geneva, Museum Ariana (Inv. AR 4092). Photograph by the author 173
7.5 Giovanni di Nicola di Manzoni (?), "Nativity Inkstand", ca. 1509. Glazed terracotta, 24.4 × 23.4 × 22.2 cm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum (Inv. no. 396–1889). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London 174
7.6 Giovanni di Nicola di Manzoni (?), "Nativity Inkstand", ca. 1509. Glazed teracotta, 24 × 23 × 23 cm. Naples, Museo Duca di Martina (Inv. no. 958). Photograph by the author 175
7.7 Luca della Robbia, "Nativity with Gloria in Excelsis", ca. 1470. Glazed terracotta, 88.9 × 73.7 cm. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts (Inv. no. 17.1463). © Museum of Fine Arts, Boston 178
7.8 Fontana Family Workshop, "Inkstand with a Man Playing an Organ", ca. 1580. Glazed terracotta, 38 × 27 × 22 cm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum (Inv. no. 8400–1863). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London 179
7.9 Anonymous Artist from Faenza (?), "Inkstand with Crib scene", first half of the 16th century. Glazed terracotta, 22.5 × 14 cm. Cento, Private collection. Photograph by the author 180
8.1 Deruta, "St Francis Receiving the Stigmata", 1531. Maiolica, diam. 41.3 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art. © The Cleveland Museum of Art 188
8.2 Deruta, "St Francis Receiving the Stigmata", ca. 1500–1530. Lustred maiolica, diam. 40.8. Pesaro, Museo delle Ceramiche. © Musei Civici, Pesaro 189
8.3 Deruta, ca. 1540– 1560. Lustred maiolica. Philadelphia, private collection. Detail of footring, underside of dish. Photograph by the author 191

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8.4 Vittore Carpaccio, Legend of St Ursula polyptych, "Arrival of the Ambassadors", ca. 1498. Oil on canvas, 378 cm × 589 cm. Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia. Detail. © Erich Lessing / Art Resource, NY 193
8.5 Deruta, "Madonna and Child", ca. 1520–1530. Maiolica, diam. 40 cm. Musée des arts décoratifs de Lyon. © Lyon, MTMAD – Pierre Verrier (1700) 194
8.6 Deruta, *Bella donna* dish inscribed *ORARE SEGRETO E MOLTO ACETTO A DIO* (To pray in secret is most acceptable to God), ca. 1505–1520. Lustred maiolica, diam. 42.6 cm. Private collection. Photograph by the author 195
8.7 Deruta, "Jesus praying in Gethsemane", ca. 1500–1510. Maiolica, diam. 43 cm. Faenza, Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche. © Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche, Faenza 197
8.8 Anonymous, Florence, "Jesus praying in Gethsemane", ca. 1492. Woodcut from Girolamo Savonarola, *Tractato overo sermone della oratione* (Florence, Lorenzo Morgiani: 1492). Photograph by the author 198
8.9 Deruta, "The Annunciation", ca. 1500–1520. Maiolica, diam. 40.1 cm. Kansas City, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. © The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO 199
8.10 Deruta, "The Passion of Jesus", ca. 1500. Maiolica, diam. 47.5 cm. Ravenna, Museo Nazionale. © Museo Nazionale di Ravenna 200
8.11 Deruta, "The Crucifixion, with St Jerome and St Francis", ca. 1540–1550. Lustred maiolica, diam. 42.2 cm. Musée des arts décoratifs de Lyon. © Lyon, MTMAD – Sylvain Pretto (1947) 202
8.12 Deruta, "St Jerome in the Wilderness", ca. 1550–1560. Maiolica, diam. 41.5 cm. Private collection. Photograph by the author 204
8.13 Deruta, "St Catherine" ca. 1510–1530. Lustred maiolica, diam. 40.5 cm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London 205
8.14 Deruta, "St Roch", ca. 1500–1550. Lustred maiolica, diam. 41.8 cm. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum. © The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge 206
8.15 Deruta, "The Incredulity of St Thomas", ca. 1500–1530. Lustred maiolica, diam. 40.5 cm. Toronto, Gardiner Museum. © Gardiner Museum, Toronto 208
8.16 Deruta, "A Franciscan Monk Preaching from a Pulpit", ca. 1540–1560. Maiolica, diam. 46.5 cm. Private collection. Photograph by the author 211
9.1 Agnus Dei, front, 16th century. Wax, Campion Hall Collections, Oxford. © Jesuit Institute, London 223
9.2 Agnus Dei, back, 16th century. Wax, Campion Hall Collections, Oxford. © Jesuit Institute, London 224
9.3 Bartolomeo Faleti, "Pope Pious V consecrating the 'wax lamb'", 1567. Etching on paper, 40 × 54, British Museum. © The Trustees of the British Museum 225

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9.4 Pendant/Cameo, front, 16th century. Silver, shell, niello, gold, copper, 2.5 cm in diameter, British Museum. © The Trustees of the British Museum 233
9.5 Pendant/Cameo, back, 16th century. Silver, shell, niello, gold, copper, 2.5 cm in diameter, British Museum. © The Trustees of the British Museum 233
9.6 Medallion, 16th century. Silver, niello, gold, 2.5 cm in diameter, British Museum. © The Trustees of the British Museum 234
9.7 Pendant, 1400–1500. Silver, silver-gilt, 4 × 2.8 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London 235
9.8 Medallion, front, 16th century. Silver, niello, gold, 2.5 diameter, British Museum. © The Trustees of the British Museum 236
9.9 Medallion, back, 16th century. Silver, niello, gold, 2.5 diameter, British Museum. © The Trustees of the British Museum 236
10.1 Title page of the *Legenda et oratione di Santa Margherita vergine, & martire historiata; laqual oratione legendola, ouer ponendola adosso a vna donna, che non potesse parturire, subito parturirà senza pericolo*, (Venice, Francesco de Tomaso di Salò e compagni: 1550). Woodcut and print on paper, octavo. London, The British Library, General Reference Collection C.38.b.34., not paginated. © British Library Board 249
10.2 "Lettera di rivelazione di Maria Ori [Letter of Revelation of Maria Ori]" found in the crypt of the Chiesa di San Paolo Apostolo, late sixteenth century. Ink on paper, seal wax, and woodcut encased in copper and glass. Roccapelago di Pievepelago, Museo delle Mummie di Roccapelago. © Museo delle Mummie di Roccapelago 253
10.3 Reverse of Fig. 10.2, "Lettera di rivelazione di Maria Ori [Letter of Revelation of Maria Ori]" © Museo delle Mummie di Roccapelago 254
10.4 Detail of Fig. 10.2, Woodcut image of the Madonna and Child on a copper backing with a glass cover. © Museo delle Mummie di Roccapelago 255
10.5 *Breve* found in the crypt of the Chiesa di San Paolo Apostolo, late sixteenth-early seventeenth century. Pressed paper image and devotional medallion in a cloth pouch. Roccapelago di Pievepelago, Museo delle Mummie di Roccapelago. © Photograph by the author 256
10.6 "Orazione della misura di Cristo [Prayer of the Measure of Christ]", Italy, unsigned: before 1500. Red ink on paper, 10.5 × 22 cm. New York, The Morgan Library and Museum, Checklist: ChL 1360, PML 16529. © The Morgan Library and Museum 258
10.7 "Oratione devotissima alla matre di Dio trovata nel S. Sepolcro di Christo [Most Devout Prayer to the Mother of God found in the Holy Sepulchre of Christ]" (In Barzellona, e ristampata in Venetia, co[n] licenza de' Superiori). Ink on Paper, 175 × 120 mm. Rome, Biblioteca Alessandrina, Miscellanea XIV

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D 27 8. © By kind permission of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali e il Turismo 259
10.8 "La sacra cintola". Green wool with gold embroidery and two cords as ties. 87 cm (length) in the "Reliquary of the Sacra Cintola della Madonna" (Milan, 1638). Gold, enamel and rock crystal. Cathedral of Santo Stefano, Chapel of the Sacra Cintola. © Fototeca Ufficio Beni Culturali Diocesi di Prato 263
10.9 Girdle, ca. 1450. Tablet woven lampas with gilded and enamelled metal, nielloed silver and stamped brass. Victoria & Albert Museum, 4278–1857. Detail of the inscriptions on the two niello roundels, which read 'AMORE. VOL' and 'SPERA. IN DIO'. © Victoria & Albert Museum, London 265
10.10 Giovanni di Ser Giovanni (lo Scheggia), "Madonna and Child with Angels", ca. 1450–1480. Tempera on panel. Private Collection [Last Known: Collection H. Kisters, Kreuzlingen, Switzerland]. © Photo Library of the Federico Zeri Foundation. The property rights of the author have been met 267
11.1 *Representation of a Painter*, from a tomb in Cherson, Crimea, 3rd century. Saint Petersburg, The Hermitage Museum. Photograph by the author 274
11.2 *Ceramic Iconostasis*, 10th century. Preslav (Bulgaria), Archaeological Museum. Photograph by the author 275
11.3 *Madonna di Santa Chiara*, painted panel, Pisa, late 12th century. Pisa, National Museum of San Matteo. Photograph by the author 277
11.4 *Madonna di sotto gli organi*, icon, ca. 1200. Pisa, Cathedral of Our Lady. Photograph by the author 279
11.5 Andreas Ritzos, *Mater de Perpetuo Succursu*, ca. 1450, repainted in 1866. Rome, Sant'Alfonso all'Esquilino. Photo: after De Jonghe M., *Roma Santuario mariano*, Rome 1969, Fig. 109 284
11.6 Byzantine painter, *Crucifixion and the Virgin with Child*, painted panel, ca. 1370. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum. © Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam 287
11.7 Cretan painter, *Virgin and Child with Sts Anthony the Great, John the Baptist, Jerome, and Bernardine of Siena*, painted triptych, ca. 1460. Prague, National Gallery. © National Gallery, Prague 289
13.1 "The Christ Child with the infant Saint John the Baptist with an unidentified male child", sixteenth century. 42.5 × 35.6 cm, private collection. © Christie's Images / Bridgeman Images 311
13.2 Leonardo da Vinci, "The Virgin and Child with a child and a cat, two studies of a child and a cat, and the Christ Child and infant Baptist embracing", ca. 1490–1500. Pen and ink over red chalk with touches of wash on paper, 20.2 × 15.1 cm. Royal Collection, Windsor. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2017 325

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13.3 Marco d'Oggiono (?), "The Infant Christ and Saint John Embracing", ca. 1500–1530. Oil on panel, 64.3 × 48.1 cm. Royal Collection, Windsor. Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2017 326
13.4 "Holy family with the infant St John", sixteenth century. Oil on panel, 51 × 47 cm. Wellington Collection, Apsley House, London. © Historic England Archive 327
13.5 Bernardino Luini, "The Holy Family", first half of the sixteenth century. Oil on panel, 100 × 84 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. © Museo Nacional del Prado 328
13.6 Attributed by Sotheby's to Marco d'Oggiono, "The Christ with the infant St. John the Baptist", early sixteenth century. Oil on panel, 43.8 × 36.2 cm. Private collection. © 2017 Art Works Fine Art Publishing, Los Angeles 329
13.7 Bernardino dei Conti (?), "Madonna and Child with the Infant St John the Baptist", 1496. Oil on panel, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan. © Mondadori Portfolio/ Electa/Sergio Anelli / Bridgeman Images 331
13.8 "Madonna and Child with St. John", ca. 1510. Oil on panel, 22.7 × 18.5 cm. Galleria dell' Accademia Carrara, Bergamo. © Bridgeman Images 332
13.9 Bernardino Luini, "Virgin and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist", 1523–1525. Oil on canvas, 86 × 60 cm. Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid. © Fundación Colección Thyseen-Bornemisza 335
13.10 "The Christ Child", early sixteenth century. Oil on panel, 19.5 × 15.5 cm. Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan. © Museo Poldi Pezzoli 337
14.1 Alberto da Castello, *Rosario della gloriosa Vergine Maria* (Venice, s.n.: 1521), frontispiece. By kind permission of the Biblioteca Consorziale di Viterbo 348
14.2 Alberto da Castello, *Rosario della gloriosa Vergine Maria* (Venice, s.n.: 1521) fols. 78v–79r. By kind permission of the Biblioteca Consorziale di Viterbo 349
14.3 Alberto da Castello, *Rosario della gloriosa Vergine Maria* (Venice, s.n.: 1521), fols. 162r–163v. By kind permission of the Biblioteca Consorziale di Viterbo 350
14.4 Luis de Granada, *Rosario della sacratissima Vergine Maria, raccolto dall'opere del R.P.F. Luigi di Granata* (Venice, Gioanne Varisco et Compagni: 1578) 56. By kind permission of the Biblioteca del Seminario del Polo Teologico Torinese, Turin 353
14.5 Luis de Granada, *Rosario della sacratissima Vergine Maria, raccolto dall'opere del R.P.F. Luigi di Granata* (Venice, Gioanne Varisco et Compagni: 1578) 136. By kind permission of the Biblioteca del Seminario del Polo Teologico Torinese, Turin 355
14.6 Strata Niccolò, *Compendio dell'ordine e della regola del santissimo Rosario della gloriosa vergine* (Turin, Gio. Michele, & ff. de' Cauallerij: 1588) fols. 78v–79r. By kind permission of the Centro Teologico, Turin 356

Maya Corry, Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin - 978-90-04-37587-1
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14.7 Strata Niccolò, *Compendio dell'ordine e della regola del santissimo Rosario della gloriosa vergine* (Turin, Gio. Michele, & ff. de' Cauallerij: 1588) fols. 77v–78r. By kind permission of the Centro Teologico, Turin 357

14.8 Aresi Paolo, *Imprese sacre con triplicati discorsi illustrate & arricchite a' predicatori, à gli studiosi della Scrittura Sacra VI* (Tortona, Calenzano & Viola: 1634–5) 219. By kind permission of the Biblioteca dei Cappuccini di Torino 358

14.9 Bracchi T. *Le due imprese delle due catene de' rosarii* (Brescia: Antonio Ricciardi, 1633) frontispiece. By kind permission of the Staatliche Bibliothek Regensburg, 999/4Asc.162 360

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2003); *La città e il monastero. Comunità femminili cittadine nel Mezzogiorno moderno* (2005); *Sacro pubblico e privato. Donne nei secoli XV–XVIIII* (Napoli 2009); *Controllo delle coscienze e organizzazione ecclesiastica nel contesto sociale* (2009); *Baroni e vassalli. Storie moderne* (2011); *The Space of Women* (2013).

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Introduction

Maya Corry, Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin

This volume sets out to explore the world of domestic devotions in early modern Italy. Religious life in this time and place has long been the subject of scholarly study; so too have the household, family and domestic sphere.[1] Yet it is only relatively recently that academic attention has been paid to the overlap between these – to the myriad, complex and diverse ways in which people in this era engaged with religious beliefs, practices, rituals and objects in their homes.[2]

1 On the household and family see Palumbo-Fossati I., "L'interno della casa dell'artigiano e dell'artista nella Venezia del Cinquecento", *Studi Veneziani* 8 (1984) 109–153; Herlihy D. – Klapisch-Zuber C., *Tuscans and Their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427* (New Haven & London: 1985); Sarti R., *Vita di casa: abitare, mangiare, vestire nell'Europa moderna* (Rome-Bari: 1999); Balestracci D., *The Renaissance in the Fields: Family Memoirs of a Fifteenth-Century Tuscan Peasant* (University Park, PA: 1999); Fortini Brown P., *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice: Art, Architecture and the Family* (New Haven and London: 2004); Grubb J.S., "House and Household: Evidence from Family Memoirs", in Lanaro P. – Marini P. – Varanini G.M. (eds.), *Edilizia privata nella Verona rinascimentale* (Milan: 2000) 118–133; Howe N. (ed.), *Home and Homelessness in the Medieval and Renaissance World* (Notre Dame, IN: 2004). A seminal work that elucidated links between institutions, doctrine and lay piety is Niccoli O., *La vita religiosa nell'Italia moderna: Secoli XV–XVIII* (Rome: 1998).

2 An early example is Zemon Davis N., "Ghosts, Kin, and Progeny: Some Features of Family Life in Early Modern France", *Daedalus* 106.2 (1977) 87–114. Scholarship on Protestant households was swift to take up this theme, and much recent research owes a debt to works such as Ozment S., *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Cambridge, MA: 1983) and Roper L., *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: 1989). Recent publications on Protestant Britain have continued this trend: Hamling T., *Decorating the Godly Household. Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (New Haven and London: 2010); Ryrie A., *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain* (Burlington, VT: 2012); Doran J. – Methuen C. – Walsham A. (eds.), *Religion and the Household, Studies in Church History* 50 (2014). Work on Catholic contexts includes Bornstein D., "Spiritual Kinship and Domestic Devotions", in Brown J.C. – Davis R.C. (eds.), *Gender and Society in Renaissance Italy* (London: 1998) 173–192; select essays in Forster M.R. – Kaplan B.J. (eds.), *Piety and Family in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honour of Steven Ozment* (Aldershot: 2005); Cooper D., "Devotion", in Ajmar-Wollheim M. – Dennis F. (eds.), *At Home in Renaissance Italy* (London: 2006) 190–203; De Sandre Gasparini G. – Grado Merlo G. – Rigon A. (eds.), *Religione domestica: medioevo, età moderna, Quaderni di storia religiosa* 8 (2001); Mattox P., "Domestic Sacral Space in the Florentine Renaissance Palace", *Renaissance Studies* 20/5 (2006) 658–673; Morse M., "Creating Sacred Space: The Religious Visual Culture of the Renaissance Venetian Casa", *Renaissance Studies* 21 (2007) 151–84; Corry M. – Howard D. – Laven M. (eds.), *Madonnas and Miracles: The Holy Home in Renaissance Italy* (London: 2017).

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Scholars who seek to illuminate the interface between religion and domestic life have benefited from gains made by earlier work on the home and family. The seminal work of the anthropologist Mary Douglas has been crucial in this regard. For her, the home is both a space and a community: it is a repository of memory, a place where each individual is expected to invest in the collective good, somewhere with an aesthetic and moral dimension.[3] The boundaries of the home are not fixed, and it can be a fragile entity that is easily disrupted. This fluidity is central to our definition of domesticity. The early modern *casa* housed not just the nuclear family but a shifting network of kin, friends, business associates, servants and apprentices. Households were not stable units: babies were put out to wet-nurse, children lived with employers, elite girls were raised in convents, widowed women returned to their natal homes, men left for seasonal work, relatives came and went. Defining 'domestic space' is also not straightforward.[4] Many Italians would not have recognised any clear delineation between spaces for living, working and socialising, as extant architecture makes clear. Numerous individuals spent parts of their lives in institutional settings, and the poorest in society, lacking defined spaces that they could call 'home', nonetheless experienced what can be classed as 'domestic' devotions.

Notwithstanding these realities, our aim is to affirm the importance of the domestic environment to spiritual life in this period.[5] If we acknowledge that behaviours and rituals shape human experience to a greater degree than doctrines, then it becomes clear that the home is as deserving of the attention of scholars interested in religiosity as the church. Within the *casa* daily prayers were said, candles were lit in front of images, and divine grace was received. Births, deaths and marriages all took place at home and were marked by religious rituals and observances. Times of crisis as well as key moments of the

3 Douglas M., "The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space", in Mack A. (ed.), "Home: A Place in the World" *Social Research* 58, 1 (1991) 287–307.

4 A strong body of scholarship on Catholic spaces has emerged in recent years (the scope of which cannot be fully indicated here), see for example Boesch Gajano S. – Scaraffia L. (eds.), *Luoghi sacri e spazi della santità* (Turin: 1990), in particular the essays by Signorotto G.V., Zarri G., Rosa M.; Verdon T. (ed.), *Lo spazio del sacro: luoghi e spostamenti – The Space of the Sacred: Place and Displacement* (Bologna: 1997); Spicer A. – Hamilton S. (eds.), *Defining the Holy Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: 2005), in particular essays by Webb D., Banner L.A., and Pestell T.

5 We are here primarily interested in lay homes, rather than those headed by ecclesiastics, or institutional domesticities. However, we recognise that such distinctions are not so easily drawn: clerics and laypeople were members of the same families and often shared domestic spaces.

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day – waking, eating, sleeping – were punctuated with prayer that could be individual or communal, spoken, read or sung. This was an era of increasing focus on the importance of the household and family (in general, civic and moral terms), and although the practice of domestic devotion was by no means an early modern invention, its significance was amplified in the period's discourse.[6] The definition of a space as domestic in no way precluded its conceptualisation in explicitly spiritual terms. In recognition of this fact, advice literature urged laypeople to make space for moments of quiet reflection and meditation (both literally within their homes and figuratively within their hearts and souls); a wealth of material evidence confirms that many did so.

Essays in this volume draw attention to these realities, and shine light on their significance to life in this period. They highlight that domestic devotions were often simultaneously personal, familial and communal. Although the home could be an intimate space of quiet contemplation, religious life within its walls was shaped by the participatory activities of church, confraternity, shrine, parish, pilgrimage and procession in profound ways.[7] Equally, rituals that took place in the church, confraternal hall or street had domestic aspects and meanings, and the language and imagery of home and family appeared frequently in Catholic discourse. The home was a site of pious sociability, where religious festivities, weddings, and in general all those activities traditionally associated with collective and public gatherings were celebrated.[8] Domestic devotions were enmeshed with institutional forms of piety, and many essays explore the ways in which practices, sounds, gestures and objects which originated in churches, monasteries and confraternal

6 On the earlier roots of some early modern practices see Webb D., "Domestic Space and Devotion in the Middle Ages", in Spicer A. – Hamilton S. (eds.), *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: 2005) 27–47, and the essay by Bacci in this volume.

7 See essays in this volume by Chiu, Dall'Aglio, Fenlon, Garnett and Rosser and Viola. Here our approach is in harmony with a large body of scholarship from across disciplines which rejects neat divisions between public/private and clerical/lay. Studies that achieve this with a focus on early modern Catholicism include Cohn S.K., *Death and Property in Siena, 1205–1800: Strategies for the Afterlife* (Baltimore: 1988); Poska A.M., *Regulating the People: The Catholic Reformation in Seventeenth-Century Spain* (Leiden – Boston: 1998); and Garnett G. – Rosser J., *Spectacular Miracles. Transforming Images in Italy from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: 2013). Work on confraternities is often characterised by the same concern; see for instance Terpstra N., *Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna* (Cambridge: 1995).

8 See essay in this volume by Kostylo. This was as true of Muslim and Jewish homes in the early modern era as of Christian ones. See essays by Wollina, Katz, Kaplan, Arad in the companion volume to this one, Faini M. – Meneghin A. (eds.), *Domestic Devotions in the Early Modern World*, Intersections 59/2 (Leiden – Boston: 2019).

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houses migrated into dwellings.[9] Others make fresh contributions to historical debates surrounding the validity of the public/private distinction, indicating the need to pay careful attention to early modern language and attitudes.[10] In recognition of these elisions, essays in this volume probe the intricate web of connections that bound early modern believers to one another, and examine how they negotiated different forms and spaces of piety and expressions of faith.

In the light of these observations, the question arises of whether any aspect of spiritual practice was primarily domestic in nature. Prayer, for instance, could be conducted anywhere. However, preachers and the authors of moralising treatises identified certain aspects of devotion as being especially suited to the home. Daily reading was encouraged for those who were literate, as was meditation on an image.[11] Believers were urged to find time and space in their lives for quiet, regular contemplation of the holy mysteries. (Such advice was clearly modelled on monastic ideals of behaviour, with treatises on the household urging their readers to think of their homes as analogous to houses of God.) It is perhaps in the quotidian repetition of behaviours that we can locate something that was particular to domestic devotion, rather than in any single act or ritual.

Another aspect that is characteristic of this period is the significance afforded to objects and artworks. Demand for religious texts and wares exploded in these years, with the greater availability, affordability and diversity of material goods meaning that more people than ever before aspired to own such items.[12] Laypeople from across the social scale used objects to create areas within their homes that were suited to daily acts of piety. Works of art were repositories

9 See essays in this volume by Ardissino, Bacci, Morse and Sarnecka.

10 See essays in this volume by Caravale and Dall'Aglio.

11 On religious reading see essays in this volume by Corbellini and Ardissino.

12 Here too the work of anthropologists has been a catalyst for developments in other disciplines, see Douglas M. – Isherwood B., *The World of Goods. Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (New York: 1979). The literature on early modern material culture and consumption is large and ever-growing. Significant works on the domestic sphere include Thornton P., *The Italian Renaissance Interior, 1400–1600* (London: 1991); Ajmar-Wollheim M. – Dennis F. (eds.), *At Home in Renaissance Italy*; Campbell E.J. – Miller S.R. – Carroll Consavari E. (eds.), *The Early Modern Italian Domestic Interior, 1400–1700: Objects, Spaces, Domesticities* (Burlington VT: 2013). Evelyn Welch's *Shopping in the Renaissance: Consumers Cultures in Italy, 1400–1600* (New Haven and London: 2005) concludes with consideration of religious goods 'Buying Heaven' 295–301. See also Corry et al., *Madonnas and Miracles*.

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of stories, hopes and prayers, as essays in this collection demonstrate.[13] They were treasured for their beauty, their rich materials, and sometimes their artistic worth. Primarily though, religious items were valued for their ability to move the soul, provide protection and bring believers closer to the divine. In the home, beholders entered into particularly intimate relationships with depicted figures: speaking to them, touching and kissing them, imaginatively interacting with them on a daily basis. Small objects worn close to the body, such as pieces of jewellery, *agnus dei* pendants or little scraps of prayer in pouches, were often especially cherished.[14] The extraordinary range of items with religious significance of some sort that were incorporated into domestic life (including furniture, crockery, inkstands, candlesticks, holy water stoups, combs and cutlery) indicates how vibrantly artists and makers responded to the requirements of different believers: rich and poor, educated and uneducated, men, women and children.[15]

Among other things, this diversity highlights the need for historical sensitivity towards distinctions in devotional experiences. A wealth of scholarship has made clear that religion offered one of the most significant vehicles for the formation and expression of female subjectivity and agency in the early modern era. How did that dynamic operate within the home? Moralists taught that an explicitly patriarchal structure ought to govern family life: it was the assumed male head of the household who was to lead communal prayers and enforce religious discipline. Women were relied upon to behave in a pious manner and help ensure the sanctity of the home, teaching children the basics of devotion, for example, but they were expected to do so under male guidance and supervision. Spirituality itself could be deeply gendered, with contemporaries regularly associating practices and beliefs that were condemned as superstitious and silly with femininity, regardless of whether they were adhered to by men or women. The reality, although it was profoundly informed by these discourses, was of course more complicated. While any simplistic association of domesticity with femininity must be vigorously resisted, it is nonetheless true that women were able to carve out agency from within the intersecting frameworks of the domestic and the devotional. Sometimes this crystallised around explicitly female events that were more likely to happen at home than anywhere else, such as childbirth.[16] On other occasions, reputations for piety

13 See essays in this volume by Bacci, Brody, Corry, Morse and Sarnecka.

14 See essays in this volume by Galandra Cooper and Tycz.

15 See essay in this volume by Bacci, Brody, Corry and Sarnecka. See also Corry – Howard – Laven (eds.), *Madonnas and Miracles*.

16 See essay in this volume by Tycz.

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allowed laywomen to situate themselves at the centre of networks of power and exchange.[17] While valuable studies have shed light on the links between female religiosity and the household more work is needed on the spiritual experiences of laymen, and the ways in which concepts of masculinity, as well as femininity, shaped religious life within the home.[18]

Disparity in social status offers another analytical framework through which our topic can be viewed. Those who were poor and spent their days in the fields or moving around the city might have found it difficult to attend to admonitions to create quiet spaces of contemplation in their daily routines. Those who could not afford the full paraphernalia of domestic devotion (or who shared their living space with many others) were less able to create areas demarcated for prayer within their homes. Many of the essays in this volume explore practices that were commonplace across the social scale, or pay attention to objects and works of art that were available to those without great means.[19] Yet the disparities between the experiences of rich and poor is an area where more work is to be done.[20]

As with all historical enquiries covering a span of several hundred years, our topic prompts consideration of changes and continuities in domestic devotion. Italian spirituality in this era was shaped by forces that crystallised in two major events: the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation, and the Council of Trent. The spread of Reformed ideas in Italy in the first decades of the sixteenth century – partly thanks to the diffusion of cheap print – prompted questioning of some of the most widespread devotional practices.[21]

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17 See essay in this volume by Novi Chavarria.

18 One recent essay that does so is Willis J., "The Decalogue, Patriarchy, and Domestic Religious Education in Reformation England", in Doran et al. *Religion and the Household* 199–209. Another that takes account of both male and female spectatorship of domestic works of art that had moral and religious connotations is Randolph A., "Renaissance Household Goddesses: Fertility, Politics, and the Gendering of the Spectatorship" in McClanan A.L. – Rosoff Encarnación K. (eds.), *The Material Culture of Sex, Procreation, and Marriage in Premodern Europe* (New York: 2001) 163–189. A forthcoming study that engages with the religiosity of laymen is: Corry M., *Beautiful Bodies: Sexuality, Spirituality and Gender in Leonardo's Milan* (Oxford: forthcoming).

19 See essays in this volume by Ardissino, Chiu, Corry, Fenlon, Galandra Cooper, Garnett and Rosser, Sarnecka and Tycz.

20 On the ability of sources such as the *registri dei pegni* in the series of the *Monti di Pietà* to shine light on the religious lives of those of lower status see Meneghin A., "Fonti per la storia della devozione popolare nella Marca pontificia (XV–XVI secc.). I registri dei pegni nelle serie dei Monti di Pietà", *Ricerche Storiche*, 47:3 (settembre–dicembre 2017) 5–24.

21 On print see Salzberg R., *Ephemeral City: Cheap Print and Urban Culture in Renaissance Venice* (Manchester: 2016) 117.

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The Reformation manifested itself in Italy in manifold ways: Lutheran, Calvinist, Anabaptist, anti-Trinitarian and even more radical ideas coexisted and mingled with one other, and need to be considered alongside attempts at reform that were rooted in Catholic orthodoxy.

It was not just beliefs that were shaped by the influence of Reformed doctrines but also practices. Clandestine conventicles were held in semi-public spaces such as shops, taverns and workshops, as well as in homes. Such places provided ideal environments for discussion, and for the performance of deviant rituals. Adherents to these new creeds often adopted a double standard of behaviour in their everyday lives: the practice of Nicodemism made it possible to draw a distinction between one's public persona, and one's inner self.[22] Individuals who adhered to this approach seemed outwardly to abide by Catholic orthodoxy, but in private followed their true beliefs.[23] Despite many reformers, such as Calvin, arguing that martyrdom was preferable to dissimulation, the majority of heterodox believers in Italy chose the latter path.

As is well known, Protestants placed significant emphasis on domestic aspects of religiosity.[24] While the Reformation called for a more personal brand of spirituality, based on the reading of the Gospels rather than the authority of priest and Church, it also entailed a whole range of beliefs that had a powerful influence on everyday life. Reformed spirituality involved activities such as chanting the Psalms, celebrating the Lord's Supper and reading and discussing the Bible that all took place within the home; it could even shape dietary regimes.[25] The influx of new ideas that penetrated Italy also had an impact on visual cultures of devotion. Examples include Lorenzo Lotto's portraits of Luther and his wife, painted in 1540 for his nephew Mario D'Armano, or the famous *Crucifixion* drawn by Michelangelo for Vittoria Colonna, with its emphasis on ideas expressed in the *Beneficio di Cristo* (1543).[26]

22 On Nicodemism see Ginzburg C., *Il Nicodemismo* (Turin: 1970); more recently, and for further bibliography, Valente M., "Un sondaggio sulla pratica cattolica del nicodemismo. «Che li scolari tedeschi si debbano tollerare a vivere luteranamente, in secreto però»", in Peyronel S. (ed.), *Cinquant'anni di storiografia italiana sulla Riforma e i movimenti ereticali in Italia 1950–2000* (Turin: 2002) 157–216. On dissimulation see Snyder J.R., *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe* (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: 2009).

23 As previously mentioned, study of these aspects of early modern spirituality can fruitfully illuminate public/private distinctions in this era. See essays in this volume by Caravale and Kostylo.

24 See works cited in note 2.

25 See Kostylo's essay in this volume.

26 On Lotto see Firpo M., *Artisti gioiellieri eretici. Il mondo di Lorenzo Lotto tra Riforma e Controriforma* (Rome – Bari: 2001). On Michelangelo see Alberti A. – Rovetta A. – Salsi C.

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One area where reformers in the post-Tridentine Church were in partial agreement with Protestants was on the need to eradicate 'superstition'. For Protestants, the term referred to the use of most religious paraphernalia, belief in miracles and many other aspects of Catholic devotion.[27] For the post-Tridentine reformers, superstition designated what could now be defined as traditional, or folkloric forms of practice. Belief in a whole world of magical and supernatural powers had long shaped attitudes to ritual, prayer, enchantments and images in Italian religiosity. Many 'superstitious' practices were intrinsically domestic, and revolved around everyday hopes and fears: conception; recovery from illness; warding off accidents; protection against bad weather and thieves; safeguarding mothers and babies during childbirth; defence against evil spirits, and so on.[28] The intertwining of magic and religion was commonplace and was widespread amongst believers of all levels of society, including members of the Church.[29] In the aftermath of Trent, the repressive apparatus of the Counter Reformation targeted these practices in an attempt to eradicate them. The dual measures of censorship and inquisitorial activity were wielded in the effort to stamp out deviancy. As a result, little survives of the wealth of cheap prints, flysheets and texts that transmitted many of these ideas. There are a few extant printed or manuscript copies of prayers, orations and legends with rubrics that insist on the talismanic and amuletic powers of the text, but most of what we know of their use derives from indirect sources such as trials, letters, *Acta synodalia* and later accounts.[30] These sources tell us that despite its best efforts, the Counter Reformation Church failed to eliminate these beliefs.[31] Essays in this volume point to a position

(eds.), *D'après Michelangelo. La fortuna dei disegni per gli amici nelle arti del Cinquecento* (Venice: 2015), esp. the section 'Crocifisso'.

27 Although the Reformation did not entirely undermine belief in miraculous events: see Soergel P.M., *Miracles and the Protestant Imagination: The Evangelical Wonder Book in Reformation Germany* (Oxford: 2012).

28 See Faini M., "Every-Day Miracles and Supernatural Agency in Sixteenth-Century Italy. The Case of the Marche", in Cardarelli S. – Fenelli L. (eds.), *Saints, Miracles and the Image: Healing Saints and Miraculous Images in the Renaissance* (Turnhout: forthcoming); in the same volume see also Meneghin A., "The Miracles of the *Madonna del Soccorso* of Rovigo: Popular Piety, Natural Disasters and the Environment of Polesine in the Sixteenth Century".

29 See for example the case of the priest Guglielmo Campana explored in Duni M., *Tra religione e magia. Storia del prete modenese Guglielmo Campana (1460?–1541)* (Florence: 1999).

30 See Tycz's essay in this volume.

31 Rozzo U., *La strage ignorata. I fogli volanti a stampa nell'Italia dei secoli XV e XVI* (Udine: 2008); Caravale G., *Forbidden Prayer: Church Censorship and Devotional Literature in Renaissance Italy* (Farnham: 2011).

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of reluctant compromise that was adopted by some reformers: traditional forms of devotion could be tolerated within the domestic sphere, if in public believers conformed to the newly codified orthodoxy.[32]

There had always been a divergence between how the Church thought spirituality ought to manifest itself in the home and how it did so in reality. This rift between the prescriptive tenets of domestic devotion and its actual features deepened over the sixteenth century. Historians have long mined the substantial advice literature of this era, but those who are interested in the experience of lay piety also have to attend closely to the scraps of evidence that have come down to us in trial records, legislation, songs, material and visual remains, written accounts and architecture. In many cases, those interested in domestic devotion find themselves caught between prescriptive sources and accounts of 'deviant' practices. Widespread, everyday devotions were not often recorded (not all are as lucky as historians of Tuscany who have recourse to *libri di famiglia* which often contain pertinent material); the essays in this volume therefore represent a precious effort in the reconstruction of the kinds of customs, rituals and beliefs that powerfully shaped both religious and home life in early modern Italy.[33]

1 The Unbounded Nature of Domestic Space

It has been noted that many of the essays in this volume testify to the impossibility of drawing any clear distinction between individual and collective devotions, instead highlighting the myriad ways in which these were linked. Spiritual ties expanded outwards from the domestic sphere, enmeshing the whole community in a network of social relationships that had a religious dimension. Iain Fenlon's contribution explores devotional music, demonstrating that it was common for the chanted litany to be sung in the home as well as in churches, monasteries, and convents. By a careful study of extant evidence Fenlon is able to reconstruct some of the pious sounds that echoed through early modern homes. Study of Florentine *laudi* demonstrates that a 'rich variety of interlocking musical practices', both public and private, were audible in this urban context. In Venice, too, *madrigali spirituali* and litanies, *laudi* and hymns such as the 'Salve Regina' were commonly heard *in casa*. In the intimacy

32 See essays in this volume by Caravale and Dall'Aglio.

33 For an example of the use of this kind of Tuscan evidence see Corbellini's essay in this volume.

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of the home, in front of images of the Virgin, prayers were said and devotional songs sung, just as in church.

Remi Chiu's essay similarly illustrates how sound linked domestic and communal spaces. Chiu focuses on a series of processions held in Milan in 1576–78 during an outbreak of plague. These were organised by the Archbishop Carlo Borromeo as a response to the problem of collective sin. Whether sung in the streets during one of these processions, or from behind doors and windows due to the imposition of quarantine, religious music brought the populace together in the fight against the communal scourge. Moreover, singing at home could activate a form of imaginative devotion: by retracing the steps of Christ on his long suffering *Via Crucis* one could remain safely indoors during the plague and yet attend a procession 'in spirit'. If the procession must be seen as a physical expression of civic and social organisation and hierarchy, it can also be read as an event during which liturgy and music allowed individuals to participate in a shared devotion that encompassed domestic space within its boundaries. The home thus became the site of religious experience that was simultaneously individual, familial, household, civic and communal.

Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser discuss the ex voto as a particular point of reference, a witness to this special relationship between individual religiosity and that which was communal. Focusing on Liguria, the authors argue that while the ex voto evidently functioned as a direct witness of the receipt of personal grace, it simultaneously held powerful collective significance. Those who left ex votos at shrines declared themselves to be part of a local community of believers. By doing so, they participated in the formation of public memory and affirmed the miraculous powers of a particular holy figure. The ex voto thus represents a perfect example of the ways in which personal religious experiences found natural expression and obvious significance in the context of a social community.

At times, the impetus for the convergence of domestic and communal aspects of religious life came more from one side than the other. If Chiu deals with the appropriation of communal customs by laypeople in domestic contexts, Valeria Viola considers the opposite occurrence: when spaces that were ostensibly reserved for the devotions of a household took on more expansive and collective significance. Viola's essay presents case-studies of the architecture of noble residences in Palermo during the age of Counter Reformation. She demonstrates that apparently 'private' familial *oratori* and chapels were used for church functions that included the wider community, either regularly or when the necessity arose. A careful comparison of rural and urban examples reveals that this was especially true in the countryside, where in some cases

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the communal role of a 'private' space concluded with its final transformation into a parish church. Viola also highlights the importance of paying attention to regional variations in responses to the restrictions that Rome sought to impose on the use of domestic chapels after Trent, exploring how they shaped the particular spiritual landscape of Palermo.

2 Domesticating the Divine

Contemporaries recognised that domestic space was defined as much by its myriad links to other spheres and networks as by any sense of enclosure. At the same time, the richly interactive relationship between domesticity and religiosity meant that beliefs about the household and family themselves shaped piety. Domestic metaphors and imagery featured in prayers and songs, *vite* of recent saints described their origins in ordinary lay households, and images of the births of holy babies in contemporary settings affirmed that everyday events could have intense religious significance. This was also a period characterised by a real appetite for images, objects and stories that illuminated the home lives of holy individuals, whether near contemporaries or Biblical figures. Popular texts told of how the little boy Jesus helped his mother around the house, laying the table and making the beds, and increasing prominence was given to the iconography of the nuclear Holy Family, with their loving bond held up as an ideal for ordinary people to emulate.[34] In addition, from earliest childhood early modern Italians were encouraged to develop close, even familial, relationships with the holy figures who inhabited their homes – appearing in prints and paintings, decorating crockery and other day-to-day objects, evoked in literature, prayer and song.

This impulse towards the domestication of the divine is unsurprising: this was a period during which the home increasingly took centre stage in moral and civic discourse. Discussions of marriage, household management and child-drearing; interest in etiquette, manners and bodily deportment; the attempted regulation of household goods – all emphasised the moral significance of the home. Margaret Morse examines this overlap in her essay on portraiture. She

34 Texts that explored the home lives of holy figures include the widely read thirteenth-century *Meditationes vitae Christi* which was attributed by contemporaries to Bonaventure, and the early-fourteenth-century *Vita di San Giovanni Battista.* On these texts and their relationship to contemporary devotional practices see Corry's essay in this volume. On the cult and iconography of the Holy Family see Wilson C., *St Joseph in Italian Renaissance Society and Art* (Philadelphia: 2001).

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asserts that neat art historical divisions of Renaissance paintings into 'secular' and 'religious' did not reflect the contemporary reality. Piety could be signalled in portraits via clothing, poses, jewellery and books. But even paintings that lacked these overt markers of religiosity could take on spiritual significance when they were hung alongside devotional images and placed in close proximity to domestic altars. Morse argues that this kind of arrangement communicated that a depicted figure was a devout member of the Christian community. If the sitter was deceased the image called forth prayers for his or her soul, and exerted continuous pressure on the living to dutifully maintain the family's honour and good standing. We are thus encouraged to think in more flexible terms about how we classify certain aspects of early modern culture.

Zuzanna Sarnecka's investigation of the taste for domestic *presepi* (Nativity scenes) encapsulates many of the trends outlined here. In the later thirteenth century Pope Nicholas IV commissioned a *presepio* for Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, in commemoration of St Francis' particular devotion to Christ's birth and the miracle at Greccio. Similar sculptural representations subsequently filled churches and convents, before migrating into homes in miniature. Paying particular attention to questions of materiality and gender, Sarnecka provides a case-study of these little terracotta objects. Many of them were functional as well as decorative, taking the form of inkstands. They asserted a charming connection between writing and the moment when 'the Word was made flesh' at Christ's birth. Thus a very everyday activity could be imbued with mystical meaning by an object that brought the holy narrative into the home.

By contrast, Elisa Novi Chavarria's study considers a cult that had its genesis in domestic circumstances, before emanating outwards into society. In Naples in the later sixteenth century Isabella della Rovere, Princess of Bisignano, was renowned for her great piety. In her chamber hung a painting depicting a Marian vision that had been experienced by her spiritual advisor, the Capuchin monk and 'living saint' Geremia da Valacchia. Geremia had the work of art made for her, and it testifies to the intimate relationship that bound the two together. But, as Novi Chavarria attests, neither Isabella nor Geremia was an isolated figure. The Princess was at the heart of a network of aristocratic sociability that was based on cultural connections and the exchange of religious relics, scientific instruments, and artistic artefacts. The holy man became the subject of widespread devotion and as his fame spread, so too did the image he had had made for Isabella, disseminated in prints and sculptures. Thus the intimate, personal religious encounter of these two figures lay at the heart of a cult that traversed social boundaries and spread beyond Italy.

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3 The Materiality of Devotion

As has already been noted, the centrality of material and visual culture to early modern Catholicism is inescapable. The essays in the previous sections, although grouped under different headings, encompass discussion of maiolica inkstands, musical instruments, ex votos, architectural structures, paintings, domestic altars, relics and prints. Catholicism was undoubtedly a religion of things: the liturgy came to employ a vast array of objects (chalices and patens of precious metals, candles and candleholders, bells, sacred vestments, crosses and so on) and churches were lavishly furnished. This period also saw a remarkable proliferation of objects intended for private devotion: rosaries, crucifixes, *agnus dei*, medals and pilgrim badges, domestic altars, holy water stoups, prints, plaquettes, sculptures and paintings. Objects and their uses sparked debate and attracted criticism, most obviously during the Protestant Reformation. Although the Catholic Church affirmed the value of the visual and material culture of religion, increasingly after Trent it sought to control the use of such objects through sanction and censure.

Historians of Catholicism have long paid attention to objects, images and the evidence of sources such as *post mortem* inventories, but the essays in this section confirm that there is still much that can be illuminated by a focused approach to material culture.[35] Michael Brody's study provides an overview of sixteenth-century *piatti da pompa*, objects that were often painted with religious scenes and which call into question modern definitions of a devotional image. Brody conducts a survey of the iconographies of these maiolica wares, which were found in homes across Italy. He perceives them as operating in an analogous way to paintings, and considers to what degree their cheaper production distinguished them and increased their appeal.

Brody's essay illustrates the advantages of directing new attention towards a specific category of objects, and the same is true of the contributions of Irene Galandra Cooper and Katherine Tycz. Galandra Cooper concentrates on the *agnus dei*. Her analysis attends to their physical and material characteristics, and commences with fundamental questions such as: What were *agnus dei*? Who made them and for what purposes? To what kinds of beliefs and practices do they attest? These little pieces of wax were initially an entirely licit sacramental distributed by the Church. Individuals treasured them, keeping

35 It is not possible to give a full overview of the literature on Catholic material culture here. For a recent publication of direct relevance see Corry – Howard – Laven (eds.), *Madonnas and Miracles* and bibliography.

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them at home or on their persons, pinned to their clothes or hanging from their necks. However, these were multivalent objects that could slip into the realm of the illicit and become points of tension – both between the Church and laypeople, and between individuals within a single household. In the aftermath of the Council of Trent ecclesiastical authorities attempted to impose a rigidly orthodox discipline over the use of such items, and Galandra Cooper fruitfully turns to inquisitorial records to unpick these complexities.

Katherine Tycz's essay considers the material resources which women had recourse to when they faced hardship or significant life events. Focusing on items such girdles, amulets and holy words, prayer sheets, and phrases written on *brevi*, and on attitudes to these objects that are revealed in contemporary sources, Tycz illuminates both actual practices and gendered understandings of religiosity. She demonstrates that fierce belief in the power of such aids during pregnancy and childbirth was enduring and widespread. From consideration of the apotropaic virtues of the *brevi*, Tycz moves outward to the histories of child bearing, pregnancy and infancy in early modern Italy. Her essay demonstrates that although the study of material culture prioritises research on artefacts, it is also enriched through analyses of representations of materiality, both textual and visual.

The use of objects in private devotion was nothing new, of course. Michele Bacci's essay reminds us that Christians had prayed in front of images since the earliest days of the religion. By the twelfth century, Byzantine believers had adapted rituals of the Mass and transposed them into their homes, along with religious icons. Although this domestication of church practices was suspect in the eyes of some Westerners, the production and domestic use of icons quickly spread in Italy and the Venetian empire. By the fifteenth century, the *maniera greca* was perceived as distinct from the Western style: the latter was considered more aesthetically appealing, but icons were thought by many to retain a particular value in private devotion. Bacci illustrates how artists freely mixed Italianate features with Byzantine ones to create works that made visible a trans-confessional concern with the efficacy of images for personal piety.

4 Prayer and Meditation

Throughout the early modern era, reading devotional texts and contemplating sacred images were privileged ways to gain access to the divine. A large portion of the print industry's output consisted of religious literature. Notwithstanding the prohibition issued in the aftermath of Trent on reading the Bible, Italian devotees had access to a large and manifold choice of spiritual works, mainly

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in the vernacular.[36] Many of these books were cheap, affordable, and readily available on book-stalls, from street vendors, and in bookshops. As scholars are beginning to recognise, both the birth of new spiritual genres and the spiritualisation of pre-existing ones contributed to a rejuvenation of Italian literature in this period.[37] However, one should bear in mind that words and images were not mutually exclusive: many devotional books were illustrated (or contained at least one woodcut), and they shaped forms of piety that also found expression in the visual arts. Essays in this section reflect on devotional literature, on how it affected prayer and meditation, as well as on its interactions with imagery.

As Sabrina Corbellini confirms in her essay, reading provided a 'mystical itinerary' to God, performed in accordance with rules that were handed down to laypeople by spiritual advisors. In turn, literate laypeople taught the art of religious reading to fellow devotees. This was true of Bartolomea degli Obizzi, whose spiritual father was the Dominican Giovanni Dominici, and who herself provided guidance to other women with whom she corresponded. As Corbellini notes, there was a substantial – and still partially unexplored – outpouring of devotional books, many of which recommended regular religious reading. Towards the end of the fifteenth century, members of the mendicant orders came to comprehend the demand from laypeople for instructions on how to practice their devotions, and were swift to use the printing press to disseminate manuals that soon became best-sellers (examples include Cherubino da Spoleto's *Regola della vita matrimoniale* (ca. 1464) and *Regola della vita spirituale* (ca. 1485)). Spiritual teachings learned while attending sermons or church were often written down, and subsequently read, meditated on, and discussed at home.

36 Fragnito G., *La Bibbia al rogo. La censura ecclesiastica e i volgarizzamenti della Scrittura (1471–1605)* (Bologna: 1997); ead., *Proibito capire. La Chiesa e il volgare nella prima età moderna* (Bologna: 2005).

37 Baldacchini L., *Bibliografia delle stampe popolari religiose del XVI–XVII secolo. Biblioteche Vaticana, Alessandrina, Estense* (Florence: 1980); Jacobson Schutte A., *Printed Italian Vernacular Books 1465–1550: A Finding List* (Geneva: 1983); Baldacchini L., "Il libro popolare italiano d'argomento religioso durante la Controriforma", in Aquilon P. – Martin H.J. – Dupuigrenet Desrousilles F. (eds.), *Le Livre dans l'Europe de la Renaissance*, Actes du XXVIIIe Colloque international d'Études humanistes de Tours (Paris: 1988) 434–445; Quondam A., "Note sulla tradizione della poesia spirituale e religiosa (parte prima)", *Studi (e testi) italiani* 16 (2005): Quondam A. (ed.), *Paradigmi e tradizioni* 127–211 and 213–282; Ferretti F., *Le Muse del Calvario. Angelo Grillo e la poesia dei benedettini cassinesi* (Bologna: 2012); Samarini F., *Poemi sacri nel Ducato di Milano* (Bologna: 2017).

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While some of the devotional works that were printed for a growing audience of devout readers achieved remarkable success and longevity, many of them are nowadays largely forgotten. The same is true of paintings. Maya Corry turns her attention to the production of numerous relatively cheap, small-scale religious paintings of generally Leonardesque inspiration, which depict episodes from the infancy of Christ and St John the Baptist. Devotional literature was deeply concerned with infancy, often recommending that a child's religious education begin in their earliest years when their soul was especially malleable. Medical beliefs taught that children were naturally inclined towards sensual pleasure, and pedagogues advised that their moral instruction ought to be enjoyable. Visual images were thought to be particularly appealing, and in combination with the idea that works of art could access the soul with greater immediacy than the written word, these discourses can be seen to have driven the market in certain iconographies that were pleasing to children. Works representing the encounter between Christ and his cousin in a joyful and 'childish' way provided a focus for the youngest members of the household, stimulating pleasure, recognition and positive spiritual development. Such images were generally small-scale and widely available, and Corry's study thus provides new insight into the religious concerns of those lower down the social scale.

If the needs and desires of laypeople drove the production of devotional works of art, the same was equally true of texts. Nor was there any clear distinction between these, for contiguity between the written word and images was a defining feature of religious culture. Erminia Ardissino analyses the production of books on the rosary, exploring the interplay between words and pictures in this sub-genre. As is well known, the rosary was one of the most widespread forms of devotion in Europe. Spoken individually or collectively it could be practised anywhere, inside the home or within one of the many confraternities of the rosary. The first Italian book on the subject was Alberto da Castello's 1522 best-seller, the *Rosario della gloriosa Vergine Maria*, which was reprinted forty times. Rosary books were often illustrated so that the illiterate could take spiritual advantage from them, while more literate readers could fruitfully consider the images alongside the written text. Later in the century books of *imprese* and emblems specifically centred on the rosary were published, and it became the subject of narrative poems (some intended for a learned audience, others for a more popular readership). This dense and rich literature also encompassed texts by female authors, such as Francesca Turini Bufalini's *Rime spirituali sopra i misterii del santissimo Rosario* (1595). Ardissino's essay illustrates how a single religious practice could stimulate a wealth of cultural responses, traversing all levels of society.

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5 Conflict and Control

In a time of confessional divisions, personal religiosity became an increasingly delicate matter. Homes were privileged spaces where heterodox ideas could be discussed and deviant devotional practices could be performed, as has been noted. Although we tend to think of reformed devotion as generally not relying on materiality, this is only partially true. Books, paintings and woodcuts were all central in non-orthodox devotions, and a variety of rituals and practices were associated with them.[38] Later in the sixteenth century the Inquisition's attention shifted towards the resistance of 'superstitious' practices, which the post-Tridentine Church struggled to eradicate. A number of essays in this volume deal with these issues, highlighting the ambiguities and the shortcomings of the strategies of the Roman Church.

Giorgio Caravale reasserts the value of the analytical categories of public and private in the specific context of the Counter Reformation, when contemporary observers became wary of forms of devotion that were practised 'away from an audience'.[39] The space in which heterodox believers sought shelter from prying eyes was not necessarily a physical place, a secluded room of one's house, but could be the inner part of one's soul. Yet religious authorities were suspicious of the domestic diffusion of heterodox practices and sought to encourage public displays of orthodoxy. In the second half of the sixteenth century the Inquisition tribunal increasingly turned its attention towards mysticism and superstition. Caravale defines these deviations from orthodoxy respectively as an 'excessive focus on the inner life' and an 'excessive misuse of outward signs'. Given the practical impossibility of exerting control over the personal religiosity of all Catholics (and also because of the many jurisdictional conflicts within the Counter Reformation Church), Rome resorted to a compromise. Certain forms of devotion, such as cults dedicated to un-canonised holy people, were prohibited in their public manifestations but tolerated in private. Possession of suspect books might be permitted as long as they were not read. This led to an ambivalence, a grey area in official attitudes to personal devotion that Caravale links to longer-term historical trends.

The question of how contemporaries understood the concept of 'private' devotion is taken up by Stefano Dall'Aglio in his study of a phenomenon that lay in the grey area identified by Caravale: the cult of Girolamo Savonarola.

38 See, for example, Al-Kalak M., *L'eresia dei fratelli. Una comunità eterodossa nella Modena del Cinquecento* (Rome: 2011).

39 On the use of these controversial categories, see Bonora E., "Il ritorno della Controriforma (e la Vergine del Rosario di Guápulo)", *Studi storici* 57 (2016) 267–295.

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As late as the 1580s, secret conventicles were held during which devotion was paid to relics and images of the friar, and stories of his miracles were told (these also circulated in the anonymous *Trattato dei miracoli*). The cult, which was not limited to Tuscany and which involved members of all levels of society, was eminently domestic. This, Dall'Aglio suggests, was not only because it was prohibited, but was also due to Savonarola's own promotion of intimate and domestic forms of piety. Towards the end of the sixteenth century Dominican voices suggested that worship of Savonarola be allowed to continue, so long as it was conducted in 'private'. Here, Dall'Aglio argues, privacy was understood to mean within the home, rather than in one's inner soul.

This is not to suggest, however, that authorities simply ceded control over the domestic sphere. Those who advocated compromise did so in acknowledgment of the disruptive potential of religious beliefs that found expression behind closed doors. In a city such as Venice, with its proximity to German-speaking regions, these issues were particularly acute. Here, as Joanna Kostylo affirms, different confessions coexisted, and the extraordinary output of the printing press as well as the feverish circulation of manuscripts meant that it was easy to access heretical ideas.[40] Kostylo's analysis of apothecaries' households – spaces that were simultaneously familial and professional, meeting places where news was exchanged and people gathered – reconstructs the ways in which heterodox beliefs spread and took root. Multiple, conflicting religious identities could exist within a single family, and theological discussions that took place in the home could eventually lead to forms of radical unbelief. Kostylo reveals how complex networks of sociability shaped heterodoxy in early modern Venice. Lutheran – but also Calvinist and, to some extent, Anabaptist – believers read books aloud, discussed theological issues, prayed and sung together, performed music, and celebrated the Lord's Supper.

While confessional conflicts or the attempted suppression of traditional, local or folkloric cults are certainly not unique to the Italian peninsula, the extent of the interaction between these components of early modern spirituality in Italy was profound. In some respects the home was a laboratory in which reading and discussion, the comparison of confessions and faiths, and a constant dialogue took place. It is unsurprising, then, that ideas were shaped there that informed some of the major strands in European thought.

40 de Vivo F., *Information and Communication in Venice. Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Oxford: 2007).

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6 Conclusion

Inevitably, a collection of case-studies such as ours cannot provide an entirely comprehensive overview of our topic. The domestic devotions of Italian Jews are not considered here, for example.[41] Certain aspects of Catholic spirituality which undoubtedly had domestic manifestation are not addressed.[42] New models of sanctity introduced in the Counter Reformation period are only touched upon, despite their relevance to our theme.[43] (The biographies of the Oratorians, for example, exemplary first followers of St Filippo Neri, reflect an innovative, domestic pattern of sanctity that was expressed through continuous prayer, virtue and visions, and which often included women and children.)[44] Differences based on location and region are hinted at, and a number of essays focus on areas that are understudied in Anglophone scholarship: Naples, Palermo, Liguria, Lombardy. But a more systematic study of regional variation is outside the scope of our volume.[45]

What we hope to have demonstrated beyond doubt is that a tight bond existed between the domestic and the devotional. Household rituals and beliefs that were largely beyond the reach of external authority cannot be adequately traced in any one type of source, or by means of a single approach. For this reason, our volume draws on expertise across several disciplines in order to bring to light the pivotal place of piety in the early modern Italian home. Essays encompass the histories of art and architecture, material culture, musicology, literature, and social and cultural history. They address how spiritual concerns shaped definitions of 'home' and 'privacy', the role of images and

41 The partner volume to this one, *Domestic Devotions in the Early Modern World*, does address the topic of domestic devotions from the perspective of different faiths.

42 Examples include acute fears of apocalypse, on which see Niccoli O., *Profeti e popolo nell'Italia del Rinascimento* (Rome – Bari: 1987), and belief in the ability of spirits, devils and angels to interact with humans, on which see Christian W.A., *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain* (Princeton, NJ: 1981) and Levi G., *L'eredità immateriale: carriera di un esorcista nel Piemonte del Seicento* (Turin: 1985).

43 See Dall'Aglio's essay on the cult of Savonarola. See also Zarri G., *Le sante vive. Profezie di corte e devozione tra '400 e '500* (Turin: 1990); Jacobson Schutte A., *Aspiring Saints. Pretense of Holiness, Inquisition, and Gender in the Republic of Venice, 1618–1750* (Baltimore and London: 2001); Gotor M., *I beati del papa. Santità, inquisizione e obbedienza in età moderna* (Florence: 2002).

44 The lives of the followers of Filippo Neri are found in Rome, Biblioteca Casanatense, ms. *2068* (*olim XX.VI.25*). On the spirituality of the Filippini and its domestic dimension see Verstegen I., *Federico Barocci and the Oratorians: Corporate Patronage and Style in the Counter-Reformation* (Kirksville, MO: 2015).

45 For this see Brundin A. – Howard D. – Laven M., *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: 2018).

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objects in devotion, the ability of domestic religious practices to shape wider social, cultural and economic life (and vice versa), and the complex relationships that existed between official orthodoxy and beliefs that were suspect or unsanctioned.

This volume poses a challenge to the enduring notion that Catholic religiosity in the early modern era was governed primarily by institutions. It asserts in unambiguous terms that spiritual life was not characterised by the endless repetition of empty ritual. Practices of domestic devotion did not fade away after Trent, nor did Catholic authorities cease to provide advice on how, when and where these should be conducted (the Jesuits are an obvious example). Throughout our period, for ordinary Catholics the home was a place for religious instruction and reading, prayer and meditation, communal worship, miracles, multi-sensory devotions, the contemplation of religious images and the performance of rituals. It was within this context that intimate relationships with the divine were forged and maintained; the study of domestic devotions can open up the history of the emotions and subjectivity in fascinating and important ways. Spiritual experience within the home was familial and communal, so our topic has ramifications for the study of religious institutions, and society and culture more broadly. Overall, what emerges most forcefully from these collected studies is a clear sense of the vibrancy, flexibility and importance of domestic devotions in early modern Italy.

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PART 1

The Unbounded Nature of Domestic Space



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CHAPTER 1

Singing on the Street and in the Home in Times of Pestilence: Lessons from the 1576–78 Plague of Milan

Remi Chiu

When plague returned to Europe in 1348 after an absence of nearly six hundred years, few could have guessed that the disease would continue to haunt the continent for the next four centuries.[1] A number of factors made the disease horrifying: it recurred in unpredictable cycles; it produced grotesque symptoms such as buboes and necrosis of the extremities; it had a high mortality rate; and it spread easily and killed quickly (Boccaccio writes that victims of plague 'having breakfasted in the morning with their kinsfolk, acquaintances and friends, supped that same evening with their ancestors in the next world!').[2] Moreover, unlike other ailments such as leprosy, plague did not mark individuals, but rather besieged entire populations. This last attribute of plague had important moral implications. If disease, as it was thought, was ultimately divine punishment for sin, then it followed that plague impugned not only the virtue of an individual, but the collective morality of a community. Corrective action, therefore, had to be carried out communally.

This essay examines the ritual of the plague procession as a response to the problem of collective sin, using as the focal point a series of well-documented processions held by Carlo Borromeo, the Archbishop of Milan, during the city's outbreak of 1576–78. It will first explore the ways in which music, as a central component of the procession, interacted with other elements of the ritual to facilitate corporate worship while strengthening the civic bonds of the processional community. However, large congregations of people in processions exacerbated the very real threat of contagion and contravened medical and civic rules for isolation. The second half of this essay will investigate how Borromeo coped with this struggle between piety and public safety by relocating the procession off the public streets and into private homes when parishes were placed under quarantine. In Borromeo's *ad hoc* program of devotion, most ritual elements were pared away, leaving music as the primary tool by which

1 Research for this essay was supported by the Wellcome Trust (106651/Z/14/Z).

2 Boccaccio Giovanni, *The Decameron*, trans. G.H. McWilliam (London: 2003) 13.

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the Milanese were able to maintain their corporate devotional activities and to erase the boundaries between public and domestic worship.

1 The 1576–78 Plague of Milan

According to surviving chronicles, plague entered Milan in either late July or early August of 1576 and reigned until the city was declared 'liberated' on 20 January 1578, meaningfully coinciding with feast day of St. Sebastian, one of the premier protectors against pestilence. Over those eighteen months, the city lost over 17,000 individuals, roughly 15% of her citizens.[3] No one knew for certain how plague could have breached the city's walls, given that Milan was already on alert. Trent, the ground zero for the epidemic, was struck just a year earlier. From there, the disease progressed first to Venice and Mantua in the early part of 1576 before finally reaching Milan. Within a month of the outbreak, most of Milan's nobility had fled. Even more distressing for the Milanese, 'the evils produced by this state of things were increased' when the Governor, the Marquis of Ayamonte, likewise abandoned his city and took refuge in nearby Vigevano.[4] Conditions deteriorated throughout the autumn on both the medical and the civic fronts. Trade and commerce faltered, and it became difficult for the government to provision the city with goods from uninfected regions. The city's plague hospital quickly filled to capacity, and more temporary straw huts for the sick were needed than could be built.[5] Increasingly draconian measures were enacted – such as the purging of infected homes, closure of non-essential shops, and a general quarantine – all of which further exacerbated the city's financial troubles.[6]

3 Figure based on Stefano D'Amico's estimate of the city's population in 1574 in "Crisis and Transformation: Economic Organization and Social Structures in Milan, 1570–1610", *Social History* 25, 1 (2000) 4. Robert Kendrick puts the figure slightly lower, at 80,000 to 100,000 citizen inside Milan's walls; *The Sounds of Milan, 1585–1650* (Oxford: 2002) 411n25.

4 Bisciola Paolo, *Relatione verissima del progresso della peste di Milano. Qual principiò nel mese d'Agosto 1576, e seguì sino al mese di Maggio 1577* (Bologna, Carlo Malisardi and Sebastiano Balestra: 1630) 2r; Giussano Giovanni Pietro, *The Life of St. Charles Borromeo, Cardinal Archbishop of Milan: From the Italian of John Peter Giussano; With Preface by Henry Edward Cardinal Manning* [*Vita Di S. Carlo Borromeo* (*Rome, 1610*)] (London – New York: 1884) 369, 384–385.

5 Besta Giacomo Filippo, *Vera narratione del successo della peste, che afflisse l'inclita città di Milano l'anno 1576 et di tutte le provisioni fatte a salute di essa città* (Milan, Paolo Gottardo, & Pacifico Pontii, fratelli: 1578) 22r–v.

6 Besta, *Vera narratione* 25v–29r.

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Carlo Borromeo took over where the Milanese officials left off, marshalling the clergy to maintain the city's temporal and spiritual welfare. He organised the cleaning of homes and streets, and ordered the culling of dogs and cats; he conducted charitable relief work, selling his possessions, spending his own wealth, and borrowing money when his personal funds ran low; and, dismissing concerns over infection, he made visitations across the diocese and even personally ministered to the sick.[7]

2 The Pestilential Procession

One of Borromeo's most frequently noted pastoral acts during the crisis – one that would later become an indelible part of his cultic hagiography – was the organisation of three general processions in October 1576.[8] Each of the processions began at the city's cathedral, with the first terminating at the Basilica of Sant'Ambrogio, the second at San Lorenzo, and the third at Santa Maria presso San Celso. With the added incentive of a plenary indulgence, the processions attracted an enormous number of participants, including any noblemen and civic officials who were left, ordinary citizens, and at least a thousand flagellants in tow. Borromeo wore a noose around his neck and walked barefoot to evoke the image of a condemned criminal. During the first procession, he reportedly cut his foot on an iron railing, but instead of tending to the wound, he walked on, letting his blood flow freely for all to see. Witnesses to the wound were all moved to compassion and cried out, 'Miserere! Miserere!' The third and final procession was to be the most solemn. Borromeo bid the parochial clergy to bring out their most prized relics in order to both move the masses to devotion and appeal to the saints. He himself carried the prized Milanese relic from the Cathedral, the Holy Nail, attached to a cross. At the close of this procession, Borromeo returned to the Cathedral and began a forty-hour devotion.

The ritual model that Borromeo invoked to rally support for his procession was established nearly a millennium earlier by Gregory I during a Roman

7 Bisciola, *Relatione verissima* 5v–6r. See also de Boer W., *The Conquest of the Soul: Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* (Leiden – Boston: 2001) 79–80.

8 Jones P.M., "San Carlo Borromeo and Plague Imagery in Milan and Rome", in Bailey G.A. et alia (eds.), *Hope and Healing: Painting in Italy in a Time of Plague, 1500–1800* (Worcester: 2005) 65–96; Crawfurd R., *Plague and Pestilence in Literature and Art* (Oxford: 1914) 171–175; Getz C., "Canonising San Carlo: Sermonising, the Sounding Word, and Image Construction in the Music for Carlo Borromeo", *Early Music History* 34 (2015) 133–189.

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outbreak in 590.[9] As recounted in the *Legenda aurea*, the Romans, having lived a continent life throughout Lent, threw off all restraints after Easter and lived sinfully, for which they were heartily punished with buboes on their bodies.[10] Amid the scourge, Pope Gregory summoned the entire Roman populace to a sevenfold or septiform litany, so-called because seven classes of people – clergy, monks and religious men, religious women, children, laymen, widows and unmarried women, and married women, each group accompanied by priests from the seven ecclesiastical districts of the city – were to gather separately at seven different churches throughout Rome and then process together toward the Basilica S. Maria Maggiore. The penitents took to the streets, chanting litanies and singing 'Miserere'. Death was among the ranks, however, as eighty penitents fell dead in the space of an hour. As he headed the trains of suffering Romans, Gregory carried an image of Mary – the *Salus populi Romani* – purportedly made by St. Luke himself, which miraculously cleansed the surrounding air of infection as it moved through the city. As Gregory approached the Aelian Bridge, the Archangel Michael appeared atop the castle of Crescentius (now the Castel Sant'Angelo) and sheathed his bloody sword as a sign that God had been placated by the pious outpouring. And indeed, the *Legenda aurea* tells us, the plague promptly came to an end.

Processions such as Gregory's and Borromeo's were held across Europe in times of plague. They aimed, in the first instance, to rectify the relationship between the participants and their punitive God – in the case of Milan, a relationship that Borromeo felt had long been strained by the moral lassitude of the citizens in the years leading up to the outbreak.[11] Subsumed under the processions' similarities in purpose and ritual framework, however, were local variations in practices that worked together toward a secondary goal of securing civic identification and solidarity. At the most basic, the very route of the procession itself was necessarily unique for every city. The different itineraries also meant that the penitents had the opportunity to make station and pray at different shrines and churches along the way, and to honour patrons and intercessors who were particularly important to the community. The relics displayed during a procession had to be chosen with special care for their proven efficacy and special relationship to the participants; the Romans used

9 Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo* 390–391. Gregory's plague procession was the first recorded instance of such ritual of affliction within the Christian context.

10 Jacobus, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. W.G. Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton: 1993) 1:171–174; see also Mollaret H.H. – Brossollet J., "La procession de saint Grégoire et la peste à Rome en l'an 590", *Médecine de France* 199, 13 (1969) 13–22.

11 Lezowski M., "Portraits de Milan par Charles Borromée (1564–1584): La dynamique rigoriste de l'écriture", *Seizième siècle* 9 (2013) 135–140.

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the *Salus populi Romani* in 590, the Venetians favoured a Byzantine icon of the Madonna, and Borromeo brought out the Holy Nail. When another major outbreak hit Milan in 1630, it was St. Carlo Borromeo's exhumed body that was carried in procession, a choice of relic meant to recall and honour the cardinal's successful stewardship of the city in the earlier crisis. The holy totems chosen for processions, therefore, expressed a particular civic identity that drew on the shared spiritual history of a given people.

The physical organisation of the participants, too, reflected the demographic make-up and political ideologies of a society. Gregory's septiform procession distinguished the different kinds of clergy and the laity by gender, marital status, and age. Venetian processions put into practice the republic ideology of *La Serenissima*, based on clear and stable hierarchies: the Doge walked in the center of the procession; before him, civil servants were ranked in an ascending order of prestige, and behind him, noble magistrates followed in descending order of status.[12] The Doge was like a living relic whose power and magnificence emanated outward. In Borromeo's plague processions, chroniclers noted that the archbishop came first, followed by the governor and the members of the Senate, with the clergy and the general population following them in turn.[13] The laity was separated into parishes and marched under separate parish banners. This arrangement, Borromeo reasoned, would also diminish the risk of contagion across neighbourhoods.[14]

3 Music of the Pestilential Procession

The liturgical-musical elements of the plague procession worked in tandem with these other ritual elements in propitiating the divinities and unifying the community. On the evidence of sacerdotal manuals, the core ritual framework of crisis processions, such as processions for rain or the cessation of plague, followed the form of the Major Litanies. In general, Psalms (usually one of the Penitential Psalms, 6, 31, 37, 50, 101, 129, and 142)[15] and antiphons were performed at the point of departure. During the actual ambulation, the litany, usually the Litany of the Saints, was sung along with more Psalms and repeated

12 Muir E., *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: 1981) 203.

13 Besta, *Vera narratione* 15v–16r. For the hierarchical organization and separation of participants (including their distinguishing manners of dress) in Milanese general processions during the Counter-Reformation, see Dallaj A., "Le Processioni a Milano Nella Controriforma", *Studi Storici* 23, 1 (1982) 172–183.

14 Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo* 391.

15 These are Vulgate numberings.

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as necessary. At the conclusion of the ritual, prayers at the terminus renewed the foregoing petitions, and a *Missa contra pestem* was to be celebrated.

Special pamphlets containing the prayers of plague processions were sometimes issued, and they can help us flesh out the liturgical programme of a given procession. For the ritual in Milan, Borromeo published the *Antiphonae, psalmi, preces, et orationes ad usum supplicationum tempore pestis*, a palm-sized booklet (21 folios, 13cm by 7.5cm) that could easily have been carried in procession.[16] The book opens with a selection of seven antiphons and the seven Penitential Psalms, to be performed 'pro arbitratu'. Three additional Psalms (94, 87 and 90) and two biblical readings (Jonah 2 and Isaiah 38) follow, again to be performed as the participants see fit. The Litany of the Saints comes next, followed by a reprint of Psalm 50 and then a set of five short prayers, the first of which is merely a rubric instructing the supplicants to perform a prayer to the saint in whose church they find themselves ('de Sancto, in cuius Ecclesia supplicationes fiunt'). The rest are prayers for mercy and protection. Indicating the intended Milanese use of pamphlet, *Oratio II* and *V* respectively invoke Saint Ambrose as 'patron[us] nost[er]' and 'Pontif[ex] nost[er]'. At the end of the pamphlet, seven additional propitiatory prayers are provided.

The dominant and 'iconic' sound of the plague procession was undoubtedly the litany, a word that stands in as a synecdoche for the term 'procession' itself. In the Litany of the Saints, the bulk of the prayer is a roll-call of divinities where each invocation sung by cantors is punctuated by the response of the general processional body: 'ora/orate pro nobis' [Fig. 1.1]. On account of its predominantly call-and-response structure, the litany is a useful musical tool for uniting the participants. The complete meaning of the litany prayer emerges in performance only through the coordinated participation of a penitential community – the call from a leader has to be met by a response, so every member of procession becomes indispensable to the success of the ritual. The very melodic profile of the litany encourages that participation. The invocation forms an upward melodic arch that stops at (what we would call today) the 'leading-tone', a point of melodic instability that necessitates a musical completion. The response begins where the invocation leaves off and returns to the initial note, the 'tonic', through a downward arc, preparing the votaries for another iteration of the call. Moreover, with its narrow range and simple tunefulness, the litany is easily accessible. An account by Paolo Bisciola, a chronicler of the Borromean plague, reveals how 'democratic' this prayer can be: the Cardinal 'having by chance seen a poor woman praying in the street to

16 Borromeo Carlo, *Antiphonae, psalmi, preces, et orationes, ad usum supplicationum tempore pestis* (Milan, Pacificum Pontium: 1576).

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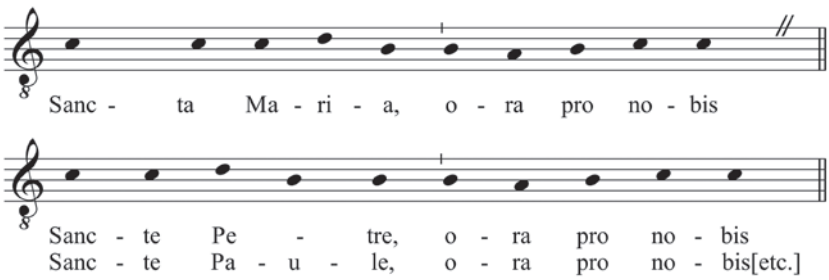


FIGURE 1.1 Excerpt from Litany of the Saints (*Liber usualis*)

an image which she had attached to a wall, was so delighted by this devotion that he sent a number of his followers out into the streets to teach the people to sing the litanies'.[17] Gender, poverty, and lack of education were not barriers to the learning of this simple and repetitive Latin prayer, allowing all the penitents to participate meaningfully in the central liturgy of the procession. And as they sing the litany on the march, the participants send out an audible pulse through the marching group and provide an ambulatory rhythm that unites them. Weaving back and forth, the litany acts as a sonic thread that sutures together the constituent parts of the processional body.

In addition to facilitating the kinetics of the public procession, the litany draws the participants into a shared devotional history and culture through the list of names invoked. Like the itinerary of a procession or the choice of relics carried therein, the roll-call of names was highly customisable – and customised – to reflect the special relationships between votaries and divine patrons. A cursory comparison between the Litany in Borromeo's processional pamphlet and the Litany in a similar pamphlet issued by the Pope in the same year (*Litaniae, et preces* [...] *pro avertenda a populo Christiano pestilentia*) shows that the roll-call in the former, invoking around ninety specific names, is nearly twice the length of the latter.[18] Many of these extra names in the Milanese litany (some fairly obscure), such as Nazarius, Celsus, Sisinnius, Martyrius, Calimerus and Miroclus, bear local significance as saints who were either associated with the city during their lifetimes or whose relics were kept by the Milanese. It may be that, because the Pope's pamphlet described Roman usage and was intended to be serviceable for a wider number of liturgical centers, the list was only a template that invited local accretions and *ex tempore*

17 Bisciola, *Relatione verissima* 3v.

18 Catholic Church, *Litaniae et preces iussu S.D.N. Gregorij Papae XIII in omnibus ecclesijs dicendae ad implorandum diuinum auxilium pro auertenda à populo Christiano pestilentia & pro aliis instantibus eiusdem necessitatibus* (Rome, Bladius: 1576).

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supplements. By the same token, because the Milanese list was intended for local use, it could be more complete as given.

While the inclusion and exclusion of intercessors varied from one civic center to another, the appearance of names was invariably governed by a hierarchical organisation based on the historical *vitae* of the chosen saints. In the Roman order, the invocations begin with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, followed by a three-fold petition to Mary. Then come the Archangels Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, the prophets and church patriarchs, apostles and disciples, martyrs, popes and bishops and Church doctors, other male priests and saints, and finally, female saints. The Milanese list follows roughly the same order, but with female saints coming after male martyrs and before male bishops. In the categories of martyrs and bishops, Milanese names come at the top of the list, before the more universal saints, giving local figures the pride of place. In an abstract way, this hierarchical procession of celestial names in the litany was in symmetry with the organisation of participants in the procession and legitimised both the segregation of the penitents and the prime position of earthly *potentes*, be it the Doge, the Bishop, or the Pope. As above, so below.

In addition to the litany and the other prescribed liturgical items, the plague procession called for other unspecified musical performances during moments of repose. Paul V's *Rituale romanum* instructs that if the route of an extraordinary procession were to pass by a church, the participants should interrupt their Litany or the Psalm and enter, with the clergy singing antiphons or prayers to the patron saint of that place.[19] The instruction in Borromeo's pamphlet to perform a prayer 'de Sancto, in cuius Ecclesia supplicationes fiunt' points precisely to those performance possibilities. If a prayer of such specificity is not readily at hand, a 1537 manual provides examples that would be suitable for different classes of patrons, such as antiphons for Apostolic patrons, for one and multiple martyrs, for pontiffs, or for virgin martyrs.[20] While spoken prayers would have been serviceable for making these stations, there is evidence from across Renaissance Europe that more complex polyphonic music (outside the musical abilities of the average lay participant) was sometimes performed by ecclesiastical choirs or singers hired specifically for the occasion. Notably, in cases where we have good evidence concerning specific

19 Catholic Church, *Rituale romanum* (Paris, Societas typographica: 1623) 391.

20 Castello Alberto da, *Liber sacerdotalis: nuperrime ex libris Sancte Romane ecclesie* [*et*] *quarundam aliar*[*um*] *ecclesiar*[*um*] [*et*] *ex antiquis codicibus apostolice bibliothece* (Venice, Rabanis: 1537) 271r–272v.

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pieces performed, the works in question sometimes quote the litany formula.[21] As Kendrick writes of such polyphony that incorporates litanies, 'Given the universal presence of the litany tone in the sonic memory of any early modern Catholic, these pieces allow for – one might almost say 'script in', as in film – the participation of literally anyone present, no matter how musically illiterate otherwise, into the polyphonic performance'.[22] The recognition of the litany in these pieces invites the lay participants to tune in, so to speak, even during the static moments of the procession when they are silent. In these musical accretions at shrines and stations, we can discern yet another facet of the interrelationship between ritual elements in a procession. In this instance, part of the liturgical-musical program of a procession is determined by its route and the devotional architecture of the city, which is related, in turn, to the historical affinity between a community and its holy protectors.

4 From the Street to the Home

As a phenomenon, plague-tide processions brought together the public and acknowledged that the plague, aside from being a personal physical and spiritual problem, was also one that befell the entire community and that required communal action. A variety of ritual elements – from the relics used to the music sung – mutually reinforced each other to facilitate social cohesion. Fostering such a sense of social awareness and solidarity was undoubtedly commendable, but the wisdom of the actual processions was frequently disputed. It was recognised, right from the time of the Black Death, that plague was highly contagious. A Pisan chronicler observed that 'when [the crew of two Genoese galleys] reached the fish market someone began to talk with them and immediately he fell ill and died; others who talked with them also became ill as well as any who were touched by those who had died [...] and

21 Josquin's *Pater noster / Ave Maria* or the motets of TrevBC 29, for example. See Kellman H., "Josquin and the Courts of the Netherlands and France: The Evidence of the Sources", in Lowinsky E. – Blackburn B.J. (eds.), *Josquin Des Prez: Proceedings of the International Josquin Festival-Conference Held at the Juilliard School at Lincoln Center in New York City, 21–25 June 1971* (London – New York: 1976) 181–216; Bryant D. – Pozzobon M., *Musica devozione città: la Scuola di Santa Maria dei Battuti* (*e un suo manoscritto musicale*) *nella Treviso del Rinascimento*, Memorie/Monografie 4 (Treviso: 1995); O'Regan N., "Processions and Their Music in Post-Tridentine Rome", *Recercare* 4 (1992) 45–80.

22 Kendrick R., "'Honore a Dio, e allegrezza alli santi, e consolazione alli putti': The Musical Projection of Litanies in Sixteenth-Century Italy", in Ditchfield S. (ed.), *Plasmare il suono: Il culto dei santi e la musica* (*secc. XVI–XVIII*), Sanctorum 6 (Rome: 2009) 46.

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thus was sparked the great corruption that killed everyone'.[23] Given such fears over contagion, governments sometimes forbade general processions, either directly or indirectly through the imposition of quarantines and curfews.[24] During the 1576 outbreak, health officials in both Venice and Milan objected to the processions that eventually went ahead anyway.[25]

The anxiety of magistrates over the safety of processions is equally evident in Giovanni Filippo Ingrassia's 1576 *Informatione del pestifero et contagioso morbo*. In this plague treatise, the physician cautions his readers against congregating in crowds, since 'it is among such large groups that the contagion has prevailed up until now and continues to prevail, given that their bodies are filthy and their clothes dirty'.[26] For the same reason, Ingrassia advises that town squares and churches should be avoided. In his treatment of the procession elsewhere in the treatise, however, he is more ambivalent. Ingrassia recognises that, while the procession is a 'divine remedy' that can be 'supported by many reasons and examples', it can nevertheless pose a difficulty for disease containment.[27] Despite his misgivings, the pious doctor ultimately supports the ritual and tries to downplay the threat of contagion with an appeal to faith:

> Those who are not in favour [of processions] think that it will avoid a great unruly multitude of people in the midst of this highly dangerous contagion. But I am of the opinion that we should not abandon the idea for that reason [...]. Who could think, as a faithful Christian, that if the people go to worship the Holy Sacrament with devotion, weeping and praying for grace, that they would succumb to plague?[28]

23 Sardo Ranieri, *Cronaca di Pisa*, Banti O. (ed.), Fonti per la storia dell'Italia moderna e contemporanea (Roma: 1963) 96; cited in Cohn S.K. Jr., *The Black Death Transformed: Disease and Culture in Early Renaissance Europe* (Oxford: 2002) 112.

24 In the early sixteenth century, for example, Giovanni Cambi complained bitterly of the Florentine ban on processions during the plague: 'This seemed a great abomination, for in tempestuous times one customarily turns to God, but we have made ourselves suspicious of the feasts of God and of the saints'; Cambi Giovanni, *Istorie di Giovanni Cambi, cittadino fiorentino*, ed. Ildefonso di San Luigi, 4 vols., *Delizie degli eruditi toscani* 20–23 (Florence, Cambiagi: 1785) 22:237.

25 Fenlon I., *The Ceremonial City: History, Memory and Myth in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven: 2007) 225; Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo* 391.

26 Ingrassia Giovanni Filippo, *Informatione del pestifero et contagioso morbo*, Ingaliso L. (ed.), Filosofia e scienza nell'età moderna 19 (Milan: 2005) 420.

27 Ingrassia, *Informatione del pestifero* 349.

28 Ibid., 353.

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If there is little reassurance in Ingrassia's rhetorical question, his attempt to downplay the dangers of processions is less helpful still; the doctor points out that very few people actually catch the plague on procession days (perhaps he had not read Gregory's legend very closely) – and those who do are probably not worthy of God's grace in any case![29]

Ingrassia's equivocations betray the difficulty of reconciling religious zeal with public safety, and the belief in processions as a miracle cure with the fear of the ritual as a hotbed of contagion. What could the devout do, then, if they wished to participate in processions, but for reasons of illness and quarantine, or for fear of contagion, could not? A piece of advice from Borromeo is pertinent here; to those who could not attend mass in the midst of plague, he said, 'Go to church in spirit', making viable the substitution of physical presence with an imaginative attendance.[30] While the harrowing plague-tide factors motivating Borromeo's solution in this instance may be extraordinary, such virtual devotional acts themselves were not. Popular meditation guides of the period, for example, encouraged their readers, with the help of visual aids, to imagine themselves with Christ as he suffered his Passion.[31] The *sacro monte* in Varallo just outside Milan – financially supported and frequented by Borromeo, who called the complex a 'New Jerusalem' – sent visitors to the Holy Land with chapels arranged to tell a Christological narrative, made even more vivid by thousands of statues and painted figures.[32] In an even more direct parallel to our quarantined Milanese, cloistered nuns were encouraged to go on pilgrimages imaginatively, since travel outside their convents was impossible. For such an exercise, they relied on pilgrims' diaries and narrative travelogues, maps, images of landmarks, and souvenir relics to imagine the visual and affective experiences of a journey, and they even made use of 'scripts' in devotional literature (say certain prayers while walking a certain distance, for instance) to verbally and somatically act out a pilgrimage.[33]

29 Ibid., 350.

30 Cited in Barker S., "The Gendered Imagination and Plague Art in Early Modern Italy" (Paper, Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting, Venice, 10 April 2010).

31 Freedberg D., *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: 1989) 161–191.

32 See for example, Freedberg, *The Power of Images* 192–245; Leatherbarrow D., "The Image and Its Setting: A Study of the Sacro Monte at Varallo", *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 14 (1987) 107–122.

33 See for example, Rudy K., *Virtual Pilgrimages in the Convent: Imagining Jerusalem in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout: 2011); Rudy K., "A Guide to Mental Pilgrimage: Paris, Bibliothèque de L'Arsenal Ms. 212", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 63, 4 (2000) 494–515; Baernstein P.R., *A Convent Tale: A Century of Sisterhood in Spanish Milan* (Abingdon: 2013);

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Activating a similar kind of devotional imagination, one could, by extension, stay at home during the Borromean plague and attend a procession 'in spirit'. On this point, we can draw important lessons from Borromeo's devotional provisions outlined in his *Constitutiones et decreta de cura pestilentiae*, a handbook for parish clergy and health workers. One of the chapters of the *Constitutiones* is devoted to spiritual activities in public administrative spaces and closed-up homes. In it, the clergy are told to prepare each household for the devotional activities devised for the extraordinary circumstances by teaching them a variety of prayers, litanies, and Psalms ahead of the quarantine. During the quarantine, bells across the parish were to be rung seven times a day, approximately every two hours, to call the households to prayer. Once begun, the bell would be rung again every quarter hour, until the fourth bell signals an end to the hour of prayer. While the bell rings,

> litanies or supplications will be chanted or recited at the direction of the Bishop. This will be performed in such a way that one group sings from the windows or the doors of their homes, and then another group sings and responds in turn.[34]

To ensure that these prayers are carried out properly, the decree continues, a member of the clergy or someone trained in these prayers (possibly the head of the household) should also come to a window or door at the appointed times to direct the prayers and stir up enthusiasm for this devotion.

To further facilitate these devotional activities, Borromeo instructed the parish clergy to be supplied with books 'that contain certain prayers, litanies, and oration, which will be made freely available, in order that he may go and distribute them to his own or other parishes'.[35] What are these books? From Giovanni Pietro Giussano's hagiography of Borromeo, we learn that this was liturgical literature that was especially printed for the occasion: 'when [the bell] sounded, all the inhabitants attended at their windows, a priest or other person appointed began the prayers, and all the people on their knees made the responses, each having the book of prayers which the Cardinal had printed for the purpose'.[36] It is possible that the prayer book described here refers to

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Ehrenschwendtner M.L., "Virtual Pilgrimages? Enclosure and the Practice of Piety at St Katherine's Convent, Augsburg", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 60, 1 (2009) 45–73.

34 Borromeo Carlo, *Constitutiones et decreta de cura pestilentiae; ex concilio provinciali quinto mediolanensi extracta* (Venice, Franciscum de Franciscis Senensem: 1595) 55–56. I would like to thank David Jacobson for his help with this translation.

35 Borromeo, *Constitutiones et decreta* 56.

36 Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo* 419.

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the *Antiphonae, psalmi, preces, et orationes*. If that is the case, then we have even more direct evidence that Borromeo's devotional program was meant to mirror the liturgical framework of the processions on the street.

Borromeo's directive to sing at doors and windows was evidently put into practice and impressed a number of chroniclers. In his *Relatione verissima*, Paolo Bisciola reports:

> [W]hen the plague began to grow, this practice [of singing the litanies in public] was interrupted, so as not to allow the congregations to provide it more fuel. The orations did not stop, however, because each person stood in his house at the window or door and made them from there [...] Just think, in walking around Milan, one heard nothing but song, veneration of God, and supplication to the saints, such that one almost wished for these tribulations to last longer.[37]

Giussano likewise remarks on the harmonious piety of Milan, even going so far as to describe the plague-stricken city as heaven on earth on account of the pious singing:

> It was a sight to see, when all the inhabitants of this populous city, numbering little short of three hundred thousand souls, united to praise God at one and the same time, sending up together an harmonious voice of supplication for deliverance from their distress. Milan might at this time have been not unfitly compared to a cloister of religious of both sexes serving God in the inclosure [sic] of their cells, an image of the heavenly Jerusalem filled with the praises of the angelic hosts.[38]

We can imagine the astonishment of these chroniclers, hearing the disembodied voices emerging from isolated homes all around, aggregating and blanketing an entire parish in song.

Borromeo's transference of the public procession from the street and into the home depended on – and was regulated by – sound. The ritual began with the sound of church bells, which not only signalled the times of the prayers, but also, as Sarah Hamilton and Andrew Spicer describe, intruded into domestic spaces from without, 'denoting the lordship and dominion of a particular

37 Bisciola, *Relatione verissima* 3v–4r.

38 Giussano, *Life of St. Charles Borromeo* 419–420.

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house [of worship] over its territory.'[39] The bells thus extended the sacred spaces of the parish into the homes. There, led by stationed liturgical leaders, the Milanese sang together. The litany, which so effectively encouraged participation and stitched together the processional body, became even more useful in suturing together members of segregated households; its musical simplicity and short-range call-and-response structure were essential when isolated neighbours could not even see each other. With their voices comingling, the penitents breached the walls between each other's houses, and between their homes and the streets, eroding the conceptual boundaries between public and private worship. Giussano's comparison of citizens praying in their enclosed homes to monks and nuns serving God in their cloister cells aptly describes this liminal state that is both communal and private, shared and isolated. The comparison also helps situate Borromeo's virtual processions within a larger context of spiritual exercises, such as the imaginative pilgrimages described earlier – with one important difference. While maps, itineraries, and other visual aids were helpful for those personal and solitary devotional acts, here, music is indispensable in coordinating the corporate, interactive ritual, allowing penitents to project themselves back onto the streets and re-join each other virtually in their beleaguered city.

5 Conclusions: Processional Books and Dirty Books

By way of concluding, I wish to speculate on other indications that premodern Europeans may have brought plague-related devotional activities into the home, and on other materials that may have helped penitents go on processions 'in spirit'. In the absence of the kind of pestilential prayer books that Borromeo issued, many Christians would still have had a cheap, printed book of hours on hand.[40] As Virginia Reinburg describes them, these prayer

39 Hamilton S. and Spicer A., "Defining the Holy: The Delineation of Sacred Space", in Spicer A. – Hamilton S. (eds.), *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: 2005) 7.

40 L.M.J Delaissé called the book of hours 'the first medieval best-seller', which is particularly true of France, England and the Low countries, to a lesser extent in Germany and Italy. Some were deluxe illuminated editions fit for royalty, but down-market prints were also widely and more cheaply available. See Wieck R.S. (ed.), *Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in Medieval Art and Life* (New York: 2001) 28–31; Dondi C., "Pathways to Survival of Books of Hours Printed in Italy in the Fifteenth Century", in Myers R. – Harris M. – Mandelbrote G. (eds.), *Books on the Move: Tracking Copies through Collections and the Book Trade*, (London: 2007) 113–132; Hindman S. and Marrow J. (eds.), *Books of Hours*

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books 'provided a bridge between the liturgy and the home,' and the devotional practices prescribed and described therein 'were at the same time both individual and collective, public and private'.[41] Books of hours allowed the devout to carry with them the rituals that they participated in publically and to re-create them wherever they happened to be. Books of hours facilitated that goal in a variety of ways. They may have included pictures that further invoked the stock of images that the votary already knew from other devotional places, imaginatively transporting her into the scene depicted or other ritual spaces.[42] The text of the prayers themselves may have encouraged performance, both musical and physical. Some prayers, such as the common rhyming sequence to St. Sebastian 'O Sancte Sebastiane, semper vespere et mane', were possibly designed to be sung.[43] Others committed the votary to devotional movements. A prayer that tells Mary, 'At your holy feet … with humble heart and prostrate body, I pray', for example, adopts a virtual posture of humility for the devotee. Another that describes penitents who come to St Martha 'hands joined, knees bent, heads uncovered' portrays a procession.[44] Like a script, such prayers guide the votary through the enactment, either actual or imaginative, of devotional rituals and gestures.

Is it possible, then, that books of hours could have facilitated the 'domestication' of the anti-pestilential procession? Art historian Kathryn Rudy's innovative work on the material signs of use in books of hours is revealing.[45] Using a densitometer, a device that measures the darkness of a surface, she compared the dirtiness of pages of various books of hours to determine which were the most handled – and therefore most used – by the user (or even users across generations).[46] The results for one Dutch book are particularly interesting for our purposes. In MS 74 G35, held at the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague, the Hours of the Virgin are, across the board, the dirtiest, likely on account of the quotidian use of this office. In the later sections of the book, the

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Reconsidered, Studies in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art History (Turnhout: 2013) 6–7.

41 Reinburg V., *French Books of Hours: Making an Archive of Prayer, C. 1400–1600* (Cambridge: 2012) 6.

42 Ibid., 123–125.

43 Ibid., 146.

44 Ibid., 165.

45 Rudy K., "Dirty Books: Quantifying Patterns of Use in Medieval Manuscripts Using a Densitometer", *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 2, 1–2 (2010), 1–26: http://www.jhna.org/index.php/past-issues/volume-2-issue-1-2/129-dirty-books.

46 Rudy avoids dark patches that result from damage and calibrates her reading against the natural darkness of the vellum.

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densitometer spiked again at the Penitential Psalms and at the Litany of the Saints that follows them. The dirtiest pages in the entire book, however, are in the suffrage section and contain an antiphon to St. Sebastian:

> Distinguished martyr Sebastian, master and propagator of the holiest teachings, behold your name written in the book of celestial lives. Therefore, intercede for us all. By the honouring of your memory to our Lord Jesus Christ, may he deign always to liberate us from plague and from epidemic death. Pray for us, blessed Sebastian, so we are made worthy of the promises of Christ.

The Penitential Psalms, the Litany of the Saints, and a prayer against pestilence – the user(s) of this book of hours handled those pages over and over again, clear evidence that plague weighed heavily on their minds. It is impossible to know for certain, of course, from the signs of wear in the book alone how they performed these prayers (was this a solitary performance, or did the whole family sing the Litany, creating a different kind of 'processional' community?) or whether they even performed them with the procession in mind. Nevertheless, the availability of the liturgical elements of the anti-pestilential procession at their (dirty) fingertips – and in a book, no less, whose generic expectations included singing, enacting pious gestures, and making public rituals private – makes such a domestication of the ritual an attractive possibility.

Then, as now, the management of disease was not a straightforward project. In times of plague, civic and religious leaders had to carefully balance the demands of spiritual and biological health, both communal and individual. When faced with the obstacles posed by the threat of contagion, pre-modern Christians found new ways to carry out their spiritual duties as a community. Within this picture, singing served as an essential tool for maintaining a continuity of devotional practice in the challenging conditions of plague. Whether performed publically or behind doors and windows, music brought the prayerful thoughts and spirits of the penitents together to fight against the communal scourge. The devotional activities during the outbreak in Milan can teach us many lessons on the texture of ritual practices in this period. Those activities can reveal to us, in turn, the extraordinary resilience and adaptability of the devout in the face of crisis. As Randolph Starn writes, '[the] chronic presence of disease suggests that we should not think of medieval and early modern societies as caught in the grip of plague-year panics or as waiting passively to be delivered by modern medicine. The newer accounts [of plague history] speak of "experienced populations," of well-organized institutional responses, of

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resourceful strategies for survival'.[47] Our history of Milanese devotion in times of pestilence is precisely such a narrative of organisation and resourcefulness.

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47 Starn R., Foreword to *Histories of a Plague Year: The Social and the Imaginary in Baroque Florence*, ed. G. Calvi, trans. D. Biocca – B.T. Ragin (Berkeley: 1989).

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CHAPTER 2

The Ex Voto between Domestic and Public Space: From Personal Testimony to Collective Memory

Jane Garnett and Gervase Rosser

Holy pictures for the house; modes of prayer recommended for use in the privacy of the chamber; vernacular religious texts for lay consumption: these leave no doubt of the perceived significance of the home as a place of Christian devotion during the Renaissance. To privilege the domestic context of Renaissance religion, which is the purpose of the present volume, is to bring welcome light to neglected evidence of spirituality within the household. At the same time, however, the focus of attention on the domestic environment should not be taken to imply a separation of spheres. It is a premise of the essay which follows that there was no form of devotion in the home which did not find its meaning in a larger context of shared identity and belief. The Italian Renaissance *casa*, at different social levels, comprised diverse social groups, economic activities, and functional locations, and this complexity blurred the boundary between domestic and communal or social spaces. The household was at once the site of both the 'personal' and the 'public'; and its individual members were equally multifaceted.

This point matters, because to give particular attention and priority to evidence of religious behaviour within the home is to risk polarising the historical picture – or rather, since the polarisation is already present, to exacerbate the problem. The original rhetoric of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation established a supposedly fundamental contrast between the Lutheran householder and his wife, at home, in intimate conversation with the deity, and an unthinking herd of Catholic parishioners gathered, in church, in passive incomprehension of a collective liturgy. Negative accounts of the pre-Reformation Church – influenced by Counter-Reformation Catholic no less than Protestant critiques – have been extensively dismantled by recent scholarship, yet the effect of the confessional debates of the sixteenth century is still evident in the divergent directions taken by recent and current research. Some years ago, André Vauchez drew a categorical distinction between two separate and 'contrary' traditions, respectively of the public cult of the saints

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and of the private world of prayer.[1] The historiography of late medieval and Renaissance religion has continued to suffer from a marked divide between those historians who emphasise its social and collective aspect (parish life, fraternities, processions, and religious plays) and those who, by contrast, highlight the elements of the personal and the private in contemporary religious experience (prayer books, meditation, small-scale holy images, and mystical writings).[2] Beneath these diverse studies runs a common underlying assumption: that religious life is essentially to be understood, depending on the priorities and the method of the observer, as either 'public' or 'private', and that the period of the Renaissance witnessed a shift from the former to the latter as the dominant site of religious experience. Yet this commonly invoked distinction between 'public' and 'private' religion is deeply problematic in any historical context, and not least the one in question here, at which time neither the 'private' nor the 'domestic' (themselves categories which are too often unhelpfully elided) was conceptualised as a distinct devotional realm. It is an enduring characteristic of human personality to oscillate between the projection of an extrovert, sociable aspect, and the recourse to an interior self. People need both dimensions in order to exist in the world.[3] Each field of human activity finds its meaning simultaneously in both realms: as in other areas of life, so in religious and devotional behaviour, an individual creates a unique identity both through personal choices made at the level of the self, and through finding validation of those choices by interaction with others in the social arena. Any study of devotion needs, therefore, to take account of the necessary coexistence, in any one time and place, of both the intimate and the social aspects of religious experience.

The present essay, therefore, takes its assignment to consider the 'domestic' in Renaissance religion as an opportunity to consider the interrelationship both between the household and the larger social sphere, and between the

1 Vauchez A., *Les laïcs au Moyen Âge. Pratiques et expériences religieuses* (Paris: 1987) 287–288.

2 There is space here only for indicative citations. For the former, see e.g. Bossy J., *Christianity in the West, 1400–1700* (Oxford: 1985); Terpstra N., *The Politics of Ritual Kinship: Confraternities and Social Order in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: 2000); Black C.F. – Gravestock P. (eds.), *Early Modern Confraternities in Europe and the Americas* (Aldershot: 2006); for the latter, see e.g. McGinn B., *The Varieties of Vernacular Mysticism* (*1350–1550*) (New York: 2012); Andersen E. – Lähnemann H. – Simon A. (eds.), *A Companion to Mysticism and Devotion in Northern Germany in the Late Middle Ages* (Leiden – Boston: 2014); Poor S.S. – Smith N., (eds.), *Mysticism and Reform 1400–1750* (Notre Dame, IN: 2015).

3 For a fuller discussion in the related context of devotional confraternities, see Rosser G., *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages. Guilds in England 1250–1550* (Oxford: 2015) ch. 1.

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individual and the Christian community. Its particular point of reference is the ex voto: the material acknowledgement of a grace or miracle, delivered by a grateful beneficiary as a donation to a holy shrine. All known religious traditions accommodate variants on this practice of recording a perceived supernatural intervention by the reciprocal dedication of a material record: an image whose purpose is to record, to absolve, and to commemorate a spiritual debt. Although the ex voto is far from unfamiliar to students of Renaissance religion, and is evident to modern visitors to many Catholic shrines, the scale of the phenomenon at all periods has been a great deal more extensive than is generally realised. It is inclusive: in recognition of a divine favour, anybody can bring a bunch of flowers to the site of the holy relic or miraculous image to which the blessing is attributed. Its forms are infinitely diverse: crutches, bandages and moulded limbs and internal organs in wax or metal, witnesses to the recovery of those of whom doctors had despaired; stuffed animals and reptiles, to recall mortal encounters with snakes or rabid dogs; bloodied clothing, as testimony to the survival of attack in feud or war; dresses and jewels, to ornament the shrine or sacred image. The most familiar type, although in fact by no means the most common, is the two-dimensional painted representation of a scene of crisis, the context of the vow: a child on her sickbed; a ship in a storm; a farmer falling from a tree; and in each case the depiction, in the upper part of the image, of the saint or the reputedly miracle-working image to which a successful appeal had been launched. Specialist manufacturers produced – and still produce – many of these multifarious objects and paintings, which may be adapted to individual requirements. Bishops and parish clergy, while not wishing to discourage altogether these manifestations of Christian piety, have at all times looked askance at what they consider the folkloric and pagan aspects of the practice. Clerical disapproval and distaste for what are seen as the expression of excessive independence on the part of the laity (not only but not least in the late twentieth century, following the directives of the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church to establish conformity with a consistent, clerically monitored religious programme) have caused many shrines to be purged of their ex votos, gravely limiting our awareness of their former ubiquity. Where a little chapel containing a statue known for its apotropaic powers once housed many thousands of ex votos of every variety, it is likely that not a trace of these accumulated tributes remains to be seen today. A few shrines, such as that of the painted Madonna of Montenero above Livorno on the northwest Italian coast, do currently display collections of ex votos on this scale, although even these are normally the surviving

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FIGURE 2.1 Ex votos at the sanctuary of the Madonna of Montenero, Livorno
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nineteenth- and twentieth-century minority from what had been a far more numerous accumulation since the late medieval or Renaissance period (Fig. 2.1).[4] In such cases, the very vibrancy of the cult tends to privilege its more recent manifestations. The ex voto is a religious and social rite of enormous significance, which, despite some recent signs of scholarly interest, still has more light to shed on devotional beliefs and practice.

What do the ex votos tell us about devotion in the Renaissance? With the exception of a pioneering study by the museum director and student of popular religious culture, Lenz Kriss-Rettenbeck, published in 1972, studies of ex votos have until recently largely been confined to empirical catalogues, and to a sterile analysis of the categories of misfortune with which they are associated.[5] A recent collection of studies has drawn attention to ex voto traditions in diverse cultures, and to the potential of anthropological approaches for their comparative study.[6] But while anthropology and comparative history are invaluable aids to help to define the universal category of material offerings made in return for a divine intervention, they do not suffice to allow us to make more specific statements about the particular functions and potency of the ex voto in a given place and time. While recognising that the ex voto has had a global diffusion and a *longue durée*, we also need to ask both why and how it was employed in diverse particular communities and social situations. This is not to propose an arbitrary periodisation of the phenomenon, and indeed 'the Renaissance ex voto' is not a distinguishable category. This point needs to be underlined in the present context, and in view of one of the latest contributions to the literature. In her recently published monograph, Fredrika Jacobs,

4 *Ex voto marinari del Santuario di Montenero*, 2nd edn. (Pisa: 1999); Garnett J. – Rosser G., *Spectacular Miracles: Transforming Images in Italy from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: 2013) 143.

5 The most significant monograph on the subject remains Kriss-Rettenbeck L., *Ex voto. Bild und Abbild im christlichen Votiv-Brauchtum* (Zürich and Freiburg-im-Breisgau: 1972). Paolo Toschi did much to draw Italian painted ex votos to scholarly attention, although his discussion of the material (like that of many authors of more recent catalogues of individual local collections of ex votos) tended to become grounded in quantitative analysis of the social types and diverse ailments of their subjects. Toschi P., *Arte popolare italiana* (Rome: 1960); Toschi P., *Le tavolette votive della Madonna dell'Arco* (Cava dei Tirreni: 1971). Other studies which offer more than empirical description of the material: Ciarrocchi A. – Mori E. (eds.), *Le tavole votive italiane* (Udine: 1960); Prosperi A., "Introduzione", in Ghirardini G. – Andreoli S. (eds.), *La Madonna della Ghiara di Reggio nelle immagini devozionali* (Reggio Emilia: 1990) 11–25; Clemente P. et al., *Pittura votiva e stampe popolari* (Milan: 1987).

6 Weinryb I. (ed.), *Ex voto: Votive Giving Across Cultures* (New York: 2016), is a collection of studies ranging from Antiquity to the present and from Europe to Japan. Its diverse contents are richly suggestive, but are not brought together in an integrated or rigorously comparative discussion.

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on the basis of the surviving evidence from the single shrine on which she bases most of her discussion, implies that the long sixteenth century, from 1470 to 1610, was of distinct significance in the history of the painted Catholic ex voto. She writes: 'If the *terminus a quo* for a study of the *tavolette votive* can be set around 1470 on the basis of extant panels, then the *terminus ad quem* can be reasonably, if somewhat arbitrarily, placed roughly within the first decade of the seventeenth century.'[7] Jacobs acknowledges in an afterword that ex votos continued to be made after this period, and notes that painted ex votos of a similar kind may today be seen in New Mexico, but she explicitly sustains that the early seventeenth century saw an interruption in the practice because of Tridentine clerical disapproval of folkloric practices.[8] The fact is that notwithstanding the element of ecclesiastical reserve, painted (and other) ex votos continued to multiply across the ensuing centuries (as innumerable shrines bear witness). The impact of the Council of Trent, on this as on other forms of lay devotion, was far more limited than its published decree of 1563 had envisaged. With respect to the preceding, medieval period, Jacobs's chronology is based on a lack of surviving painted ex voto panels prior to the late fifteenth century, which is not a strong argument, especially given extensive medieval evidence of other forms of ex voto, including fourteenth-century painted frescos, and given, too, the existence of painted predella panels dating from as early as the late thirteenth century which record quotidian miracles in very similar ways to ex votos.[9] In post-medieval inventories and visitation records, painted *tavolette*, even when known to have been present, were regularly omitted when other ex votos were recorded, due to the lack of material value of the former: this also has a bearing on the evidence for medieval painted ex votos. Finally, apart from natural disasters and the depredations of war, collections of ex votos, once the families of their donors are no longer present to supervise them, have always been vulnerable to being removed from view, becoming subsequently susceptible to loss: this is documented in the post-medieval period and is sure to have occurred earlier. However, Jacobs further distinguishes the pictorial ex votos she discusses by an argument that non-pictorial ex votos constituted a different phenomenon. She sees the latter – crutches, wax limbs, rings, etc. – as functionally less effective than pictures and therefore both inferior to and distinct from the painted *tavolette* on which she exclusively

7 Jacobs F.H., *Votive Panels and Popular Piety in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: 2013) 79.

8 Jacobs, *Votive Panels* 79–84, 196.

9 On the precedents for the late fifteenth-century *tavolette* see Bacci M., "Italian Ex-Votos and 'Pro Anima' Images in the Late Middle Ages", in Weinryb, *Ex voto* 76–105.

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concentrates.[10] But given the continued widespread use from the sixteenth century until the present, within the same cults, of ex votos in diverse media, this distinction does not seem conceptually convincing.[11]

We need to be wary of tying the chronology of ex votos to developments in other areas, with the consequent risk of creating circular arguments. A century ago, in a classic essay, the attempt was made to connect the late-fifteenth-century ex voto to the contemporary development in painting of new techniques of naturalism. Julius von Schlosser proposed that the Renaissance ex voto in the form of a wax portrait of the grateful donor, of which examples are known from Mantua, Florence, and elsewhere, was a catalyst of lifelike portraiture in secular contexts.[12] The hypothesis was doubly problematic. In the first place, it depended upon a simplistic teleological assumption about 'the rise of naturalism' in Renaissance art; and in the second, it inferred that the ex voto functioned as a kind of sympathetic magic based upon a formal resemblance between the image and the beneficiary.[13] Building on this suggestion, David Freedberg made extensive use of ex votos in the development of his thesis that all artistic representations function as surrogates for reality.[14] Yet the thesis was flawed in its foundation: the briefest survey of ex voto material, in its fantastical diversity, makes it clear that a literal or naturalistic representation of life is not an element which is essential to its operation. Apart from the naturalistic portrait in wax, the ex voto offers a variety of other ways to allude to its donor, including the indexical reference of an item of jewellery, or the mensural similitude of a candle of the same length as the subject's height. Representational ex votos, meanwhile, offer formulaic depictions of their protagonists, the detail of whose experience, never more than

10 Jacobs, *Votive Panels* 127, 151.

11 Michele Bacci has suggested that in the Middle Ages, wax limbs were offered to shrines in anticipation of a grace, and not in thanks for a cure. Bacci, "Italian ex-votos" 79–80. If this were the case, it would represent a significant continuity with antique practice, in which offerings were made both following the receipt of a healing or other grace and, more commonly, in the hope of receiving one. Didi-Huberman G., *Ex-voto, image, organe, temps* (Paris: 2006), principally considers classical evidence of this nature. Post-medieval Catholic practice has been almost exclusively to promise an offering in the moment of crisis, and to bring it to the shrine in the aftermath of its resolution.

12 von Schlosser J., "Geschichte der Porträtbilder in Wachs", *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses* 29 (1910–11) 171–258.

13 Jacobs appears to have been influenced, in the construction of her chronology of ex votos, by Schlosser's argument: '[…] *tavolette* began to proliferate around 1470, a time that coincides with an increase in portrait paintings and even more monumental fresco cycles featuring a donor, his family, and even his well-placed friends.' Jacobs, *Votive Panels* 77.

14 Freedberg D., *The Power of Images. Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: 1989) esp. 146–160.

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summarily indicated in the visual depiction, is sometimes amplified by accompanying texts. It cannot be agreed as a general rule that the ex voto functions on the basis of 'the felt efficacy [...] of the exactly lifelike'.[15] The same point applies to the representation, within the painted ex voto, of the venerated statue of the saint or the miraculous image: the image provides a sufficient, but never more than approximate indication of the particular saintly power to which a grace is attributed. Printed reproductions of the cult image, which since the sixteenth century have been vital means of dissemination of these devotions, also provide more-or-less crudely simplified copies of the prototype, with no loss of perceived efficacy. In the mind of the devotee, the strength of remembered presence of the holy image has only a weak relationship to visual resemblance.[16] As with the paper copy or *santino*, so too in the case of the ex voto, the material visual image does not depend for its operation on its mimetic qualities, but functions, instead, as a catalyst of remembered stories.

Every ex voto claims to be the authentic record of an event. But rather than offering a complete or precisely accurate visual description, the vowed image or object donated to the shrine is the trace of a memory which is, at the same time, both personal and collective. It is a part of a larger nexus of relationships between the donor, the deity, and the community.[17] Catholic belief and practice continued to be influenced by the example of the Jews, who in ancient times brought thank-offerings to the Temple, as described in the Psalms:

> For thou, O God, has proved us: thou hast tried us by fire, as silver is tried. Thou hast brought us into a net, thou has laid afflictions on our back: Thou hast set men over our heads. We have passed through fire and water, and thou hast brought us out into a refreshment. I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. I will offer

15 Freedberg, *Power of Images* 157. As Kriss-Rettenbeck pointed out, the 'likeness' of the donor in a medieval or Renaissance vowed image was not understood to be a literal, earthly portrait, but, rather, a sufficient demonstration that the vow had been fulfilled. Kriss-Rettenbeck, *Ex voto* 277–278.

16 Garnett and Rosser, *Spectacular Miracles* esp. 195–199.

17 As Kriss-Rettenbeck already noted, each pictorial ex voto, displayed at the shrine, shows both the relationship between the grateful donor and the supernatural agent, and the relationship of the miraculous event to the present beholder. Kriss-Rettenbeck, *Ex voto* 156–157. Jacobs, *Votive Panels* 88–98 makes the point that the ex voto should not be understood as a 'gift', because divine grace is understood in Catholic culture to be unrepayable. Indeed, the ex voto is not a unilateral donation, and still less the settlement of a debt, but rather the fulfilment of a vow to acknowledge the infinite generosity of divine compassion for humanity.

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> up to thee holocausts full of marrow, with burnt offerings of rams: I will offer to thee bullocks with goats.[18]

Similar declarations were made by innumerable deponents concerning ex votos brought to shrines in sixteenth-century Italy. The testimony of Giovanni Battista Roccatagliata, concerning the cure of a Genoese dyer attributed to the miraculous painted Madonna of Mondovì, is typical. To make his vow to the picture, whose powers had recently become a *cause célèbre* throughout a wide area, the crippled man made his way to a chapel of the Virgin Mary in the cathedral church of Genoa, where his ex voto would remain with others as an offering and a local witness to the cult, whose epicentre lay beyond the mountains in Piedmont:

> I have known [for some time] a Genoese man named Francesco Semino, a dyer, who for about five years was lamed in his left leg and foot, the leg being greatly swollen. When he moved about his house, at the start of the condition, he went from one room to another on all fours, and outdoors he went with crutches, as, more recently, he did also at home. On the fourth Saturday in August [1595] this dyer went to San Lorenzo in Genoa, to the chapel of St John the Baptist and to that of the Virgin Mary, and in the Virgin's chapel he vowed himself to the Madonna of Savona and to the Madonna of Mondovì, praying for the grace to be able to visit them without crutches. Having finished his prayer he came with his crutches to the shop of Messer Pietro Rocha, the druggist, in Piazza Nuova, and related to him what he had done, and also that he felt more robust than before. The druggist told him to try to walk without the crutches, and he did this, returning home on his feet, to the amazement of the neighbourhood. News of the miracle spread through the city, and on the following day the archbishop's vicar, wanting to know all about it, called Francesco and examined many witnesses. And the whole city flocked to that chapel of the Madonna, and by permission of the ordinary [the archbishop's representative] they continue to bring numerous wax and other ex votos [*molte imagini di cera et voti*]. That Francesco had previously gone everywhere with crutches I saw myself, and is commonly known throughout Genoa: indeed I have now seen his crutches, which I recognise, in that very chapel of the Madonna, hung one on each side of the altar.

18 Ps. 65 [66], 10–15 (Douai translation from the Vulgate).

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A second deponent reported that, although he had not seen Francesco Semino since his miraculous cure, he had observed the man's crutches hanging in the chapel.[19] Such narratives, similar to countless others in the period, show how the ex voto functioned at once as the outcome of a personal vow born in the context of individual and domestic suffering and prayer, and as a catalyst of public rumour, conversation, and shared history.

Once placed on view in the august and public setting of the chapel, the ex voto records and validates a personal experience.[20] At the same time, it makes a contribution to a composite image of multiple lives: the collective memory of an evolving community. An ex voto, in other words, does not function in isolation, but works as a metonym for a narrative of personal experience which exists simultaneously within the life of the giver and, as a story shared with the wider community, as an element in a multifaceted and enduring embodiment of the society of participants in the cult. It is significantly misleading, therefore, to categorise the ex voto as an 'egodocument': Ittai Weinryb, who makes this suggestion, risks underestimating the communal dimension which is no less essential to the object than its reference to its donor.[21] The frame of ex votos surrounding the statue of the saint or the miraculous crucifix is the deposit of innumerable personal stories: a palimpsest of particular narratives which have become integrated into a shared history. The author of an official guide, published in 1571, to the shrine of the miraculous statue of the Virgin Mary at Altötting in Bavaria declared that when one stood surrounded by all the traces of those who, as their wax and other ex votos testified, had been helped by the image, it seemed as though they were all actually present.[22] Even as it pays the debt of personal gratitude for supernatural intervention, the ex voto helps to construct a collaborative image of the larger community of devotees as both virtuous and powerful in the assurance of divine support in the future. The ex voto refers to an individual event, whether experienced as a personal or (as in the case of natural disaster) a collective grace; but it reconfigures that experience in the language of the community. Around 1600 in Genoa, Nicolo de Blagio was bedridden in his house with an illness and for some time in great danger of his life, when his prayer to the Virgin Mary and the miracle-working crucifix of the local church of Santa Maria di Castello was answered

19 Cozzo P., *"Regina Montis Regalis". Il santuario di Mondovì da devozione locale a tempio sabaudo* (Rome: 2002) 392–393.

20 "Chi fa raffigurare la sua vicenda esistenziale sul quadro votivo, non solo riconosce la grazia, ma si fa riconoscere come graziato davanti a Dio e agli uomini", Bessone A.S. – Trivero S., *I quadri votivi del santuario di Oropa*, 4 vols. (Biella: 1995), I, 16.

21 Weinryb, *Ex voto* 8.

22 Kriss-Rettenbeck, *Ex voto* 279.

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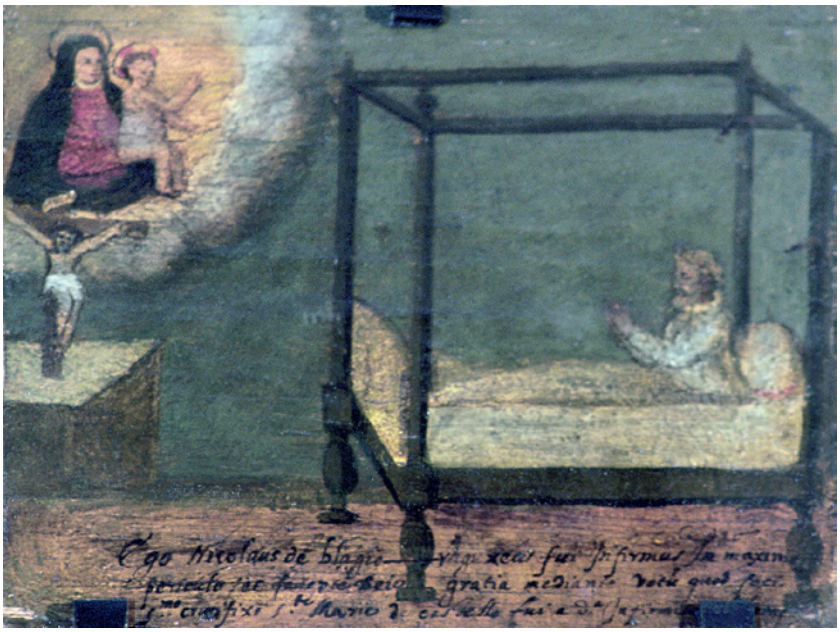


FIGURE 2.2 Ex voto at the sanctuary of Santa Maria di Castello, Genoa
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHORS

with his recovery. The scene which he subsequently had a painter depict shows the patient alone in his bedroom, calling into his mind the Virgin of Castello and the adjacent thaumaturgic crucifix, which may have been present in the room in the form of a printed reproduction (Fig. 2.2). The domestic intimacy of the scene is typical of an infinite number of ex voto pictures. Yet when Nicolo de Blagio brought his visual testament as an offering to the cross, its public display alongside others both validated his experience as miraculous and recast it as part of a communal identity. To bequeath an ex voto offering to a shrine is to participate in a social ritual, one which cumulatively constructs the shrine containing the relics of the saint, or the miraculous painting or statue, in the image of the body of its devotees.[23]

Each time an ex voto is hung up at a shrine, a personal experience is given public importance. By the same token, the right of the secular community to define the sacred site is vindicated. The *raison d'être* of the holy place is

23 The argument developed here was first proposed in Garnett and Rosser, *Spectacular Miracles* 142–156.

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constituted by the accumulated testimonials to its potency.[24] For this reason, a standard type of print of a venerated saint or a miraculous image includes a frame which incorporates in addition a series of the accompanying ex votos, demonstrating again how the personal stories of the *miracolati* have been translated into a communal narrative.[25] Such prints, themselves made to be framed and contemplated at home, or taken on travels as a means of creating and recreating a 'home' on the move, provided a constant reminder of the web of interconnections between the personal, the familial and the social. The narrative was both infinitely extendable and intensely felt in its specificity. Hence the ambivalence of the clergy, torn between the desire to foster an active piety and unease at the degree to which Christianity, in the hands of its lay devotees, is susceptible to being fragmented into myriad local, particular and mobile cults, determined and directed by the laity and ultimately uncontrollable. The material deposits of these cults could often be manifested in distinctly secular, even pagan forms. When one of the leaders of the Tridentine reforms, Cardinal Bossio, conducted his visitation of the diocese of Genoa in 1582, he demanded the removal of what appeared to him to be outlandish ex votos in the Ligurian shrines of miraculous images, including flags, weapons, model ships, and displays of dogs, snakes, and other 'brute animals'. At Lavagna, evidently with raised eyebrows, he observed a crocodile suspended from the rafters of the chapel of the miracle-working painted panel of the Madonna del Ponte. This animal had been brought to the shrine in 1566 by sailors from Lavagna who had miraculously been saved from its jaws in the waters of the Nile. No less symptomatic of this ongoing tension, between clerical ideas of orthodoxy and decorum and the power of the laity to determine the scope and social character of religion, is the fact that in the late nineteenth century, visitors to the chapel of the Madonna del Ponte found, amongst the thousands of ex votos expressive of a long-lived secular community, the crocodile still in its place.[26] In the minds of the episcopate, the Counter-Reformation sharpened issues of orthodoxy and conformity surrounding ex votos; but the long-term endurance of these practices amongst the laity is itself a testimony to their perceived

24 "Se privata della relativa serie di testimonianze, comprovanti grazie e miracoli e favori celesti, un santuario è destituito della sua ragion d'essere […] Assenza di ex-voto è condanna all'oblio", Vecchi A., "Per la lettura delle tavolette votive", in B. Avesani B. – Zanini F. (eds.), *Le tavolette votive della Madonna della Salute di Dossobuono* (Verona: 1987) 11–29: 13–14.

25 Vecchi A., *Il culto delle immagini nelle stampe popolari* (Florence: 1968) 101–102.

26 *Synodi diocesanae et provinciales editae atque ineditae S. Genuensis Ecclesiae, accedunt Acta et Decreta visitationis Francisci Bosii episcopi Novariensis ann. MDLXXXII* (Genoa: 1833) 184–185, 265; Castellini P., *Pellegrinaggi al santuario di N.S. del Ponte: Cenni storici* (Chiavari: 1908) 15–16.

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significance for the consolidation of a community which, as will become explicit in the discussion, below, of the Madonna dell'Orto of Chiavari, could be political no less than it was religious.

In this context, the 'domestic' exists as a function of the 'public', and vice versa: the ex voto is an interface between the two spheres, and provides a telling example of the way in which personal religious experience finds validation and significance in the context of a social community. A family drama becomes, through the pious act of one of its participants, the material of a collective devotion. The text inscribed on another sixteenth-century ex voto preserved at the shrine of the miraculous crucifix of Santa Maria di Castello in Genoa catches something of the tone of the news as it circulated in the neighbourhood, in the aftermath of one particular domestic crisis. These are the words of the main protagonist, Lorenzo Carrega:

> On the Monday, which was 20 September, 1569, at the third hour of the night I went to bed. I woke at the sixth hour, but it not yet being time to get up for work, I went back to sleep. In the space of an hour, I don't know how, but a fire started in the house [...] and seeing the danger to myself and my family, I rescued my children as quickly as I could. Straight away on our knees we put ourselves in the hands of the Lord God, Our Lady and the glorious St John the Baptist, as the Crucifix of Castello came into our hearts.

The panel on which this text appears shows the drama of the house fire, with flames pouring from windows and chimneys, and in the foreground the family of four in their nightclothes, kneeling in imprecation before the imagined image of the miraculous cross (Fig. 2.3). In the moment of crisis, their minds had turned to God and the Virgin Mary, and to John the Baptist, the civic patron of Genoa, but most particularly – as the picture records – to the Crucifix of Castello. The cult of this carved wooden crucifix of ca. 1300 was well established by this period, and the outdoor shrine, attached to the nave of the church of Santa Maria di Castello, in the heart of the old city of Genoa, proclaimed its powers through a display of multiple ex votos. Those, like Lorenzo Carrega and his family, who grew up familiar with these images and stories of the powers of the crucifix, turned instinctively, in the moment of crisis, to this source of protection: the tutelary deity of all households bound together in the same narrative community.

The ex voto is normally presented at an established shrine. However, the communal potential of the personal offering to the deity is also demonstrated in the rarer instance in which an ex voto, created on a new, and sometimes

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FIGURE 2.3 Ex voto at the sanctuary of Santa Maria di Castello, Genoa
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domestic, site, becomes in its own right the focus of a popular cult. Such was the case of the frescoed image of the Madonna dell'Orto of Chiavari, on the coast of Liguria. It was in the 1490s that a local woman, Maria Guercia, also known by her nickname of la Turchina – probably on account of a blue (*turchese*) dress which she wore in honour of the Virgin Mary – is said to have had painted, on the wall of a garden in the suburb of Chiavari, the image of the Virgin and Christ Child, flanked by those of St Sebastian and St Roch. The latter were both associated with protection from the plague, and in fact the image was commissioned by the woman as an ex voto of thanks for her survival of the plague. The image enjoyed the fluctuating interest of the Chiavaresi during the sixteenth century; but it was at the beginning of the seventeenth century, in the context of mounting political tension between the town and the dominant city of Genoa, that Our Lady of the Garden began to work miracles, and became the catalyst of a major pilgrimage (Fig. 2.4). The many accounts of the cult which were written at that time all concur in the conviction that the fresco was in origin an ex voto. Whatever the true fifteenth-century history of the image (and the story of Maria 'la Turchina' perhaps has a legendary quality), the universal perception at the time of the birth of the civic cult was that

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FIGURE 2.4 Devotees at the garden shrine of the Madonna dell'Orto, Chiavari (commemorative image). Oil on wood. Cathedral and sanctuary of the Madonna dell'Orto.
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHORS

it had begun life as the fulfilment of a humble woman's vow. The status of the image as the modest ex voto creation of a simple lay woman of Chiavari, and its location in an undistinguished garden outside the town walls, made it the ideal palladium of the Chiavarese community – comprising townspeople both rich and poor – which desired to make a stand against what were perceived as the excessive burdens of Genoese rule. Attempts by the authorities to suppress the nascent cult were powerless to resist the crowds of devotees who came

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from a wide hinterland to honour the Madonna dell'Orto, and in a number of instances to add to her tally of miraculous cures. In the end the Genoese senate was persuaded, in return for a measure of supervision, to remove its opposition, and the triumph was celebrated locally as a moral and political victory for the whole population of Chiavari. On the completion of a new basilica to house the image, on 8 September 1634 the frescoed ex voto, still attached to part of the garden wall, was carried in festive procession through all the main streets of the town before its installation in the purpose-built shrine (Fig. 2.5). A new harvest of ex votos now began to flourish around the venerated image, consolidating the reputation of this modest fresco, in origin the outcome of a personal vow, as the civic patron of Chiavari.[27]

Almost without exception, ex votos are the expression of what today would be considered private concerns, or personal responses to public events.[28] Typical of the circumstances which have occasioned their manufacture are dramas of the home such as a difficult childbirth, an infant falling downstairs or – as we have seen – an incurable illness or a house fire. The devotional context of the vow made to the saint or miraculous image at the moment of crisis is either personal or domestic. Yet the vow itself requires that the story find a social expression, becoming incorporated into the common memory through the relation of the event in speech and its enduring commemoration in the ex voto deposited at the shrine. Those responsible for leaving ex votos have always, especially on the annual feast day of the saint or the image, returned regularly to reconnect with their offerings, to dust them and to ensure that they remain in view both of the thaumaturgic image and of the secular community.[29] The ex voto negotiates a continuous loop of devotional energy between the field of the personal and the domestic, and that of society at large.

In every religious tradition, devotion finds forms of expression which may be described as either personal or domestic, or both. Yet that personal belief and intimate devotional practice only make sense within a larger context of communal history. Every invocation of the patron saint or thaumaturgic image plots the relationship of the individual to a supernatural presence which is not remote, but which is located within the community. Attempts to censor that wider field of devotional expression, on the part of clerical authority, have always had a political undercurrent. The local cult has the capacity – as in the Chiavarese case just discussed – to catalyse a strong secular community,

27 Garnett and Rosser, *Spectacular Miracles* 80–83, 181–183, 185–187, 196–199.

28 A very small minority of ex votos are erected by groups, notably in the aftermath of natural disasters such as a threat of disease or an earthquake.

29 See e.g. Bessone and Trivero, *I quadri votivi* 108–109.

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FIGURE 2.5 The Madonna dell'Orto. Fresco, ca. 1490, formerly on a garden wall, in its transposed, 17th-century setting.
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHORS

confident of divine support at both the personal and the collective level.[30] The attempts by clergy since the sixteenth century, in both Catholic and Protestant traditions, to encourage moral discipline within the household, under the direction of the *paterfamilias*, while imposing in the public sphere a prescribed

30 See e.g. Garnett and Rosser, *Spectacular Miracles* and passim.

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model of devotional observance, should be seen for what they have in fact been: efforts to limit the communal aspects of lay religion in both contexts to standardised forms approved and regulated by the clergy. From this clerical perspective, domestic devotion has been intended to be devotion kept safely under control. Yet the ordered separation of spheres has never been easy to impose, and the long history of the ex voto demonstrates the repeated appropriation by lay men and women of the right to reveal the presence of the supernatural within the quotidian realms of the home and the wider community. The placement of an ex voto at the shrine secures the public authentication of a personal encounter with the divine. And at the same time as it validates that individual spiritual experience, the action consolidates and legitimises a public history of divine support for the community.

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CHAPTER 3

Spaces for Domestic Devotion in the Noble Residences of Palermo in the Age of Catholic Reform

Valeria Viola

In the mid-eighteenth century, Francesco Maria Emanuele Gaetani, Marquis of Villabianca (1720–1802), acknowledged that in Palermo the prestige and distinction of a palace had depended on the presence of 'crenellations, turrets, columns, courtyards and private churches'.[1] He was referring to the Royal Palace which the Normans began constructing in 1132, and to medieval fortified houses, whose private chapels were notable for their sizable dimensions.[2] The Marquis, despite being a valuable source of information on the period, is known to have been a conservative voice from the upper echelons of society, perpetually worried by the evolving world around him. He complained that the custom of erecting great private oratories was vanishing, because of the new, and in his words 'mal consigliata' (erroneous) custom of allowing domestic chapels inside rooms.[3] His words, however, prove that devotional spaces – albeit reduced in size – were still considered necessary to complete a noble home in Palermo.

Pending the conclusion of research that is still underway, this paper provides an overview of chapels and oratories in the noble residences of Palermo in the post-Tridentine age. It asserts that the pervasive and enduring role of religion was reflected in the architecture of private devotional spaces.[4] This paper sheds light on the continuous re-negotiation of the boundaries between

1 'La distinzione anticamente de' nostri palazzi civici consisteva ne' merli, colonne, corti e chiese private complesse in essi'. These notes by the Marquis of Villabianca come from his "Opuscoli Palermitani", an eighteenth-century manuscript partly transcribed in Mazzè A. (ed.), *I Palazzi regi di Palermo, monasteri e cappelle private* (Palermo: 1991) 94.

2 Mazzè (ed.), *I Palazzi regi di Palermo* 96.

3 Ibid., 97.

4 Because archival sources are currently under investigation, this paper mainly takes advantage of published works that shed light on the topic, as well as analysis of some extant examples of chapels and oratories. In addition, to gain an idea of Sicilian aristocratic practices, the paper draws on both earlier sources and some recent interviews conducted with the heirs of those noble families who still own historical residences (or parts of them) and still preserve memories of the devotional use of these spaces.

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religious and secular spheres in the domestic environment. A comparison of oratories in villas and chapels located in urban and rural palaces suggests that rural oratories were more closely intertwined with the development of links between aristocratic families and local populations, while urban chapels were smaller and more private.

Two premises should be established before proceeding. The first relates to the issue of terminology: devotional spaces for laypeople are described in contemporary sources as either 'chapels' or 'oratories' (or even 'private churches', as above) without distinction, which is confusing for the modern reader. This confusion, however, has a historical basis, because the conception and the use of these private spaces seems to have been indistinct until the sixteenth century, when the Council of Trent laid down rules in an attempt to define these sacred spaces.[5] Nonetheless, the general term 'cappella' (chapel) has also lingered in everyday language to define some of these rooms, especially in palaces.[6] This can partly be explained by the fact that the term generally identifies a relatively small architectural space dedicated to worship, either in a church or in another architectural context, whilst the word oratory is commonly used for a larger and, specifically, independent buildings. Oratories are therefore generally easily identifiable, but it is not always so easy to discern devotional spaces inside urban residences – where they might be limited to a niche, but could expand into the surrounding domestic space when needed.[7]

5 The Council of Trent did not directly address the issue of private oratories. An indirect reference to them is expressed within the conciliar decree *De observandiis* (23rd Session, 17th October 1562), when, listing the necessary precautions to avoid an attitude of irreverence ('ut irreverentia vitetur'), correct behaviour in domestic oratories was described; further on, the document required that the Eucharist could only be celebrated in oratories which were exclusively dedicated to divine worship, had been visited by ordinaries, and approved by pontifical authority. However, the matter was not settled definitively until 1917 when the Church's preference for the word 'oratorio' (oratory) to define these spaces was established in canon law, and a distinction made between public, semi-public, and private oratories. *Codex Iuris Canonici* (CIC, 1917, can. 1188–1196). However, the CIC of 1983 removed the second category of 'semi-public oratory', the most difficult to identify, while the private oratory remains 'locus divino cultui, in commodum unius vel plurium personarum physicarum, de licentia Ordinarii loci destinatus' (CIC, 1983, can. 1226), i.e. 'a place addressed by the bishop's allowance to the cult, for the use of one or more people'.

6 The term 'cappella' is constantly preferred in archival inventories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while the term 'oratorio' is more frequent in Diocesan documents of the same period.

7 As Susan Gal argues in a different context, 'the issue is not one of instable or fuzzy boundaries. Rather, the intertwining public and private is created by practices that participants understand as re-creations of the dichotomy.' The same can be said for the opposition of sacred and secular. Gal S., "A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction", *Differences. A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 13, 1 (2002) 84.

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Therefore, here the term oratory is used only if the room is identifiable as a completely or largely independent construction; otherwise, the term chapel will be employed, trying in all cases to describe any spaces as accurately as possible in architectural terms.

Secondly, despite the scholarly attention currently being paid to the theme of domestic devotion in the early modern period, very little has yet been written which focuses specifically on the south of Italy.[8] The situation is no better when one considers local scholarship that focuses more on elaborate reception rooms rather than on private spaces, and least of all on chapels.[9] Furthermore, few rooms and pieces of furniture have survived untouched within private palaces. Even the offices of bodies charged with the preservation of historic architecture do not have records of these rooms. Family archives, if they are still available, too often lie hidden in dusty attics. There is a real risk that, as little scholarly attention is being paid to this subject, the heritage itself is gradually being lost. Partly as a result of the dearth of interest, this attempt to shed light

8 The current debate is overwhelmingly focused on northern Europe and often limited to northern and central Italy (e.g. Smith J.M.H., "Material Christianity in the Early Mediaeval Household", in Doran J. – Methuen C. – Walsham, A. (eds.), *Religion and the Household, Studies in Church History* 50 (2014) 23–46; Campbell E.J. – Miller S.R. – Consavari E.C. (eds.), *The Early Modern Italia Domestic Interior, 1400–1700: Objects, Spaces, Domesticities* (Farnham: 2013); Hirschboeck M., *Florentinische Palastkapellen unter den ersten Medici-Herzögen (1537–1609). Verborgene Orte frommer Selbstdarstellung und konfessioneller Identität* (Berlin: 2011); Cavallo S. – Evangelisti S. (eds.), *Domestic Institutional Interiors in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot and Burlington: 2009); Anderson C.C., "The Material Culture of Domestic Religion in Early Modern Florence", Ph.D. dissertation (University of York: 2007); Morse M.A., "The Arts of Domestic Devotion in Renaissance Italy: the case of Venice", Ph.D. dissertation (University of Maryland: 2006); Mattox P.E., "The Domestic Chapel in Renaissance Florence, 1400–1550", Ph.D. dissertation (Yale University: 1996). Yet recently, some scholars have noted that 'the preoccupation with this "golden triangle" of Florence, Rome and Venice has skewed our view of the period, especially when it comes to consideration of the lives of ordinary families', see the Introduction in Corry M. – Howard D. – Laven M. (eds.), *Madonnas & Miracles. The Holy Home in Renaissance Italy* (London: 2017) 7. See also Irene Galandra Cooper's essay in this volume, 220–243.

9 Local interest in private residences in Palermo has grown slowly, as many monographs prove: Grasso S., "Il Palazzo Butera a Palermo: acquisizioni documentarie" *Antichità Viva* 12 no.5 (1980) 33–38; Aricò N. et alia, *Abitare a Palermo. Due Palazzi e la loro storia tra Cinquecento e Ottocento* (Cinisello Balsamo: 1983); Scaduto F., *Architettura e committenza nella Palermo del Cinquecento: il Palazzo Castrone di via Toledo* (Palermo: 2002); Piazza S., *Il palazzo Valguarnera-Gangi a Palermo* (Palermo: 2004); Marafon Pecoraro M. – Palazzotto P. – Vesco M., *Palazzo Alliata di Pietratagliata tra tardogotico e neostili. Archivi, cantieri, protagonisti a Palermo* (Palermo: 2013); Zalapì A. – Maurizio Rotolo M., *Palazzo Comitini* (Palermo: 2011). Yet none of these shows any concern for devotional spaces.

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on the situation in Palermo will necessarily be partial, because many hypotheses are still to be confirmed.

1 The Nobility of Palermo

From the start of its life as a city until its unification with the rest of Italy in 1861, Palermo's urban density gradually increased, saturating the spaces that today mark its historic centre. During this long process, the so-called 'golden century' of Palermo's religious and residential architecture took place from the end of the seventeenth to the early eighteenth century.[10] Throughout this period religious orders competed in building wonderful churches and convents and the aristocracy constructed breath-taking residences, overwhelming the medieval parts of the city with imposing palaces and filling the surrounding areas with sumptuous villas.

At the end of the sixteenth century royal policy pushed the aristocracy towards the countryside to resolve issues of insufficient grain production and consequent economic crises.[11] In the following centuries, turbulence among the three dynasties (from Spain, Piedmont and Austria) who ruled the island encouraged nobles to go back to the city: in awareness of the collapse of long-standing political balances, aristocratic families returned to the capital to protect their interests. A period of intense building then occurred in Palermo and its environs, as nobles who had previously had nothing more than a pied-à-terre in the city built residences. Construction expanded even more after the accession of Charles III in 1735, when the nobility obtained a firmer social and economic position.[12]

10 The citation 'golden century' comes from: Abbate F., *Storia dell'arte nell'Italia meridionale: il secolo d'oro* (Rome: 2012); the expression was very common among eighteenth-century writers. In 1724, Pietro Vitale connected this city's key period with devotion to the patroness, Saint Rosalia, whose relics were found a century before. Vitale Pietro, *Il secolo d'oro aperto a Palermo dalla preziosissima inventione del corpo di S. Rosalia vergine palermitana* (Palermo, Antonio Epiro: 1724; reprint, Palermo: 1824) 10.

11 Cancila R., *Autorità sovrana e potere feudale nella Sicilia moderna* (Palermo: 2013) 47–56; Castiglione P., *Settecento siciliano. Città e terre feudali tra malessere e riformismo* (Catania: 1982) 30–34.

12 On the topic see: Piazza S., "Il sistema delle residenze nobiliari", in *Atlante tematico del Barocco in Italia*, vol. 3: Fagiolo M. (ed.), *Il sistema delle residenze nobiliari. Italia Meridionale* (Rome: 2010) 304–316.

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Consequently, when the slow decay of Sicilian aristocratic society began at the end of the eighteenth century, the noble families already dwelling in these lavish houses continued to live on in them until the effective financial collapse of their social class. For this reason, and due to the resistance to change shown by the elite in Sicily, extant residences can reveal much about noble lifestyles, notwithstanding the major modifications that these buildings have endured since the beginning of the twentieth century.

Catholic thought saturated every aspect of daily life in Sicily, at all social levels and in all places, inside and outside the home.[13] The demands of the act of worship itself guaranteed widespread participation, drawing people from all levels of society in shared devotion and, at the same time, respecting hierarchical differences. When Ignazio de Vio narrates how citizens were 'radunati a gran folla ò ne' palaggi, e cafe, ò nella piazza' ('gathered in crowds in palaces, cafés, and piazzas') at the 1693 procession of Saint Rosalia, he seems to divide society into three categories, denoted by these locations.[14] Aristocrats were more likely to attend the event from their own balconies, from which they could gaze over the people below, rather than joining them in the streets and squares.[15] However, during the description of the procession of Saints Cosmas and Damian, the Marquise of Villabianca reports that he himself had 'seen civil people of some respectability not disdaining to run behind [the procession] mixing with the plebeians, hoping to obtain from the Saints the end of their pains and because they felt pleasure in running'.[16] The episode and the irritated tone of the comment reveal the tension in the nobility's desire to participate in communal devotional life but requirement that they distinguish

13 'After the first victories over the Protestant thought' Sicilian Christian art increasingly underlined the triumphal aspect of Catholicism, dwelling on themes that could have an anti-Protestant meaning, such as the Trinity, the Eucharist, and the Communion of the Saints, since Protestants acknowledged the presence of Christ only inside the liturgical celebration, Stabile F.M., "Sicilia devota e committenza artistica dopo il concilio di Trento", in Malignaggi D. (ed.), *Pietro Novelli ed i il suo ambiente*, Proceedings of the 1990 Palermo Symposium (Palermo: 1990) 23. It should be said, however, that the Lutheran threat to Sicilian religious life was a distant one; if anything, Islam was a more real danger.

14 De Vio Ignazio, *Li giorni d'oro di Palermo nella trionfale solennità di Santa Rosalia, vergine palermitana celebrata l'anno 1693* (Palermo, Pietro Coppula: 1691) 84.

15 Palace facades signalled the celebrations with hanging brocades and velvets, burning torches, canopies and altars set in front of entrances. Isgrò G., *Feste barocche a Palermo* (Palermo: 1981–86) 44–48.

16 "[H]o veduto io, Villabianca, persone civili e di qualche riguardo non avere ribrezzo a correrci di appresso meschiati a plebei, sperando nei Santi ottener fine a' loro mali e perché, nel correrci, vi provavano un gran piacere", Mazzè A. (ed.), *Processioni di Palermo sacre e profane* (Palermo: 1989) 59.

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themselves in some way. The manner in which religious choices shaped the sense of identity of European aristocratic dynasties and the 'overwhelming power of confessional identities after the Reformation' has been well explored, and the findings hold true in this context.[17] Individuals felt the need to be connected 'to the city's wider community of Christian devotion'.[18] For aristocrats, the requirement that they act as leaders in the community coincided with being part of the same community, as devotees. The architecture of oratories in rural villas and urban chapels encapsulate this ambivalence between the act of opening outwards and that of withdrawing into one's own environment.

2 The Architecture of Devotion: Countryside

Country villas are easier to investigate than urban chapels as numerous examples of the former survive – albeit not always in good condition. Many historians of architecture have shown how villas built in the countryside around Palermo during the period demonstrate strong connections between architecture and setting, residence and garden, home and landscape.[19] In addition to this, analysis of these villas reveals an interesting, understudied, religious aspect. Palermo's villas are characterised by a geometrical approach to their design. In most cases, private oratories were an integral part of the architectural scheme. Cases in point are three villas in Bagheria, a town in the countryside east of Palermo: Palagonia (built 1658), Valguarnera (1714–1785), and Cattolica (1706–1736).[20] The oratories of these residences are, in fact, small churches situated in the outbuildings that surround the house [Fig. 3.1]. In such cases, oratories were rarely just for the use of family members: their quasi-public use was laid out in the document of consecration. These spaces opened themselves up to the community of the surrounding countryside. The oratory was used for regular church services for the families of agricultural workers on the estate,

17 Geevers L. – Marini M. (eds.), *Aristocracy, Dynasty and Identity in Early Modern Europe. Rulers, Aristocrats and the Formations of Identities* (Aldershot and Burlington: 2015) 17.

18 Morse, *The Arts of Domestic Devotion* 2.

19 De Simone M., *Ville palermitane del 17. e 18. secolo: profilo storico e rilievi* (Genova: 1968); Piazza S., *Le ville di Palermo. Le dimore extraurbane dei baroni del Regno di Sicilia* (*1412–1812*) (Rome: 2011).

20 Dates from: Boscarino S., *Sicilia barocca. Architettura e città 1610–1760* (Palermo: 1981) 210–212.

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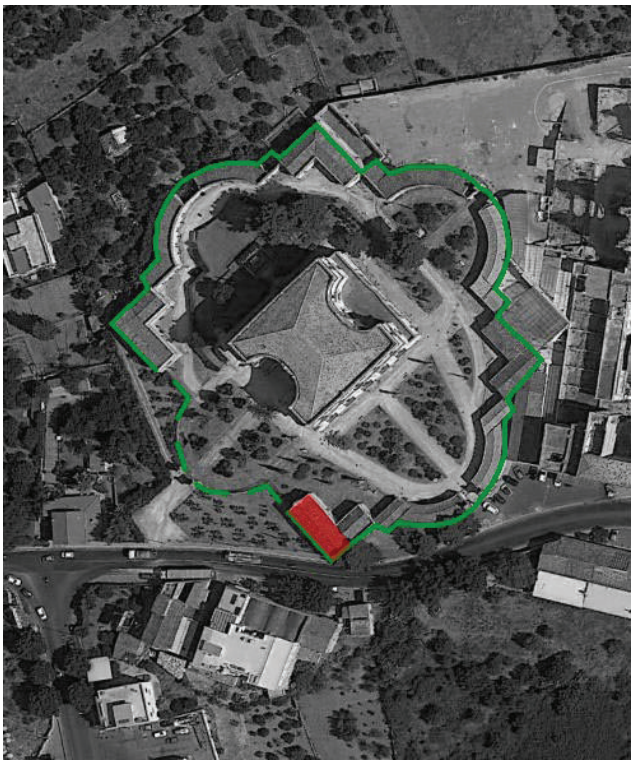


FIGURE 3.1 Villa Cattolica, Bagheria (Palermo), the geometrical *disegno* of outbuildings is highlighted in green, the oratory is in red
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especially if there was no other church nearby. Their use in this way explains some features of these rooms: the location of the oratory on the ground floor was obviously a necessity, despite this usually being the level of service rooms such as kitchens and stables. Moreover, the main entrance might be situated on to the inner garden, towards fields, or on to the public road [Fig. 3.2]; in the latter two cases the owners would also have had a private entrance, as was the case at the Villa Cattolica [Fig. 3.3]. It is fitting that nowadays, if these oratories are no longer private property, they are often public churches where Sunday services are held for local residents.

This semi-private use seems to have been little influenced either by the dimensions of the oratory or by its proximity to the villa. On the one hand, in the case of very small interior chapels, the congregation could spill over into

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FIGURE 3.2 Oratory of Villa Cattolica, entrance from the street, Bagheria (Palermo)
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FIGURE 3.3 Oratory of Villa Cattolica, entrance from the inner garden, Bagheria (Palermo)
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

a nearby garden, as is demonstrated by the example of the little chapel inside the Villa La Grua, built in the mid-eighteenth century to the west of Palermo [Fig. 3.4]. This room, which was sadly burgled about ten years ago, is located in a small elliptical space on the ground floor [Fig. 3.5], but potentially its congregation could overflow if necessary out into the external front courtyard (as happened until the recent past, according to the last owner of the villa).[21] In other words, occasionally a secular space was transformed into a religious one by this practice. On the other hand, there are also examples of oratories close to a dwelling, but neither inside it nor in one of the outbuildings. Such structures were more likely to become independent churches over time. One example is the church built adjacent to the late baroque Villa Terrasi ai colli, an unusually large family oratory that has now been transformed into the parish church of a new quarter of Palermo, San Lorenzo. Similarly, the former chapel of the Villa Filangeri in Santa Flavia is now the main village church. They have lost their private aspect and acquired the function of a public religious edifice.

21 Gustavo De Simone Achates Blanco Wirz, interviewed March 2015.

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FIGURE 3.4 Villa La Grua, Palermo, the oratory is highlighted in red
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As these examples show, the oratories of country villas illuminate an interesting aspect of the relationship between noble families – the estate owners – and the people who were economically dependent on their land. Evidently, in this relationship the head of the noble household had a prominent role: providing work, leading the community, and, as we have seen, building the oratory. A significant role was also played by female members of the nobility. An example is the case of the Branciforti di Butera family in Bagheria. In this small town, Prince Giuseppe lived in his huge palazzo in self-imposed exile from Palermo. The tree-lined avenue that was the primary path to the villa is now the main road of the town, but the relationship between the Palazzo Butera and the village is more profound. According to Francesco Michele Stabile, in 1702 Donna Agata, sister of the Prince and heir of the propriety at his death, gave her peasants a small chapel dedicated to the Madonna of the Rosary on land not far away

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FIGURE 3.5 Chapel on the ground floor of Villa La Grua
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from her villa, to bury their dead.[22] Thereafter, in 1707 she obtained from the Archbishop permission to convert the oratory that was within the area of her own house into a parish church with a baptismal font available to peasants for the sacraments of baptism.[23] In return, she promised to manage the daily maintenance of the church and to provide a stipend for its priest. We do not have enough evidence to judge if a woman such as Agata was motivated merely by a sense of a duty to the spiritual welfare of the community, or by a desire to control everyday aspects of people's lives, or maybe by a combination of both. These cases, however, should be framed inside the broader context of interactions between elites and peasants that took place within countryside villages, since at the beginning of the seventeenth century, noble families were allowed to buy royal privileges, such as the 'licentia populandi' and the 'merum et mixtum imperium', in order to incentivise the repopulation of the countryside.[24] This community aspect, however, is almost absent in the city, where chapels set in urban palaces operated quite differently.

3 The Architecture of Devotion: City

Unfortunately, examples of urban chapels are fewer in number and less well preserved than oratories of villas, but we do have an important source from the period who debated the question of such chapels, namely the architect and priest Giovanni Biagio Amico (1684–1754). As already noted, the aristocratic and conservative Marquis of Villabianca had complained that the older and grander style of residence was gradually falling out of fashion amongst Palermo's noble families and that as a result the size of chapels was reducing over time. By contrast, in the second volume of his *L'architetto pratico* (The

22 Stabile F.M., "La Parrocchia della Bagaria. Dallo spazio del Principe al patronato municipale (1708–1858)", in Scaduto R. – Stabile F.M. (eds.), *Le acque del Salvatore nel villaggio di delizie della Bagaria*, Proceedings of the conference held in Bagheria on 13rd February 2009 (Palermo: 2010) 21.

23 Stabile, "La parrocchia della Bagaria" 22. The Butera family oratory was the only church in Bagheria until the building of the current main church (1769–1771).

24 These privileges allowed them to found villages and to administer justice for the villagers; see Cancila R., *Autorità sovrana e potere feudale nella Sicilia moderna* (Palermo: 2013) 15–64. As Domenico Ligresti argues, controlling a fief and founding a new village could give families prestige in many ways: giving access to the *Braccio militare* of the Parliament, enhancing the political role of the family, providing more prestigious aristocratic titles, increasing incomes and unlimited power over the population. Ligresti D., "Per un'interpretazione del Seicento siciliano", *Cheiron* 17–18 (1992) 93.

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Practical Architect) of 1750 Giovanni Biagio Amico explicitly recommends that such smaller spaces should be incorporated into dwellings. He stated that the chapel should be located among the backrooms of the 'piano nobile', the primary floor of the residence, close to the 'alcova' in order to allow attendance at mass even in case of sickness.[25]

On the first floor, Amico listed as necessary the following rooms: 'the main entrance, anterooms, rooms for receiving and sleeping, the gallery, the library, the chapel, lodges, backrooms, service area, fireplaces, secret passages, pantry, and other rooms suitable for the Mistress and the Master'.[26] At this point, Amico lingers in the passage from the anterooms to the backrooms, through the bedroom, introducing a series of intermediate rooms.[27] He does not use the terms private or public. As Giulia Calvi writes, 'from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, no one would have placed family and familial relationships, religious profession or devotion in the private sphere or in the realm of individual choice'.[28] Yet, from the sequence of rooms provided by Amico a slight distinction emerges between the anterooms and the backrooms, between what was visible to the judging eyes of a visitor and what was not. Along with the stairs, loggia, and entrance, which should provide the palace with 'magnificenza' and 'grandezza', the anterooms were assigned with the explicit function of 'making the palace magnificent'.[29] By contrast, Amico

25 'La cappella suol situarsi anche presso alla camera di dormire, e sarà ben fatto il disporla in modo, che anche dal letto possa ascoltarsi la messa in caso di malattia', Amico Giovanni Biagio, *L'architetto prattico in cui con facilità si danno le regole per apprendere l'architettura civile* (Palermo. Nella Stamperia di Angelo Felicella: 1750; reprint, Palermo: 1997) 67–69. The 'retro-camere', or backrooms, were rooms behind the bedroom, usually conceived of as private spaces. The 'alcova' was a tripartite space that housed, under a central wooden vault, the bed and the bedside tables and, laterally, two small rooms or passages, possibly divided per sex. In some documents, the term can be found as a synonym for bedroom, but in those days the alcove was more an optional addition to the main bedroom.

26 '[L]a Sala, le Anticamere, le Camere d'udienza, e di dormire, la Galleria, la Libraria, la Cappella, le Logge, le Retrocamere, i Gabinetti, i camini, i Passetti segreti, la Credenza, e tant'altre officine civili per comodo della Dama o del Padrone.' Amico, *L'architetto prattico* 64. Amico states 'now, the apartments according to Sicilian custom are arranged, as follows' (ora gli appartamenti giusta il costume di Sicilia si dipongono così). Amico, *L'architetto pratico* 66. The phrase reveals that, although intending to list general prescriptions, the author gives us a glimpse of the contemporary customs of his land and it is likely that the author benefitted from direct knowledge of most of the residences already built in Palermo.

27 Amico, *L'architetto prattico* 67.

28 Calvi G. (ed.), *Barocco al femminile* (Rome – Bari: 1992) XI.

29 "[R]endere magnifico il palazzo." For this reason, Amico suggests that their doors must be placed in sequence (enfilade). Amico, *L'architetto pratico* 66.

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associates the backrooms with a function more related to what he considers to be women's activities. These activities, together with the reduced size of the backrooms, hint at a more intimate atmosphere. The bedroom and its 'alcova' were deemed, by Amico, as a sort of boundary between these two areas. This could be constituted by a single room, or by two rooms, the 'camera di parata' and the *real* bedroom behind it. One could also add a further passage through the narrow 'gabinetti' flanking the 'alcova', pushing the backrooms back even further. This complexity blurs the boundary between areas. At any rate, this space was never thought to be off-limits, as family members, servants, and the closest friends continually entered it.[30]

The sequence of rooms Amico describes can be compared to that that Patricia Waddy outlines for the apartment in seventeenth-century Rome [Fig. 3.6].[31] Apart from some additional spaces, the suggested proportions, and the different names of the rooms, the two are very similar. Yet the position of the chapel is remarkably different [Fig. 3.7]. Amico places the domestic chapel inside the bedroom area and not outside it, as in the Roman model. This creates a sharp contrast with the greater visibility that the chapel had in the Roman palace, where it opened onto one of the anterooms. This probably results from the fact that what Waddy reports is 'a set of rooms for the use of a single important resident, and the model resident was a cardinal'.[32] Therefore, even if the chapel 'had a window to an inner room of the apartment, from which the cardinal could hear mass privately' daily celebrations must have been occasions for fairly large gatherings in one anteroom.[33] The visibility of the chapel, in this case, could have underlined the fact that the palace's resident was a member of the Church. Contrastingly, Amico suggests a more intimate context for the chapel, which would have been neither physically accessible nor visible to the majority of visitors [Fig. 3.8].

The location of the chapel on the first floor was undoubtedly the most frequent (even if this was not universally the case).[34] Its presence on the same floor as the family activities entailed its inclusion in daily life.[35] It is not un-

30 Amico himself reports the presence of servants who could be asked to sleep in the backrooms, or to cook there. He also mentions the presence of nannies, which implies the presence of children, see Amico, *L'architetto pratico* 67.

31 Waddy P., *Seventeenth-century Roman Palaces: Use and the Art of the Plan* (New York – Cambridge: 1990) 3. The scheme is on page 5.

32 Waddy, *Seventeenth-century Roman Palaces* 3.

33 Ibid., 7.

34 For instance, the palace of the Prince of Valdina used as a chapel a small medieval church that had ended up in the courtyard of his palace; see Mazzè, *I Palazzi regi di Palermo* 98.

35 To understand the importance of being set on the *piano nobile* level, an example is that of the chapel of the Holy Shroud in Turin. This room, even if it was part of the city

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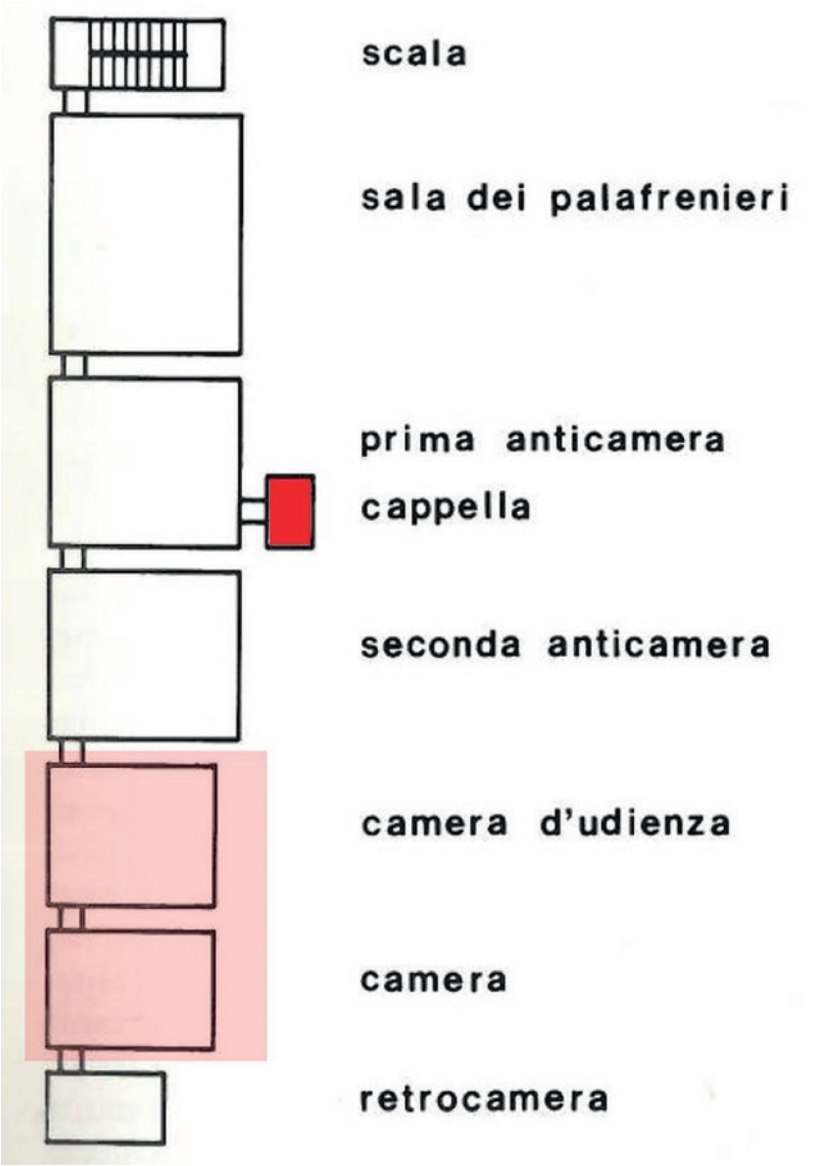


FIGURE 3.6 Patricia Waddy's scheme for the apartment in seventeenth-century Rome. The chapel is highlighted in red by the author, whilst the bedroom area is coloured in light red. Scheme from: Waddy P., *Seventeenth-century Roman Palaces: use and the art of the plan* (New York and Cambridge: 1990), 5.

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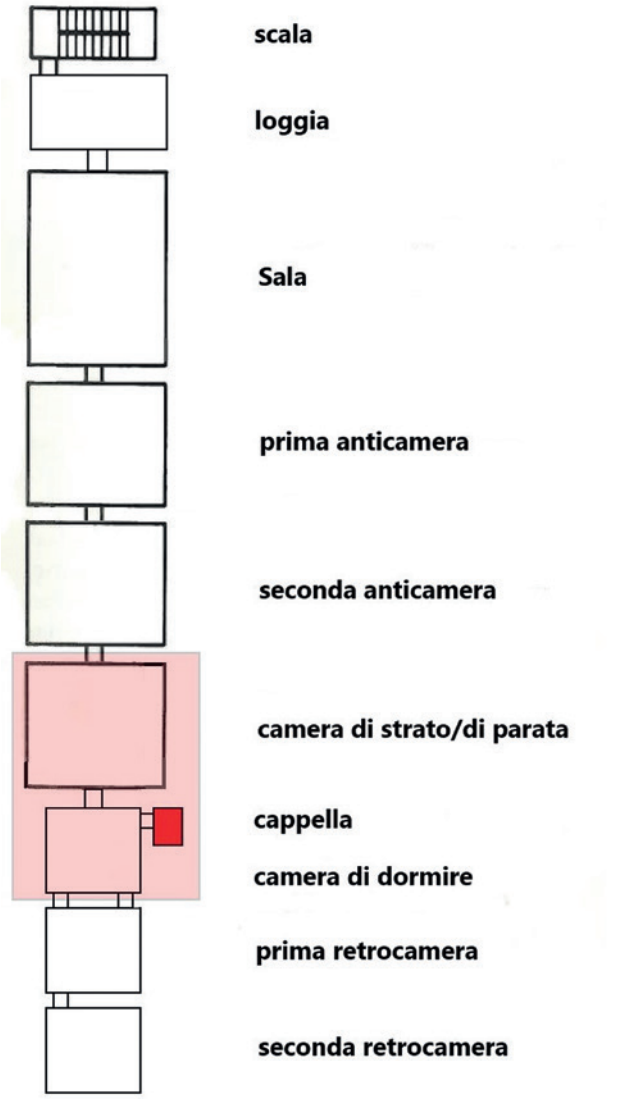


FIGURE 3.7 Scheme of the apartment in late seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century Palermo by the author, based on the description by G.B. Amico. The chapel is highlighted in red, whilst the bedroom area is coloured in light red.

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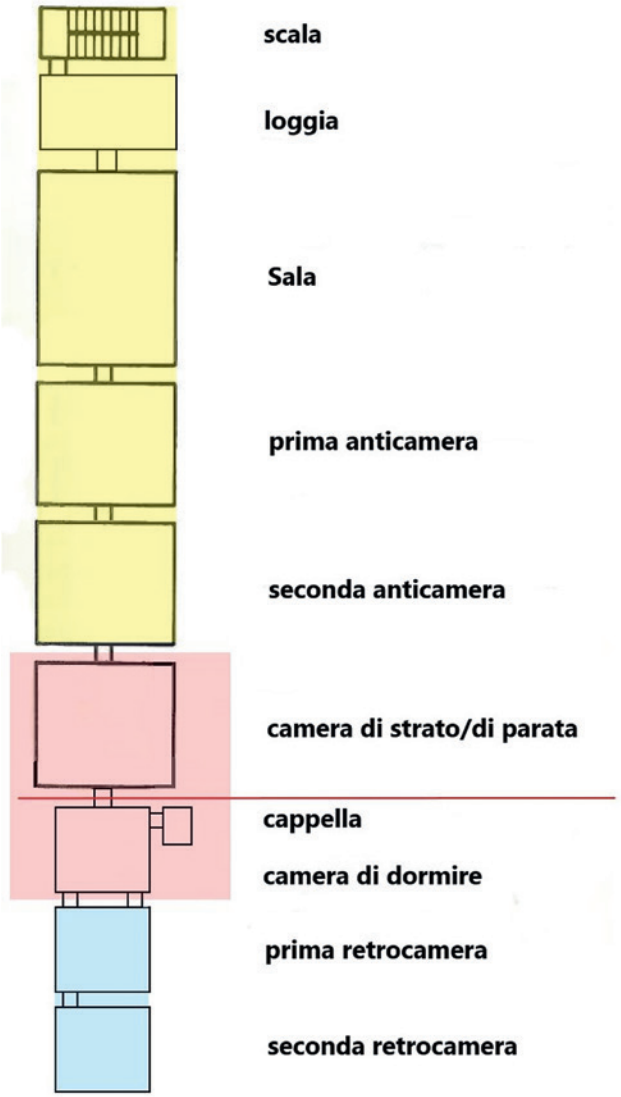


FIGURE 3.8 Scheme based on the description by G.B. Amico. The rooms shaded yellow represent the spaces that were most public, those in blue the most private, and those in red the more liminal. The red line indicates the limit to an outsider's gaze.

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usual to find in contemporary documents more than one chapel listed on the same floor, since the *piano nobile* was often divided into two or three sets of apartments.[36] At the time of his death in 1697, Don Francesco Alliata, prince of Villafranca, had a chapel in his bedroom, on the first floor of his Palazzo in piazza Bologni (most probably only an altar in a niche or a piece of furniture covered by curtains).[37] His widow Margherita, building her own apartment on the same floor in 1698–1700, planned to have two new chapels close to her own bedroom, one large and the other small: 'la cappelluzza'.[38]

The fact that the bedroom was the most usual place for worship is not a surprise.[39] The issue is addressed in a book written by Calisto di Missanello, printed in 1647, which was aimed at members of the numerous and widespread confraternities dedicated to the Madonna of the Rosary.[40] The book's subtitle, '[m]any and diverse ways to meditate and recite the most holy Rosary in *Chori* or individually', reveals that it was intended for common people.[41] The fourth chapter reports that every good Christian must pray and meditate three times a day: early in the morning, soon after lunchtime, and in the evening.[42] Whilst morning prayer can take place in church, the other two are described as domestic activities, one at the table and the other 'with all your family in front of the oratory'.[43] Furthermore, Calisto refers several times to the evening prayer taking place just before going to sleep, thus linking the chapel (or

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Cathedral, became for everybody "the royal chapel" since it was positioned by Guarino Guarini on the first-floor level of the Savoy Palace and connected to its interiors. Scott J.B., "Seeing the Shroud: Guarini's Reliquary Chapel in Turin and the Ostension of a Dynastic Relic", *The Art Bulletin* 77, 4 (1995) 609–637.

36 In 1777, the Palazzo Comitini contained at least two 'camerini priega Dio' (literally, small rooms to pray to God) provided with kneeling stools. Zalapì A., "La lunga genesi di Palazzo Comitini", in Zalapì A. – Rotolo M. (eds.), *Palazzo Comitini* (Palermo: 2011) 267–270.

37 ASP, *Alliata* vol. 2831, fol. 244v.

38 ASP, *Notai defunti*, Not. Gandolfo Cosimo, vols. 4985–4986.

39 Corry – Howard – Laven, *Madonnas & Miracles* 10.

40 Calisto di Missanello, *Regola e Costituzioni, Essercitij Spirituali, e Cerimonie da osservarsi nelle Congregazioni, e nelle Compagnie del Santissimo Rosario* (Napoli, Francesco Savio Stampatore della Corte Arcivescovale: 1647). There is no evidence about the origin of the sample in Palermo, but hand-writing on the first page seems to recite 'Lettoris fr. Antonini Abbati Ordinis Predicatore' as if it was owned by a preacher of Saint Antonio Abate's order.

41 'Molte e diverse maniere di meditare, e recitare il Santissimo Rosario, tanto à Chori, quanto in privato.' The wording *à Chori* refers to the habit of reciting the Rosary, both in church and at home, by alternating between a single voice and a group of voices. On the other hand, *in privato* or *privatamente* refers to the way the confriars pray alone, for example during the daily Spiritual Exercises mentioned further on in the book.

42 di Missanello, *Regola e Costituzioni* 195.

43 '[C]on tutta la tua famiglia avanti l'Oratorio', ibid. 260.

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FIGURE 3.9 Chapel and salon on the first floor of Palazzo Raffadali
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR, BY KIND PERMISSION OF MARIA TERESA PANZERA

the *oratorio*, as he calls it) to the bedroom. The author comments on it being commonplace for people who had gone to sleep in the evening to be found dead the following day.[44] In order to mitigate this risk, Calisto writes of the necessity of reciting monthly in the evening prayers what he calls 'last wishes of the soul' (ultime volontà dell'anima) 'in the form of a testament' (in forma di testamento).[45] Calisto advises the worshiper to carry out an examination of his or her own sins, to search for God's forgiveness, to promise to make amends the day after, and to pray to the Blessed Mary.[46] The fear of death during sleep prompted devotees to search for divine protection to ensure their survival whilst also preparing for the worst. The proximity of the chapel to the bedroom was frequent but not strictly observed. The well-preserved chapel in Palazzo Raffadali (ca. 1650) [Fig. 3.9] and the no-longer extant one in

44 '[P]uò essere, che quella notte sia l'ultima, che vive e molti sono colcati sani e salvi la sera, che poi sono stati ritrovuati morti la mattina' (It may happen that that night is the last that [one] lives, as many went to bed safe and sound in the evening and have been found dead the [next] morning)', ibid. 261.

45 Ibid., 106.

46 Ibid., 260.

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FIGURE 3.10 Altar closet in Palazzo Termine
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR, BY KIND PERMISSION OF SIGNORETTA ALLIATA

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Palazzo Termine (1747) were each separated from the bedroom by a 'camerone' (large hall).[47]

A final point worth mentioning is that if family documents recorded a salary given to a priest who celebrated masses in the house, it could also be that the services were not held in one specific place. It was possible for an altar to have been placed inside a niche of a salon or moved from one room to another like a piece of furniture. There is an example of the former case in the Villa Palagonia where, in addition to the semi-public oratory outside the house, there is a small hall with an altar in a niche which could easily return to use as a public room when the closet shutters were closed. An example of a large altar closet from the eighteenth century can still be found in a salon of the Palazzo Termine [Fig. 3.10], preserved in good condition. Inset into the flat surface of this wooden altar there is a consecrated stone and, at the feet of the closet, a removable platform that makes it possible to conduct the service from a step above the congregation. Cavallo-Evangelisti observed that '[i]gnored for a good part of the day or hidden in a cupboard or behind a curtain, the domestic altars could become the focus of devotion at certain moments, transforming the home into a church with the help of a variety of objects, words and gestures (such as genuflection or the singing of psalms) which were usually associated with consecrated spaces'.[48] This prompts a question about how the chapels were used. Were they just places for family prayers, such as the Rosary suggested by Calisto, or also for celebration of mass in festive days?

4 The Situation after Trent

In general terms, the Catholic Reformation reaffirmed the importance of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and enhanced adoration of the Eucharist outside the mass as well as within it.[49] As far as Trent had allowed the preservation of the Eucharist in the tabernacle, it facilitated various forms

47 Pecoraro Marafon M. – Palazzotto P. – Vesco M., *Palazzo Alliata di Pietratagliata tra tardogotico e neostili. Archivi, cantieri, protagonisti a Palermo* (Palermo: 2013) 52; Cedrini R. – Tortorici Montaperto G., *Repertorio delle dimore nobili e notabili nella Sicilia del XVIII secolo. Intra Moenia.* (Palermo: 2008) 272.

48 Introduction in Cavallo S. – Evangelisti S. (eds.), *Domestic Institutional Interiors in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot and Burlington VT: 2009) 7.

49 *Decretum de ss. Eucharistiae Sacramento. Can. 7*, in Denzinger H. – Hünermann P., *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* (Wirceburgi: 1854) 195.

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of Eucharistic adoration, such as the Forty Hours' devotion.[50] At the same time, however, the Council of Trent tried to prevent unsupervised celebrations of the Eucharist. This included subjecting domestic oratories to a strict procedure for obtaining a licence. Yet my on-going research is shedding light on the high number of domestic chapels in Palermo in the post-Tridentine period, both in villas and in urban palaces. Unfortunately, since large intervals exist in the diocesan archive for the licence release reports, it is not easy to establish how many of these places had a regular licence and could – licitly – be used for the celebration of mass.[51] But it is clear that a gap existed between prescriptions and practices, and that the implementation of the new rules was delayed by opposition to, negotiation with, and circumvention of the imposed control.

In Palermo, interference from Rome was resisted both by the laity and the clergy, who were afraid of losing their privileges. Palermo's post-tridentine synods, held in 1555, 1560, and 1564, were not welcomed at all, as they promoted reforms that gave greater power to parish churches, upsetting the pre-Tridentine balance of familial relationships, social norms and shared cultural values that regulated the complex spiritual panorama of Palermo.[52] Confraternities, congregations, and companies wanted to maintain their influence on daily religious practices, and the Cathedral Chapter preferred to give only part of the city governance to parish churches, in order to preserve its control over the administration of the Sacraments and religious processions.[53] When the 1586 synod, guided by archbishop Cesare Marullo, finally succeeded in executing the reforms of Trent, on 23rd June of the same year several clergymen turned to the Holy Congregation of the Council to protest against Marullo and report that his reforms were 'occasions of infinite infelicity'.[54] This search for autonomy in the management of the sacred primarily involved aristocrats, who dominated the city's main religious institutions and associations.[55]

Given this context, it seems reasonable to assume that the new procedure for authorising the celebration of mass inside domestic chapels must have

50 Scordato C., *Il Settenario sacramentale* (Trapani: 2007) vol. 1, 189–190.

51 Reports from 1663 and 1667 and from 1672 to 1692 are lost.

52 Rurale F., "Stato e chiesa nell'Italia spagnola: un dibattito aperto", *Cheiron* 9 (1992): Signorotto G. (ed.), *L'Italia degli Austrias. Monarchia Cattolica e domini italiani nei secoli XVI e XVII* 357–380; Scalisi L., *Il controllo del sacro. Poteri ed istituzioni concorrenti nella Palermo del Cinque e Seicento* (Roma: 2004) 9.

53 Scalisi, *Il controllo del sacro* 24.

54 Savagnone G., *Concili e sinodi di Sicilia* (Palermo: 1910) 142. Eventually, the reasons for the protest were refused.

55 Königsberger H., *The Government of Sicily Under Philip II of Spain. A Study in the Practice of Empire* (London: 1951) 105–116; Ligresti, "Per un'interpretazione del Seicento siciliano" 86–89.

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been resisted by the ruling class. This can be proved by the fact that not everybody in Palermo hurried to settle the matter, and the application of the whole procedure was remarkably delayed. Pope Paolo V wrote to Palermo's Archbishop Auria in July 1615:

> Most illustrious and reverend lord. The illustrious fathers, interpreters of the Council of Trent, have already invalidated previously obtained licences to celebrate the Eucharist in private oratories, at the hand of local ordinary priests without the Pope's approval; however, so that distinguished people, eminent ministers of public affairs, sick or old aristocrats, and those who are prevented from accessing churches for various reasons may not be deprived of that spiritual consolation, His Holiness, due to the paternal charity with which he embraces everybody, and due to his pastoral concern, especially considering people's needs, grants a two-month extension to the above-mentioned people for the licences obtained before the letter of the Congregation was written on this subject and so that everything written is observed precisely.[56]

The Pope suggested a temporary remedy for 'distinguished people' who still, at the dawn of the seventeenth century, had a licence without papal approval for their private oratory. The deferment may result from a negotiation between clergy and aristocratic families, but it demonstrates, nonetheless, that the devotional practice was not yet completely aligned with the Tridentine prescriptions, since there were domestic chapels in Palermo that lacked proper authorisation but were still in use.

Although the licences issued in the eighteenth century are better documented, at the moment we do not have sufficient evidence to assess with certainty whether compliance with the prescriptions laid down by the Church

56 'Illustrissime ac Reveredissime Domine. Quas licentias in privatiis Oratoriis Sacrum faciendi hactenus ab Ordinariis Locorum quisque affectus est, etsi Sanctissimo Domine Nostro annuente non ita pridem nullas, atque inanes decreverint Illustrissimi Patres Tridentinii Concilii Interpretes; cum tamen Personas Titulo insignes, Rerumque publicarum primarios Ministros, Nobiles itidem cum aegrotant, aut senio confecti sunt, qui ad Ecclesias accedere multifariam praependiuntur, non deceat hac spirituali consolatione destituit, Sanctitas Sua pro paterna, qua omnes amplectitur caritate, ac pastorali sollititudine, quorum maxime congruit pietatem quoque, necessitatemque spectans, Amplitud. V. Illustriss. potestatem facit, duraturam tamen ad duos proximos menses dumtaxat, has licentiasin ista Civitate, et Diocesi suprascriptis Personis concedendi, quae aesdem ab Amplit. V. Illustriss. ante Litteras Congregationis hac de re editas, atque ita ut infrascripta omnia exacte observentur', Gattico Joannes Baptista, *De Oratoriis domesticis et de usu altaris portatilis* (Roma: Typographia Generosi Salomoni, 1746) 141–142.

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was then achieved. The fact that licences were given *ad personam* and could not be transmitted to heirs means that their number in a specific time cannot be used to estimate the number of chapels built in the same time. For instance, in 1724 the Prince of Scordia Ercole Branciforti and Naselli obtained a licence for the domestic chapel already extant in the palace and most probably built by his grandparents at the end of the previous century.[57] In addition, what is emerging is that the presence of an authorised chapel in a building did not preclude the need for others. Ignazio and Giovanna Lanza Duke and Duchess of Camastra had already obtained a licence for their chapel in their Palazzo in Piazza del Cancelliere (now lost), in 1714.[58] Nonetheless, in 1738 the Duchess ordered a second one to be included in the extensive renovation of the palace.[59] The relationship of family members with these devotional spaces should probably be sought not so much in their suitability for celebration of mass, rather in that spiritual support to the person that could be realized with the recitation of the Rosary or even solitary prayers.

The Diocesan archive records that the number of approvals for new private oratories issued by the Church only started slowing down in the 1920s when this practice was strongly discouraged by canon law in favour of religious life better integrated with the surrounding parish community.[60] This was reaffirmed by the Sicilian Bishops' Conference in 1992, and in 1994 by the Archbishop of Palermo personally: he outright prohibited the celebration of weddings 'in private chapels and definitely not inside both private houses and villas, even if they are provided with a chapel'.[61] Of course, the necessity of reiterating the prohibition indicates how frequent religious ceremonies in homes remained and how difficult it has been to eradicate these customs, even at the turn of the twenty-first century.

In conclusion, although research is on-going, through consideration of examples located in Palermo and its closest surroundings this paper has tried to establish some fundamental points. Even if everywhere the categories of private and public, and secular and religious, tended to blur and overlap, it can be asserted that oratories in villas were more open to the neighbourhood

57 ADP, n. 1022 (1714/1724), fols. 133r–134r.

58 Ibid., fols. 131v–132r.

59 ASP, Trabia, Serie A vol. 403, fol. 277v.

60 Since 1917, canon law has stated that 'Actiones liturgicae non sunt actiones privatae, sed celebrationes Ecclesiae ipsius, quae est "unitatis sacramentum"', 'liturgical actions are not private actions but celebrations of the Church itself which is "the sacrament of unity"' (CIC, can. 837 §1).

61 Pappalardo S., "Disposizione in ordine ai matrimoni celebrati in ville o case private", *Rivista della Chiesa Palermitana* 17 (1994) 297.

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and more closely intertwined with the aristocratic role of guiding the spiritual lives of rural people, whereas urban chapels testify to a more intimate concept of domestic devotion that often placed the chapel close to the bedroom. Although at the moment it is not entirely clear to what extent these spaces were in compliance with the post-Tridentine rules about the celebration of mass, it is evident that the regulations did not negatively affect the building of new oratories and chapels, and their inclusion in aristocratic familial dwellings is an exceptionally long-lasting phenomenon. The wide variety of examples points to the need for more detailed case-by-case study. Meanwhile, however, material documentation is vanishing, as many palaces and villas have been gradually abandoned, stripped of furniture, adapted for new functions or divided into flats, and the locations of past sacred spaces are changed and forgotten.

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CHAPTER 4

Music and Domestic Devotion in the Age of Reform

Iain Fenlon

1 Music Making in the Home

In the second book of his *De cardinalatu*, Paolo Cortesi presents the image of the ideal cardinal not only as a powerful papal bureaucrat with influence in the curia, but also as the master of a large household.[1] Designed as a guide to virtuous behaviour, *De cardinalatu* addresses many practical aspects of the cardinal's life, including the construction, decoration, and functional operations of palaces. Heavily indebted to both Vitruvius and Alberti, Cortesi's discussion of palace-building also reflects his knowledge of real Roman examples including the imposing residence of Cardinal Raffaele Riario (now the Palazzo della Cancelleria). Cortesi's ideal palace includes not only a chapel, as might be expected, but also a music room, which should have a round and vaulted ceiling to improve the acoustic, and bronze or earthenware vases sunk into the wall cavities to amplify the sound.[2] These two spaces would have functioned as the principal sites of musical activity within the palace, the former for devotional music sometimes performed in a liturgical context, the latter largely (though not exclusively) for the enjoyment of secular songs and instrumental music. Surviving domestic collections of printed and manuscript music from a number of palaces with private chapels, such as the Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne and the Palazzo Altemps, bring substance to Cortesi's words.[3] In

1 Cortesi P., *De cardinalatu* (Castro Cortesio [i.e. San Geminiano], Nardi: 1510), Lib. II, cap. II; for an English translation with introduction and commentary see: Weill-Garris K. – D'Amico J., "The Renaissance Cardinal's Ideal Palace: A Chapter from Cortesi's 'De Cardinalatu'", *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 35 (1980) 45–123.

2 Pirrotta N., "Musical and Cultural Tendencies in Fifteenth-Century Italy", *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 19 (1966) 127–161, 152–153, reprinted in *Music and Culture in Italy from the Middle Ages to the Baroque* (Cambridge, MA.: 1984) 80–112. For the evolution of the music-room as a type see: Howard D. – Moretti L. (eds.), *The Music Room in Early Modern France and Italy: Sound, Space and Object* (Oxford: 2012).

3 Lippmann F., "Musikhandschriften und-Drucke in der Bibliothek Massimo", *Analecta musicologica* 17 (1976) 254–295; for further discussion of the Massimo partbooks copied ca. 1530 see: Fenlon I. – Haar J., *The Italian Madrigal on the Early Sixteenth Century: Sources and Interpretation* (Cambridge: 1988) 117–118. For the Altemps partbook copied for the family chapel during the period of Duke Giovanni Angelo Altemps see Couchman J.P., "Musica nella

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Rome, with its high density of clerical households at all levels of society, the incorporation into the daily routine of various forms of devotional music was a feature of domestic life.

Venice presents a different impression. While it is musicians (among others) that populate the Arcadian expanses of Veronese's frescoes at the Villa Maser, it seems unlikely that we shall ever know precisely what kind of music graced these interiors, and it is hard to progress beyond generalisation to a more detailed understanding of the place of music in the private lives of the citizens of the Republic.[4] Occasional clues are all the more tantalizing on account of their scarcity. In Giorgio Vasari's account of Jacopo Tintoretto's life, it is remarked that the artist took particular pleasure in playing music on a number of instruments, and even if Tintoretto's paintings contain comparatively few references to music-making, there is no doubt that the family house was one in which music was cultivated.[5] Ridolfi later claimed that as a young man Jacopo played the lute 'et altri bizzari stromenti da lui inventati'.[6] Giulio Zacchino, a minor composer who was employed as organist at San Giorgio Maggiore in the early 1570s, was charged with teaching Jacopo's daughter Marietta how to sing and play the harpsichord; according to Raffaello Borghini's description of her, she could also play the lute.[7] It is suggestive of the importance that music held for her that Marietta's well-known self-portrait shows her standing in front of a harpsichord while holding an open part book [Fig. 4.1]. As is sometimes the case in paintings of this type, the music itself is legible and forms part of our reading of the picture. Here the pages fall open to reveal the upper part, presumably Marietta's own voice type, of Philippe Verdelot's celebrated madrigal 'Madonna per voi ardo', a choice that presumably relates to some important and now lost event in her personal life. Musical inscriptions, including the opening of Andrea Gabrieli's 'Quanto lieta ver noi sorge l'Aurora' evidently copied from printed books also occur in Jacopo's allegorical painting of music,

cappella di Palazzo Altemps a Roma", in Lefevre R. – Morelli A. (eds.), *Lunario romano* 15 (1986): *Musica e musicisti nel Lazio* 167–183.

4 Murano M., "Musica nelle ville venete", in Della Seta F. – Piperno F. (eds.), *In cantu et sermone. For Nino Pirrotta on his 80th Birthday* (Rome: 1989) 175–183.

5 Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de più eccellenti pittori* (Florence, Torrentino: 1568), R. Bettarini – P. Barocchi (eds.), 6 vols. (Turin: 1963–1989) V, 468. For an overview of Tintoretto's use of musical subject-matter see: Weddigen E., "Jacopo Tintoretto und die Musik", *Artibus et historiae* 10 (1984) 67–119.

6 'And other bizarre instruments he invented', Carlo Ridolfi, *Vita di Giacopo Robusti detto il Tintoretto* (Venice, Guglielmo Oddoni: 1642) 88.

7 Raffaello Borghini, *Il riposo* (Florence, Giorgio Marescotti: 1584) 558.

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FIGURE 4.1 Marietta Robusti, "Self Portrait", ca. 1580. Oil on canvas, 93.5 × 91.5 cm. Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi
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one of a number that he painted, now in Dresden, confirming perhaps his musical literacy and knowledge of the madrigal repertory [Fig. 4.2].[8]

8 Slim H.C., "A Painting about Music at Dresden by Jacopo Tintoretto", *Exploration in Renaissance Culture* 13 (1987) 1–18; id., "Tintoretto's Music-Making Women at Dresden", *Imago musicae* 4 (1987) 45–76; Rosand D., *Painting in Cinquecento Venice* (New Haven and London: 1986) 159–164; De Girlami Cheney L., "Jacopo Tintoretto's *Female Concert*: The Realm of Venus", *Journal of Literature and Art Studies* 6 (2016) 478–499.

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FIGURE 4.2 Jacopo Tintoretto, "Women making music", after 1566. Oil on canvas, 142 × 214 cm. Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen.
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Such rare insights into the musical life of an admittedly rather untypical household are all the more precious because of the general lack of information about the place of music in the domestic world of sixteenth-century Venetians. The richly-textured image of Venetian musical activity in the period is largely based on what is known about music in public contexts; by contrast, our knowledge of musical activities *a casa*, even in the palaces that line the Grand Canal let alone in the houses of the affluent merchant class, is scant, occasional, and random. Venetians (unlike Florentines) did not routinely write *ricordanze* or family memoirs that might help.[9] In order to penetrate the walls of the Venetian house and hear its domestic sounds requires attention to other kinds of information.[10]

Among these is the *post-mortem* inventory, a group of almost eight hundred of which, deposited in the *Cancelleria inferiore* in the Archivio

9 Grubb J., "Memory and Identity: Why Venetians didn't keep *ricordanze*", *Renaissance Studies* 8 (1994) 375–387.

10 For some of the difficulties see Dennis F., "Sound and Domestic Space on Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Italy", *Studies in the Domestic Arts* 16 (2008–9) 7–19.

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di Stato, have been used extensively by historians of material culture.[11] Chronologically they stretch from 1497 to 1630, and are somewhat unevenly distributed over the decades; the traditional three estates of Venetian society are represented, though not equally.[12] One collection of books to emerge from these inventories belonged to Girolamo Ferro, a patrician whose library of almost 300 volumes included classics, law, history, and 'libri otto de musica, coperti de cuoio', probably a reference to two sets of partbooks containing vocal music for four voices.[13] The presence of music serves as a useful reminder that at the higher end of the social scale, music in the Italian home was sung from notation by the musically literate. Girolamo da Modena Solimatis, a wealthy dealer in spices, owned a shop at San Bartolomeo, a villa near Padua, and a main residence in Venice. There the *salone* contained an organ in a gilded case, a *clavicembalo* in an ebony one, five lutes, and a collection of flutes. Forty-three 'libri a stampa di diverse sorte' were kept in a trunk, and fifty 'libri da canto' in another.[14] Somewhat similar in character are a number of inventories of the possessions of members of the Flemish merchant community.[15]

For the wealthier members of society, musical skills were acquired by private tuition at the hands of music masters. A glimpse into this world is provided by the records of the Inquisition, whose investigations had led them to enquire into the activities of a schoolmaster from Cremona, Francesco Scudieri, described as a 'man of letters who teaches music and the Italian language to Germans and other northerners' in Venice.[16] It was these social contacts that had aroused suspicion, and as part of its inquiries the Holy Office made a list

11 ASVe, *Cancelleria inferiore* (from hence forward *CI*), Miscellanea bb. 34–45. See, *inter alia*: Fortini Brown P., "Behind the Walls: The Material Culture of Venetian Elites", in Martin J. – Romano D. (eds.), *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297–1797* (Baltimore: 2000) 295–338; id., *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice: Art, Architecture and the Family* (New Haven and London: 2004); Morse M.A., "Creating Sacred Space: The Religious Visual Culture of the Renaissance Venetian *casa*", *Renaissance Studies* 21 (2007) 151–184; Palumbo Fossati I., *Dentro le case. Abitare a Venezia nel Cinquecento* (Venice: 2013).

12 On the limitations of inventories as historical evidence see Thornton D., *The Scholar in his Study: Ownership and Experience in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven and London: 1997) 15–20.

13 ASVe, *CI* b. 40/43 (29 December, 1562).

14 'Printed books of different topics', and 'singing books', Ibid. ASVe, *CI* b. 40/73 (14 April–17 May, 1560); separate inventory for the contents of his shop in b. 40/44 (12–25 August, 1560).

15 Brulez W., *Marchands flamands à Venise, I: 1568–1605* (Brussels-Rome: 1965) 630–643. (Francesco Vrins); Devos G. – Brulez W., *Marchands flamands a Venise II: 1606–1621* (Brussels – Rome: 1986) 799–811 (Carlo Helman).

16 ASVe, *Sant'Uffizio* (from hence forward *SU*) b. 15, processo 15: 'Io facio profession de Lettere et insegnar musica et lengua taliana a todeschi et altri oltramontani'.

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of Scudieri's library. Apart from a good deal of music as might be expected, much of it rather old-fashioned, it also included medical treatises, Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua*, a number of works by Erasmus, Demosthenes in Greek, and Cicero, Hesiod, Homer, Quintilian, Terence, and Virgil in Latin.[17] Another professional musician, Pietro Palombino, a singing-man at St. Mark's Basilica in Venice, owned two breviaries, two manuscripts containing music, and a couple of major works of fifteenth-century music theory: a manuscript of the *De musica* by Johannes Tinctoris, and one of Franchino Gaffurius's published theoretical treatises.[18] One of the most impressive collections of music books and books about music in the city was that of the composer and theorist Gioseffo Zarlino, but sadly the notary who made the *post-mortem* inventory only counted his books according to format rather than listing titles; except for the Inquisitors, who had different objectives, this was the most efficient way of working.[19]

As well as being at the heart of the music printing and publishing trade, Venice was also one of the most important Italian centres for the manufacture of musical instruments. Two separate inventories of the goods of the lutemaker Moisé Tieffenbrucker list hundreds of finished and unfinished pieces kept on his premises; he was a distinguished maker, and a number of his instruments have survived [Fig. 4.3].[20] Another craftsman, Andrea Bassi, was storing more than two hundred lutes, more than half of which were unfinished, when the contents of his house and workshop were listed on his death; he also repaired instruments and dealt in second-hand ones.[21] Although musical instruments, and above all lutes, occur in some quantity in these lists, the operations of Bassi and the Tieffenbruckers were aimed not only at a local clientele, but also at wealthy visitors such as Raimund Fugger; an inventory of his instrument collection, made in 1566, shows that he bought lutes made from exotic materials such as ivory and sandalwood rather than the more common

17 ASVe, *SU*, b. 15, Scudieri. See: Mackenney R., *Tradesmen and Traders: The World of the Guilds in Venice and Europe, c.1250-c.1650* (London and Sydney: 1987) 183; Ongaro G.M., "The Library of a Sixteenth-Century Music Teacher", *The Journal of Musicology* 12 (1994) 357–375.

18 ASVe, *CI*, b. 36/16 (Palombino, 1 May 1535).

19 Palumbo Fossati I., "La casa veneziana di Gioseffo Zarlino nel testamento e nell'inventario dei beni del grande teorico musicale", *Nuova rivista musicale italiana* (1986) 633–649; and Palumbo Fossati, *Dentro le case* 274–277.

20 Ongaro G., "The Tieffenbruckers and the Business of Lute-Making in Sixteenth-Century Venice", *The Galpin Society Journal* 4 (1991) 46–54.

21 ASVe, *CI* b. 36/35 (Bassi, 27 January 1536). See: Toffolo S., *Antichi strumenti veneziani, 1500–1800* (Venice: 1987) 195–196.

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FIGURE 4.3 Wendelin Tieffenbrucker, *Chitarrone* (probably originally a lute but later converted), made in Padua, 1592. Pinewood with ebony and ivory, 170 × 34 cm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum
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European hardwoods.[22] At the higher end of manufacture, instruments were often prized for their decorative qualities. Vincenzo Pasqualigo, a man of considerable means, owned lutes, a violin, a couple of monochords, and a *dulcimello*, the later described as 'intagliado' and 'soazado' (carved).[23] Possession of such objects, perhaps acquired for the beauty of their craftsmanship, does not imply that they were used.[24]

That some well-to-do members of the merchant class should have musical interests, and that they acquired printed music and instruments, is to be expected. More surprising perhaps is that the ownership of musical instruments was so widespread throughout Venetian society. Notaries record them frequently in modest houses, and most patrician and merchant households owned at least one instrument and often more. Marco di Giacomo was a cloth dyer, and Giacomo Manolesso a member of the minor nobility. One thing that these two men from different social classes shared was that they owned no books of any kind but did have musical instruments: Manolesso two harpsichords, 'one large the other small', Marco di Giacomo a single 'arpicordo'.[25] The frequency with which lutes are recorded in inventories is a reminder that not all sixteenth-century luteplayers needed printed tablatures in order to make music, any more than do twenty-first century guitar players. In an age when the art of memory was developed to an extent that we can only dimly imagine, much was hummed and strummed, improvised, and memorised. It is in thinking about these musical practices, rather than merchant class performances from printed books and manuscripts, that some sort of notion of more typical experiences of devotional music emerges.

2 Domestic Devotions and Music

The increasing availability of music of all kinds in the course of the century encouraged forms of domestic music making in which distinctions between sacred and secular genres became blurred.[26] Pieces which began life as madrigals were often published as *contrafacta* with sacred texts, and instrumental duos

22 Alton Smith D., "The Musical Instrument Inventory of Raymund Fugger", *Galpin Society Journal* 33 (1980) 36–44.

23 ASVe, *CI* b. 38/74 (Pasqualigo, 7 June 1553).

24 Thornton P., *The Italian Renaissance Interior, 1400–1600* (London: 1991) 272.

25 ASVe, *CI* b. 37/6 (Manolesso, 29 June, 1543).

26 For the impact of print see: Fenlon I., *Music, Print and Culture in Early Sixteenth-Century Italy* (London: 1995); Bernstein J.A., *Print Culture and Music in Sixteenth-Century Venice* (Oxford: 2001).

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could be easily fitted out with words. Partbooks devoted to music for a single voice-type were often bound together so as to make larger anthologies containing madrigals, motets, and instrumental music sewn into one set of covers; the result was a personal collection of pieces suitable for a variety of functions within the home. One characteristic example among many includes not only books of motets by Willaert, Gombert, and Jacquet of Mantua, but also three early editions of Jan Gero's *Il primo libro de madrigali italiani et canzoni francesi a due voci*, one of the most frequently reprinted editions (more than twenty are known) of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[27] Similarly, the small collection of music assembled around the middle of the sixteenth century by Count Giovanni Severini, a member of the Accademia Filarmonica of Verona, contains editions of both secular and sacred music.[28]

The market for sacred music for performance in the home was also partly satisfied by *madrigali spirituali*, settings of devotional texts in the vernacular. Together with their near-relative the *lauda spirituale*, which was often different only to the extent of being a setting of a strophic text, these were the main components of the repertory of printed polyphonic settings of Italian devotional verse. To these should be added *falsobordoni*, pieces cast in a more 'popular' manner than the more socially restricted 'high art' of the spiritual madrigal. Since their stylistic simplicity, transparent textures, and syllabic declamation made *falsobordoni* (a type of chordal recitation based on the melody of a Gregorian psalm tone) both easier to sing and to listen to, they came closer than any other form of composed polyphony to the ideals of the reformers, for whom accessibility was the key concept. From here it is but a short step to the practice of improvised polyphony, which were related to oral traditions of improvised singing rather than written composition. These different genres span a wide range of devotional music that was available throughout the peninsula for use not only in confraternities and churches, but also in the home.

A good place to start is with the domestic shrine. Images of the Virgin, and small Byzantine icons played a distinctive role in the devotional life of early modern Venice. They were to be found everywhere, from the precious icon of the Madonna Nicopeia kept in St. Mark's Basilica, to the small *madonniere* often worshipped in Venetian houses. Their presence, often in a number of rooms in the house, remind us that the musical life of the Renaissance home

27 Palermo, Biblioteca Nazionale, *Rari* 1.a.29.32; see Lewis M.S., *Antonio Gardano, Venetian Music Printer 1538–1569: A Descriptive Bibliography and Historical Study, I* (New York and London: 1988) 146–147.

28 Bernstein J.A., *Music Printing in Renaissance Venice: The Scotto Press (1539–1572)* (New York and Oxford: 1998) 948.

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was not merely secular, but was thoroughly permeated by devotional activity.[29] In front of these shrines prayers were said and devotional songs sung.[30]

Through her long-standing association with the foundation of the city itself, which according to legend had been founded on the Feast of the Annunciation, the Virgin had always played a significant role in the Venetian consciousness. Throughout Italy, but particularly in Venice, her image was to be found everywhere, from the home to the street and the church.[31] Combined with the historical reality that, unlike most other Italian states, Venice had never been invaded, the association of the Virgin with the foundation myth of the city produced a visualisation of the *Pax Venetiana* that crucially relied upon the resonances of Marian iconography.[32] Both the Annunciation and the Assumption were marked as great civic celebrations, and by the end of the sixteenth century about one third of the major Marian feasts in the Venetian calendar had acquired state connotations, usually through association with important military or naval victories. These developments served to intensify the role of the Virgin in the inextricably linked rituals of civic and devotional practice both in public and in private. So too did the annual blessing of the Adriatic on the feast of the Ascension, which had grown into a complex ceremony in which Venice was symbolically re-married to the sea.[33]

In the private sphere, songs and prayers addressed to the Virgin – litanies, laude, and hymns such as the 'Salve Regina', were commonly to be heard, in part due to the association of the Virgin with the victory of the Holy League at Lepanto on 7 October 1571. This also marked an increase in the popularity of the cult of the rosary throughout Italy, promoted by Pius V who established the

29 Morse, "Creating Sacred Space"; Cooper D., "Devotion", in Ajmar-Wollheim M. – Dennis F. (eds.), *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, exh. cat., Victoria & Albert Museum (London: 2006) 190–203.

30 Often flanked by candlesticks, these icons, together with painted images in the Western tradition, constituted the focal point for devotion in the home. Lower down the social scale cheap woodcuts of the Virgin and Child, nailed to the wall or glued to doors served a similar purpose. See Kasl R., "Holy Households: Art and Devotion in Renaissance Venice", in Karl R. – Christiansen K. (eds.), *Giovanni Bellini and the Art of Devotion* (Indianapolis: 2004) 59–89; Morse, "Creating Sacred Space" 159–63, 165–70; Pon L., *A Painted Icon in Early Modern Italy: Forlì's Madonna of the Fire* (Cambridge: 2015) 46–50.

31 Muir E., "The Virgin on the Street Corner: The Place of the Sacred in Italian Cities", in Ozment S. (ed.), *Religion and Culture in the Renaissance and Reformation* (Kirksville, MO: 1989) 7–41.

32 Rosand M., *Myths of Venice: The Figuration of a State* (Chapel Hill: 2005) 44–46; Fenlon I., *The Ceremonial City: History, Memory and Myth in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven and London: 2007) 38–45.

33 Muir E., *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: 1981) 119–134; Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City* 43–44.

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first Sunday of the month as the feast of Our Lady of Victory.[34] Although recitation of the fifteen decades and meditation upon its mysteries once a week was the only firm obligation, public devotion played an important role; attendance at mass on the major Marian feasts of the year and to commemorate the departed was encouraged, as was participation in processions. On the first Sunday of the month, the bell of the parish church to which the confraternity was attached would be rung, and the members would process while litanies, laude, and hymns were sung. Participation in processional life was just one way in which simple devotional music could be learnt and sung; here, too, continuity of practice joined the music of the street to the domestic sphere.

In the more private space of the home, the essential features of the cult were supported by devotional objects and books such as Benedetto Zoioso's *Rosario*, commissioned by the confraternity attached to the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo in Venice, or the most frequently reprinted of such titles, Luis de Granada's *Rosario*.[35] Rosary confraternities as well as individual buyers also formed part of the market for the small bronze plaquettes showing an image of the Madonna of the Rosary which were manufactured in quantity during the last quarter of the sixteenth century; surviving perforated examples suggest that they, like medals, could be hung on the wall as objects of devotion, as well as being worn round the neck.[36] Although the fifteen decades could be recited publicly and communally in church, they could also be said domestically either silently or in groups. Books of meditations upon the mysteries, intended for private devotion and often illustrated, were produced in considerable quantities, and printed versions in *ottava rima* could be sung to simple melodic formulas.[37] Through such elaborations the Rosary became part of an integrated cult, practiced in both parish and domestic contexts, which gained additional significance in the post-Lepanto world. Spoken and sung, on both the streets and in private spaces, devotion to the Rosary was perhaps the most prominent form of Marian worship in the years after the Council of Trent.

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34 Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City* 282–284; Winston-Allen A., *Stories of the Rose: The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages* (University Park, PA.: 1997). See also Erminia Ardissino's essay in this volume, 342–371.

35 Benedetto Zoioso, *Rosario* [...] *in tre parti distinto* (Venice, ad instantia della veneranda Confraternità del Santissimo Rosario: 1581); Luis de Granada, *Rosario della sacratissima vergine* (Venice, Valvassori: 1574).

36 Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City* 284–285.

37 As with the compilation by the Jesuit Luca Pinelli, *Libretto d'imagini, e di brevi meditationi sopra i quindici misterii della sacratissima Vergine Maria* (Naples, Carlino and Pace, ex officina Horatoj Salviani: 1594). For the practice of singing verses of all kinds in *ottava rima* see below.

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Another common devotion practiced both inside and outside the home was the chanted litany, in particular the Litany of Loreto whose recitation, encouraged by indulgences, was often coupled to the Rosary; by the second half of the century it had become the most dominant of the various versions then in circulation. Its text focused on the legend of the holy house, in which the Virgin had allegedly been born in Nazareth, miraculously transported to its present location in the Marche. The story transformed Loreto into an important pilgrimage site, and from the middle of the sixteenth century, when the Jesuits were placed in charge of it, the popularity of the Litany spread both North and South of the Alps.[38]

In the home, as in the parish church or in the street during processions, the most common method of singing the litany would have been antiphonal, with each invocation being intoned by the leader of the group gathered around the family image of the Virgin, while the response 'ora pro nobis' was then sung by the rest of those present according to an extremely short simple melodic formula. In practice, the singing of a number of textually distinct litanies would have been familiar from a number of different contexts, both domestic and public. During the plague of 1575–76, the Patriarch of Venice strongly advocated that processions be held throughout the city, these to be accompanied by prayers and sung litanies 'per impetrar più facilmente la misericordia divina'.[39] The texts to be used, printed in one of the most popular of contemporary manuals, Alberto da Castello's *Liber sacerdotalis*, include the Litany of the Saints; in order to encourage the participation of those lining the route, this would have been chanted to the same simple melodic formulas used for the Litany of Loreto.[40] Alberto, who for much of his adult life lived and worked at SS. Giovanni e Paolo, was a prominent author of devotional manuals; his *Rosario*, another widely distributed Rosary text, went through at least thirty-four editions.[41] On other occasions, including 'in tempore pestis', the Madonna Nicopeia was carried in procession to the sound of the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary; the strength of the association is made explicit through the presence of the image of the Nicopeia on the title-pages of the many seventeenth-century Venetian reprints of the text [Fig. 4.4].[42]

38 Fisher A.J., "*Thesaurus litaniarum*: The Symbolism and Practice of musical litanies in Counter-Reformation Germany", *Early Music History*, 34 (2015) 45–95.

39 'To more easily obtain divine mercy', see Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City* 226.

40 Alberto da Castello, *Liber sacerdotalis* (Venice, Sessa and de Ravanis: 1523).

41 Alberto da Castello, *Rosario della Gloriosa Vergine Maria* (Venice, Sessa and de Ravanis: 1522).

42 Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City* 226–227, 322–323.

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FIGURE 4.4 Madonna Nicopeia, 12th century, Byzantine. Tempera on wood, 58 × 55 cm. Venice, Basilica di San Marco.
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While litanies were sung everywhere in Italy according to one of the standardized formulas, another popular form of devotional music, the *lauda*, took on different emphases according to geography. This was partly a matter of language; whereas litanies were always sung in Latin the *lauda*, the principal genre of non-liturgical religious song in Italy during the period, was cast in the vernacular, often using dialect forms. No particular style predominates, and polyphonic settings are found alongside simple monophony.[43] As to social function, *laude* were sung in front of street shrines, in processions, in the home, and by confraternities. When Petrucci issued the first printed collection of *laude* in 1506, he devoted it entirely to works by a Venetian priest Innocentius Dammonis.[44] It seems likely that this (and Petrucci's *Libro secondo* which soon followed), contains repertory performed by lay and clerical singers in the service of Venetian confraternities.[45] Together with technically more approachable motets, simple polyphonic *laude* could also be sung at home by the musically more accomplished.

3 Savonarolan Florence

Even more widely diffused as a domestic practice was the singing of monophonic versions, which were both printed and transmitted orally. Here Florence is something of a special case. There, as elsewhere, the *lauda* was typically a simple setting of devotional poetry addressed to either Christ or the Virgin, but to a greater extent than any other kind of music that has come down to us, it was tightly woven into the fabric of Florentine social, religious, and civic experience. Sung in churches, monasteries, and convents as well as in the home, Florentine *laude* provide a detailed picture of the rich variety of interlocking musical practices, both public and private, that were heard in a quite specific urban context. At the same time, their texts illuminate some of the dominant themes of domestic devotion. In view of its long historical roots going back to the *laudesi* companies of the early middle ages, together with its embodiment of both lay spirituality and civic values, it is hardly surprising that the *lauda* was taken up so enthusiastically by the firebrand Dominican monk

43 For a comprehensive review see: Wilson B., *Music and Merchants: The* Laudesi *Companies of Republican Florence* (Oxford: 1992) 164–182.

44 Boorman S., *Ottaviano Petrucci: A Catalogue Raisonée* (New York: 2006), nos. 29 and 45.

45 Glixon J., "The Polyphonic Laude of Innocentius Dammonis", *Journal of Musicology* 8 (1990) 19–53.

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Girolamo Savonarola and his followers at the end of the fifteenth century.[46] By then it had become so embedded in Florentine life that it was the obvious substitute, together with the more familiar chanted hymns of the church, for the intricate polyphony of contemporary mass and motet settings. Both possessed the virtues of broad social currency, the authority of tradition and, above all, a simplicity that made widespread participation possible. This clearly suited Savonarola's purposes as an alternative to the ornate polyphony which he took to be characteristic of the empty and cold rituals performed by a corrupt priesthood badly in need of reform. On one occasion, referring unmistakably to Medici patronage of the musical chapels at the Cathedral and Baptistery in Florence, he argued that:

> God says: Take away all your beautiful polyphony. These lords have chapels of singers which seem like a rabble […], because there stands a singer with a large voice like a calf's, and the others howl around him like dogs, and no-one understands what they are saying. Let polyphony go, and sing the plainchant ordered by the church.[47]

In this way, elaborate musical language was identified not only with a corrupt Church, but also with the luxurious lifestyles of princes. The fact that in its place Savonarola advocated the simplest type of *lauda* and chant indicates that this music was widely known. On another occasion he was even more precise in his enthusiasm for chant, saying to his congregation: 'You sing *laude* here every morning and that is good; but occasionally I would like to hear you sing the songs of the Church such as the 'Ave maris stella' or 'Veni creator spiritus".[48] Implicit in Savonarola's remarks is that such melodies were familiar.

Perhaps rather surprisingly in the light of Savonarola's views about the destruction of genuine piety by the intrusion of secular and corrupt elements, the Florentine monophonic *lauda* also appropriated well-known secular melodies. Particularly close are the connections between the *lauda* and the specifically

46 Macey P., "The Lauda and the Cult of Savonarola", *Renaissance Quarterly* 45 (1992) 439–483.

47 '[…] dice Dio: lieva via quelli tuoi belli canti figurati. Egli hanno questi signori le cappelle de' cantori che bene pare proprio uno tumulto […], perché vi sta là un cantore con una voce grossa che pare un vitello e li altri gli cridono atorno come cani e non s'intende cosa che dichino. Lasciate andare e' canti figurati, e cantate e' canti fermi ordinati dalla Chiesa […]', Savonarola G., *Prediche sopra Amos e Zaccaria*, ed. P. Ghiglieri, 3 vols. (Rome: 1971–2) II 23.

48 Savonarola, *Prediche sopra Amos e Zaccaria* II 80. For Medici involvement see: D'Accone F., "The Musical Chapels at the Cathedral and Baptistery during the First Half of the 16th Century", *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 24 (1971) 1–50.

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Florentine repertory of the *canti carnascialeschi*, simple songs sung during the celebration of carnival in the late fifteenth century.[49] It was then that the Medicean carnival, which had been so substantially fashioned by Lorenzo de' Medici, was replaced by a Savonarolan one whose music included not only the *lauda* of tradition and the chants of the Church, but also sacred *contrafacta* of carnival songs. The explanation of this apparent paradox lies partly in musical expediency, and partly in Savonarola's general policy of adapting rather than replacing existing cultural traditions with wide appeal.[50]

During the sixteenth century, the entrenched practice of singing *laude* with Savonarolan associations, both in Tuscany in general and Florence in particular, served to commemorate the friar's life and work and acknowledge the continued vitality of his prophecies. Throughout the rest of the century, Florentine visions of religious renewal were inextricably fused with dreams of civic liberty; both were fundamental elements of the Myth of Florence – the notion of a free republic which could liberate, enrich, and ultimately redeem its citizens.[51] The potency of this ideal is evident from the ferocity with which the Medici sought to suppress the remaining traces of Savonarolanism. In the face of such opposition the cult was certainly driven underground, but it was not extinguished, in part because of its preservation in a handful of Tuscan convents and monasteries.[52] Prominent among them was the Dominican house of San Vincenzo in Prato, where Caterina de' Ricci, a devoted disciple, kept Savonarola's memory and ideals alive by encouraging the singing of *laude* with which he was particularly associated.[53] Her importance for this practice is explicitly mentioned in the dedicatory letter addressed to her by the Venetian printer of Serafino Razzi's collection of *laudi spirituali*.[54] Razzi, another Dominican, was her first biographer, and his *Libro primo*, clearly designed in the spirit of Savonarolan hagiography, was conceived as a monument to the Florentine

49 For a selection of the musical repertory see: Gallucci J.J. (ed.), *Florentine Festival Music 1480–1520* (Madison, WI: 1981).

50 Trexler R., *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (New York: 1980) 462–490.

51 For this idea, and its use by and absorption by Savonarola, see Weinstein D., "The Myth of Florence", in Rubenstein N. (ed.), *Florentine Studies: Politics and Society in Renaissance Florence* (London: 1968) 15–44, and the first chapter of the same author's: *Savonarola and Florence: Prophecy and Patriotism in the Renaissance* (Princeton: 1970).

52 Polizzotto L., *The Elect Nation: The Savonarolan Movement in Florence 1494–1545* (Oxford: 1994) 442–443. See also Stefano Dall'Aglio's essay in this volume, 375–388.

53 Macey P., "*Infiamma il mio cor*. Savonarolan *Laude* by and for Dominican Nuns in Tuscany", in Monson C.A. (ed.), *The Crannied Wall. Women, Religion and the Arts in Early Modern Europe* (Ann Arbor, MI: 1992) 161–189.

54 Serafino Razzi, *Libro primo delle laudi spirituali da diversi eccell. e divoti autori* (Venice, ad instantia de' Giunti di Firenze: 1563).

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tradition. As such it contains a mixture of pieces for one, two, three, and four voices, some of which clearly evoke the Savonarolan past, and many of which incorporate melodies which derive from secular songs including madrigals and carnival songs.[55] Others, particularly 'Ecce quam bonum' which had been sung by Savonarola and his followers in the monastery of San Marco in Florence, were sung in *Piagnoni* communities devoted to keeping his spirit and devotional practices alive, a tendency that was given further emphasis by the tradition of composing polyphonic pieces based on the 'Ecce quam bonum' melody and other texts associated with Savonarola.[56] Dangerous though it might have been, the singing of Savonarolan *laude*, with their Republican overtones, was heard in Florentine homes.

4 Beyond Florence: Rome and Milan

In addition to its retrospective and nostalgic character, Razzi's *Libro primo* was also a major influence on the Roman *lauda* as it emerged at about the same time. Here the major figures were Filippo Neri, and the composer Giovanni Animuccia, both fellow Florentines who revered Savonarola's memory. Under their influence the final creative phase of the *lauda* took place with the composition, publication and performance of new *laudi* for Filippo Neri's *Congregazione dell'Oratorio*. As with Savonarolan Florence, this took place in a clerical environment of religious reform, both at the Oratory itself, and at the Dominican church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, where Savonarola's devotional practices were kept alive in a way that was not possible in Medicean Florence.[57] This included the singing of Marian litanies in front of an altar dedicated to the rosary; the words were published, and could be recited or sung at home.[58] Similarly, a number of composers connected with the Oratory published *laudi* to be sung not only during the *esercizi spirituali* which Neri believed to be a revival of ancient Christian practice, but also in the houses of devotees. Beginning with Animuccia's first book of *laude*, which includes

55 Macey P., "Some New Contrafacta for Canti Carnascialeschi and Laude in Late Quattrocento Florence", in Gargiulo P. (ed.), *La musica a Firenze al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico* (Florence: 1992) 143–166.

56 Macey P., *Bonfire Songs: Savonarola's Musical Legacy* (Oxford: 1998).

57 Fenlon I., "Music and Reform: The Savonarolan Legacy", in Fenlon I., *Music and Culture in Late Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: 2002) 44–66.

58 *Litanie della gloriosa vergine Maria di Dio. Lequali si cantano dalle novizi della Minerva ogni sabbato sera & nelle feste della Madonna avanti l'altare della capella nuova del Santo Rosario* (Rome, heirs of A. Blado: 1580).

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simple and essentially homophonic pieces for three and four voices 'for the consolation and needs of many spiritual and devout persons, religious and secular alike', a long series of *lauda* volumes appeared in Rome.[59] Although some of this repertory was intended for performance by professional singers, other parts if it were aimed at those of modest abilities. In addition to being sung in church and home, the Roman *lauda* was an essential feature of the *oratorio vespertino*, a walk to the Janiculum (a hill in western Rome) organized by the Oratorians. Punctuated with sermons, this took place after vespers on selected feast days and Sundays, and was similar in character to the pilgrimage to the seven principal churches of Rome which Neri had instituted earlier.[60] Such rituals connected the singing of simpler types of music to both the private and public spheres: the church, the home and the streets of the city.

Savonarola's aim of constructing a civic identity in which the devotional practices of a reformed Church touched the lives of all its citizens was most thoroughly realised neither in Rome, nor in Florence, but in Milan. There the incorporation of music into everyday routine was promoted by the Schools of Christian Doctrine. Initially a specifically Milanese phenomenon, they were well integrated into the fabric of urban life long before their appropriation as an instrument of church and civic reform by Carlo Borromeo following his appointment as Archbishop of Milan in 1565. Staffed by lay confraternities, the Schools aimed to provide children from poor families with religious knowledge, the fundamentals of an elementary education, and basic social and moral values.[61] With the advent of Borromeo they were brought under ecclesiastical supervision and placed under the control of the parish clergy, in line with the Tridentine decrees. There was now a steep increase in the total number of Schools in the diocese, from just 33 in 1563, to more than 100 by 1578, and some 740, almost one for each parish, three years later, when some 40,000 children were being taught by 3,000 confraternity members.[62] As with so many aspects of Borromeo's project, the spectacular growth of the Schools, and the intensification of their sense of purpose, was characteristic of his conception

59 Giovanni Animuccia, *Il primo libro delle laudi* [...] (Rome, V. Dorico: 1563).

60 Fenlon, "Music and Reform" 56–57.

61 For the general phenomenon see: Tamborini A., *La compagnia e le scuole della dottrina cristiana* (Milan: 1939); Grendler P.F., "The Schools of Christian Doctrine in Sixteenth-Century Italy", *Church History* 53 (1984) 319–331; id., *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300–1600* (Baltimore and London: 1989) 333–362.

62 Details from Grendler P.F., "Borromeo and the Schools of Christian Doctrine", in Headley J.M. – Tomaro J.B. (eds.), *San Carlo Borromeo: Catholic Reform and Ecclesiastical Politics in the Second Half of the Sixteenth Century* (Washington, DC, London and Toronto: 1988) 163–165.

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that the primary mission of the Church was the salvation of souls through an all-embracing programme of reform designed to penetrate all aspects of personal and public life. In this scheme of things, the education of children was an important element, and music an essential tool.

The Schools met at least once a week for about two hours. Children, some as young as five, were taught the rudiments of reading and writing through the study of simple devotional manuals, above all the catechism, the standard technique being that of rote learning. Some of the basic doctrinal concepts of the Church were also reinforced by the teaching of a handful of easily assimilated melodies, a process that can be followed with great clarity in Diego de Ledesma's textbook *Modo per insegnar la Dottrina Christiana*, cast in the form of a dialogue between teacher and pupil.[63] Concerned that all song taught in the Schools must be painlessly learnt, Ledesma advocates that children be encouraged to sing as much of the catechism as possible, with the Ave Maria, Pater Noster, Credo, and Salve Regina as a minimum requirement.[64] At the end of the book two simple four-voice settings, one of the Ave Maria the other of the Savonarolan text 'Giesu, Giesu, Giesu, Ogn'un chiami Giesu', are provided.[65] Even those unable to read were catered for through the provision of illustrated books that explain the tenets of the faith as simply as possible through visual means.[66]

In the Schools the simple art of singing litanies was also extensively taught, along with the melodies of monophonic *laude*, the psalms, and the hymns of the Church. According to the *Interrogatorio del maestro*, a textbook for the education of children, the practice followed a set formula in which two children, having intoned the melody of each phrase, were then answered by the rest of the group who repeated it.[67] Psalms could be sung in a similar antiphonal style, with alternate verses being assigned to different voices. Teaching antiphonal singing was seen not only as an aid to domestic devotion, but also as a preparation for participation in parish processions. During the second half of the sixteenth century, not only affordable copies of litanies and psalms, which could

63 Filippi D.V., "A Sound Doctrine: Early Modern Jesuits and the Singing of the Catechism", *Early Music History* 34 (2015) 1–43.

64 Diego de Ledesma, *Modo per insegnar la Dottrina Christiana* [...] (Rome, Blado: 1573) fols. 7v, 11–12.

65 For a transcription of the 'Ave Maria' see: Getz C.S., *Music in the Collective Experience of Sixteenth-Century Milan* (Aldershot: 2005) 247.

66 Giovanni Battista Eliano, *Dottrina christiana nella quale si contengono i principali misteri della nostra fede rappresentati con figure per istruttine de gl'idioti & di quelli che non sanno leggere* [...] *aggiontovi il Rosario* (Rome, G. Ruffinelli: 1591).

67 *Interrogatorio del maestro al discepolo per istruir li fanciulli* (Milan, Vincenzo Girardoni ad instanza del M. Matteo de Besozzo: 1568).

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be sung to basic recitation tones, but also uncomplicated polyphonic settings of these texts, were produced in increasing numbers.[68] Most of these editions, probably designed for church choirs of modest abilities, could also have been used at home by musically literate families.

Some form of musical literacy, and with it the ability to sing simple polyphony, was also taught in the Schools of Christian Doctrine. Through such publications as the anonymous *Lodi e canzoni spirituali*, specifically intended for the Schools, a repertory of simple devotional polyphony was introduced to a wide audience of largely urban schoolchildren.[69] Similar in style, function, and purpose to the less complicated types of polyphonic *lauda*, these were designed to be sung communally (that is not by dedicated singers), in oratories, monasteries, and parish churches. And as with the *lauda*, they could also be sung in a domestic setting, thus connecting the experiences of the local congregation, the centre of collective identity, with those of the home. When the heirs of the Milanese Tini publishing firm produced their broadside catalogue in 1596, one of the earliest from any Italian music printer or publisher to have survived, its contents were dominated, as might be expected given the religious atmosphere of late sixteenth-century Milan, by sacred music that was technically suitable for domestic use: *madrigali spirituali, laudi*, and *falsobordoni*.[70] Indeed, in this period the publication of *falsobordoni* settings became something of a Milanese speciality, a reflection perhaps of their suitability for Carlo Borromeo's vision of a reformed city.[71]

Yet not just in the towns and cities of Borromeo's sprawling diocese, but throughout Italy, lay religious devotion as practiced in the confraternity meeting house, the parish church, and the family home, was served by a range of music stretching from the monophonic *lauda* to the more complicated kinds of spiritual madrigal. In between lay a hinterland which spanned the distance between oral traditions, which would have included the chants and hymns of the church and the simplest forms of improvised polyphony, to the least complicated kinds of composed music. To an extent that is now difficult to recover, the most common forms of devotional musical experience were not

68 Rostirolla G., "Laudi e canti spirituali nelle edizioni della prima 'controriforma' milanese", Buzzi C. – Zardin D. (eds.), *Carlo Borromeo e l'opera della grande riforma* (Milan: 1997) 563–594.

69 Giacomo Ledesma, *Lodi e canzoni spirituali per cantar insieme con la Dottrina Christiana* (Milan, Pacifico Pontio: 1576).

70 Published with commentary in Fenlon I., "Il foglio volante dei Tini circa il 1596", *Rivista italiana di musicologia* 12 (1977) 231–251; see also Mischiati O., *Indici, cataloghi e avvisi degli editori e librai musicali italiani dal 1591 al 1798* (Florence: 1984) 106–110.

71 Macchiarelli I., *Il falsobordone fra tradizione orale e tradizione scritta* (Lucca: 1995) 197.

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the published repertories, but rather improvised devotional music transmitted orally and committed to memory.

Nonetheless, while much was memorized, printed books also played an important role. The propagandistic use of the press was a central feature of Borromeo's campaign, and a number of Milanese presses provided a wide spectrum of material ranging from rulebooks to catechisms, sermons, manuals of Christian behaviour, and collections of prayers and other simple devotions which involved singing.[72] One such text, the *Officium Beatae Mariae Virginis*, a miscellany of prayers, canticles, litanies, and psalms, was standardised during the pontificate of Pius V.[73] The increase in the publication of Catholic spiritual literature, particularly in Italian, during this period, was not so much a revolutionary change as a continuation of existing tendencies. By the end of the century the priority among many printers was to provide functional texts that would guide behaviour in everyday life rather than elaborations of dogma or moral theology.[74] Catechisms, devotional anthologies, manuals, collections of psalms and other standard prayers (though not the bible which was suppressed in the vernacular) were now available on an unprecedented scale.[75] By the 1570s Gabriele Giolito, one of the most prolific printers in Venice, was devoting more than two thirds of his catalogue to new and re-issued religious works largely aimed at the professional classes.[76] There can be little doubt that the Church fostered the spread of private devotion among the members of these social groups through its encouragement and use of the press; even Borromeo was not averse to private prayer, uncontrolled though it might be. This strategy also involved the dissemination of simple music for devotional use, either implicitly by calling on oral traditions, or more explicitly by printing both texts and music together. The content of publications such as the *Lodi e canzoni spirituali* could be both read and sung in the home using melodies, including secular tunes, taken from the common stock. Another kind of book

72 See Turrini M., "Riformare il mondo a vera vita christiana: le scuole di catechismo nell'Italia del Cinquecento", *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento* 8 (1982) 407–489.

73 *Officium beatae Mariae Virginis. Nuper reformatum & Pii V pont. max. iussu editum* (Rome, in aedibus populi Romanum: 1571). See Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy* 353–354.

74 Barbieri E., "Tradition and Change in the Spiritual Literature of the Cinquecento", in Fragnito G. (ed.), *Church, Censorship and Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: 2001) 111–133.

75 For the bible see Fragnito G., *La Bibbia al rogo. La censura ecclesiastica e i volgarizzamenti della scrittura (1471–1606)* (Bologna: 1997).

76 Grendler P.F., *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press 1540–1605* (Princeton: 1977) 131–134; Nuovo A. – Coppens C., *I Giolito e la stampa nell'Italia del XVI secolo* (Geneva: 2005); Barbieri, "Tradition and Change" 119–120. See also Richardson B., *Printing, Writers and Readers in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: 1999) 137–138 and table 6.

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FIGURE 4.5 *Compendium musices confectum ad faciliorem instructionem cantum choralem* [...] (Venice: Lucantonium de Giunta, 1513). V&A Libraries, Special Collections, 87.D.28.

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that takes us in to the more particular private musical world of priests and choirboys is the *Compendium musices*, an instruction manual for those who were required to sing the liturgy. This opens with a review of the principles of solmisation, illustrated with an image of the Guidonian hand, and then moves on to simple formulas for mutations and the basic chants of the church.[77] Issued as a separate publication, reprinted many times, and incorporated into editions of the *Sacerdotale*, the *Compendium* was aimed at the same audience as the *Familiaribus clericorum liber* and similar publications. All were essentially do-it-yourself manuals to be studied and followed in private as a guide to singing the liturgy in public. Religious life was not necessarily separate from family life. Although the secular clergy did not marry, they often lived with their mothers or co-habited with their 'housekeepers', effectively forming domestic units. Books such as the *Compendium musices* were often close at hand [Fig. 4.5].

At the bottom of the hierarchy of book production, both in terms of technical quality and price, chapbooks usually consisted of just two, four, or at most eight pages, poorly produced on cheap paper using worn and antiquated types, sometimes assembled from different fonts.[78] Often described as 'popular' literature, they were often bought and read by the professional classes as well as those lower down the social scale. In terms of genre, their contents cover a range stretching from extracts from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, often in dialect, to prognostications, ancient histories, legends from classical antiquity, astrological booklets, and devotional texts; among the latter prayers, *laude*, and the lives of saints were prominent.[79] Single-sheet broadsides and prints, the sources of many of the images of Christ and the Virgin that were fixed to the walls and doors of Italian houses, formed part of the same market, and were often produced by the same printers. While the press could bring sacred images into humble homes, broadsides and chapbooks also brought both devotional texts and their music in from the streets and squares of the city. Being cast in *ottava rima*, many of the poems printed in these cheap formats were intended to be sung to simple melodic formulas drawn from oral tradition, similar to

77 *Compendium musices confectum ad faciore instructione cantum chorale discentium* (Venice, Giunta: 1513). See Crawford D., "A Chant Manual in Sixteenth-Century Italy", *Musica disciplina* 36 (1982) 175–190, and for an edition, id., *Anonymous compendium musices venetiis, 1499–1597* (n.p.: American Institute of Musicology, 1985).

78 Grendler P.F., "Form and Function in Italian Renaissance Popular Books", *Renaissance Quarterly* 46 (1993) 451–485.

79 Niccoli O., *Prophecy and the People in Renaissance Italy* (Princeton: 1990); Javitch D., *Proclaiming a Classic: The Canonization of Orlando Furioso* (Princeton: 1991); Salzberg R., *Ephemeral City: Cheap Prints and Urban Culture in Renaissance Venice* (Manchester: 2014).

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those known to have been used to declaim episodes from Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*. The *strambotto*, which though apparently similar in structure (it too consists of eight eleven-syllable lines as do many verses in *ottava rima*) developed independently, could also be sung to a melody that could be indefinitely repeated.[80] Devotional verses, including versions of the Rosary, were sung in this way.[81] Performed by *cantastorie* and *cantimpanchi* standing on benches and improvised staging to entertain crowds gathered outdoors, these texts could be bought either from pedlars who circulated among the throng or from bookshops. In a domestic setting, these inexpensive print pieces were used for recitation among friends or family, and could be sung to the same tunes.

It is in this hinterland between oral tradition and written forms, rather than in the practices of social elites, that the most common forms of Italian domestic devotional music are to be found. Only one member of the family, standing in the *campo* as a procession passed or in the *piazza* when the *cantastorie* sang, needed to be present in order for texts to travel. That they did so was not only due to their availability in print, but also to the importance of memory and the place of song in everyday life.

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80 Haar J., "Arie per cantar stanze ariostesche", in Balsamo M.A. (ed.), *L'Ariosto e la musica, i musicisti: quattro studi e sette madrigali ariosteschi* (Florence: 1981) 31–46; id., "*Improvvisatori* and their Relationship to Sixteenth-Century Music" in Haar J. (ed.), *Essays on Italian Poetry and Music in the Renaissance, 1350–1600* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: 1986); id., "From 'Cantimbanco' to Court: The Musical Fortunes of Ariosto in Florentine Society", in Rossi M. – Gioffredi Superbi F. (eds.), *L'arme e gli amori: Ariosto, Tasso and Guarini in Late Renaissance Florence* (Florence: 2004) 179–197; Cavicchi C., "Musici, cantori e 'cantimbanchi' a corte al tempo dell'Orlando Furioso", in Venturi G. (ed.), *L'uno e l'altro Ariosto in corte e nelle delizie* (Florence: 2011) 263–289; Fenlon I., "Orality and Print: Singing in the Street in Early Modern Venice", in Degl'Innocenti L. – Richardson B. – Sbordoni C. (eds.), *Interactions between Orality and Writing in Early Modern Culture* (Abingdon: 2016) 81–98.

81 Giulio Cesare Grillo, *Misteri del santissimo rosario in ottava rima con alcuni sonetti e capitoli spirituali* (Rome, T. and P. Diani: 1588); Serafino Razzi, *Rosario della gloriosissima Vergine madre di Dio* [...] *composto nuovamente in ottava rima con alcune annotazione in prosa* (Florence, Stamperia del Sermartelli: 1583).

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Razzi S., *Libro primo delle laudi spirituali da diversi eccell. e divoti autori* (Venice, ad instantia de' Giunti di Firenze: 1563).

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Venice, Archivio di Stato, *Cancelleria inferiore*, Miscellanea bb. 34–45.

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PART 2

Domesticating the Divine



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CHAPTER 5

Domestic Portraiture in Early Modern Venice: Devotion to Family and Faith

Margaret A. Morse

Thirty years ago, Peter Burke urged scholars of early modern Italy to envision portraits of the period not in museums, as we often encounter them today, '[…] but in their original setting, the houses or "palaces" of the upper classes […]' and part of a larger culture of consumption oriented towards articulating the social role of individual and family.[1] This essay aims to answer Burke's call by examining portraits in the Venetian domestic interior, which typically contained, as I have argued elsewhere, 'props of identity' that were spiritual in scope.[2] Devotional images of the Virgin Mary, Christ, or saints hung on walls of both bedchambers and more public entrance halls, and religious goods, such as paternosters, devotional jewellery, prayer books and benches, and occasionally even altars, further added to the sometimes dense material culture of piety and prayer in the home.[3] By considering the domestic interior as a devotional environment of which the portrait was a part, this essay challenges traditional notions of portraiture as a secular, and even autonomous, art form.[4] I argue that in the context of the pious household, portraits may have functioned as

1 Burke P., *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy: Essays on Perception and Communication* (Cambridge: 1987) 151.

2 The phrase 'props of identity' comes from Burke, *The Historical Anthropology* 151. On the religious goods in Venetian homes see Morse M.A., "Creating Sacred Space: The Religious Visual Culture of the Renaissance Venetian *casa*", *Renaissance Studies* 21, 2 (2007) 151–184.

3 Morse, "Creating Sacred Space" 159–177; and "The Venetian *portego*: Family Piety and Public Prestige", in Campbell E.J. – Miller S.R. – Consavari E.C. (eds.), *The Early Modern Domestic Interior, 1400–1700* (New York – London: 2013) 89–106. See also Kasl R., "Holy Households: Art and Devotion in Renaissance Venice", in Kasl R. (ed.), *Giovanni Bellini and the Art of Devotion* (Indianapolis: 2004) 59–89.

4 Classic studies of early modern Italian portraiture include: Burckhardt J., "Das Porträt in der Italienischen Malerei", in Burckhardt J. (ed.) *Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte von Italien* (Basel: 1898) 145–294; Burckhardt J., *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. S.G.C. Middlemore (New York: 1954); Pope-Hennessy J., *The Portrait in the Renaissance*, The A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, National Gallery of Art (Washington, 1963; reprint, 1966); Boehm G., *Bildnis und Individuum: Über den Ursprung der Porträtmalerei in der Italienischen Renaissance* (Munich: 1985); Campbell L., *Renaissance Portraits: European Portrait-Painting in the 14th, 15th, and 16th Centuries* (New Haven and London: 1990).

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FIGURE 5.1 Titian, "Nobleman of the Maltese Order", 1510–1515. Oil on canvas, 80 × 64 cm. Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence
PHOTO: NICOLA LORUSSO. © ALINARI / ART RESOURCE, NY

part of a domestic devotional network to establish and reinforce the religious identity and public prestige of families and individuals, all while securing salvation. Given portraiture's historical relationship with sacred imagery – in the form of donor portraits, ex-votos, and icons – as well as contemporary perceptions of salvation and the role of the family in achieving deliverance, the religious visual cultural in the home may have influenced, at least at times,

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the creation, display, and ultimately, understanding of so-called independent portraits.

The religious dimension of an early modern portrait is not always obvious upon first impression. Some likenesses do make clear the pious identity of the subject with the inclusion of specifically Christian symbols or accessories, such as prayer books and rosary beads. For example, the half-visible, eight-pointed white star on the cloak of the sitter in Titian's portrait of a Knight of Malta [Fig. 5.1], from around 1515, announces the sitter's affiliation with this prestigious religious lay order, while the jewelled crucifix and glossy, black prayer beads that engage his hands signal his devout persona. In other portraits, the sitters may take on the guise of saints, such as John the Baptist, Catherine of Alexandria, or Mary Magdalene, to express their pious, and sometimes penitential, character.[5] It is easy then to see why portraits from the period with no such clear religious markers have been labelled as secular and their function as a commemorative record of appearances.

Portraits, however, are conditional expressions whose meanings are not intrinsic to the canvas or panel itself; they depend on context – the knowledge, values, spaces, and experiences of makers and viewers.[6] In recent decades, scholars have begun to explore this relational nature of portraiture. Burke considered the multiple social roles portraiture conveyed by 'framing' early modern likenesses in the social and cultural climate of the time;[7] others have followed suit, investigating topics such as gender, class, and concepts of self, identity, and interiority.[8] Bronwen Wilson has demonstrated how, in

5 Owen Hughes D., "Representing the Family: Portraits and Purpose in Early Modern Italy", *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 17, 1 (1986) 7–38; Matthews Grieco S.F., "Models of Female Sanctity in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy", in Scaraffia L. – Zarri G. (eds.), *Women and Faith: Catholic Religious Life in Italy from Late Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge, MA and London: 1999) 159–175.

6 Garton J., *Grace and Grandeur: The Portraiture of Paolo Veronese* (London: 2008) 12.

7 Burke, *The Historical Anthropology* 150–167.

8 Simons P., "Women in Frames: the Gaze, the Eye, the Profile in Renaissance Portraiture", *History Workshop* 25, 1 (1988) 4–30; Dülberg A., *Privatporträts: Geschichte und Ikonologie einer Gattung im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: 1990); Brilliant R., *Portraiture* (London: 1991); Gentili A. – Morel P. – Cieri Via C., *Il ritratto e la memoria: materiali 1–3* (Rome: 1989–1993); Berger H., "Fictions of the Pose: Facing the Gaze of Early Modern Portraiture", *Representations* 46 (Spring 1994) 87–120; Simons P., "Portraiture, Portrayal, and Idealization: Ambiguous Individualism of Representations of Renaissance Women", in Brown A. (ed.), *Languages and Images of Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: 1995) 263–311; Woodall J., *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester: 1997); Syson L. – Mann N. (eds.), *The Image of the Individual: Portraits in the Renaissance* (London: 1998); Cranston J., *The Poetics of Portraiture in the Italian Renaissance* (Cambridge: 2000); Wilson B., "The Renaissance Portrait: From Resemblance to Representation", in Martin J.J. (ed.), *The Renaissance World* (New York and London: 2007)

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the context of portrait books with their sequence of images, readers were invited to read portraits along with the biography of the sitter, and consider one face in relation to another.[9] Lina Bolzoni and Jodi Cranston have highlighted the affinity between portraits and poetry, and the dialogue the portrait can establish between the portrayed, the viewer, and the literary work of art.[10] This relational model of understanding early modern portraiture – of considering the art form as part of an ever-shifting exchange[11] – indicates that there were multiple ways to understand portraits, and suggests the possibility of a likeness's meaning also being affected by the religious climate of the time. In a period when religion and piety were ever-important aspects of individual and communal identity, it seems pertinent to consider presentations of the self with respect to contemporary spiritual thought and practices of faith, and the devotional home – the setting in which Renaissance viewers typically encountered portraits – constitutes an important environment in which to begin these explorations.

Venice was a city well known for its domestic portraiture [Fig. 5.2]. The artist and biographer Giorgio Vasari made note of the Venetian tradition of portrait collections of one's kin, stating that, 'there are many portraits in all the houses of Venice, and in many gentlemen's homes one may see their fathers and grandfathers back to the fourth generation, and in some of the more noble houses back further still'.[12] The high number of portraits listed in Venetian household inventories from the sixteenth century supports Vasari's claim. The 1587 inventory of the wealthy nobleman Giovanni Simone Donà, for instance, records several portraits of his relatives, including the late Francesco Donà, who served as doge from 1545–1553, his father Gerolamo, his wife Luchesa Trevisan, Giuseppe Trevisan, and a 'Zuan Donà', in addition to an image of

452–480; Campbell L. – Falomir M. – Fletcher J. – Syson L. (eds.), *Renaissance Faces: Van Eyck to Titian*, exh. cat., National Gallery (London: 2008); Christiansen K. – Weppelmann S. (eds.), *The Renaissance Portrait from Donatello to Bellini*, exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York: 2011).

9 Wilson B., *The World in Venice: Print, the City, and Early Modern Identity* (Toronto: 2005) 186–255.

10 Bolzoni L., *Il cuore di cristallo. Ragionamenti d'amore, poesia e ritratto nel Rinascimento* (Turin: 2010); Cranston, *The Poetics of Portraiture*.

11 Cranston, *The Poetics of Portraiture* 1–2.

12 Vasari G., *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. G. Bull (Hammondsworth: 1987) 68. Translated quote from Fortini Brown P., *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice: Art, Architecture, and the Family* (New Haven and London: 2004) 16. Marcantonio Michiel also documents numerous portraits in *Notizia d'opere del disegno. Edizione critica*, ed. T. Frimmel (Vienna: 1888; reprint, Florence: 2000).

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FIGURE 5.2 Palma il Vecchio (Jacopo d'Antonio Negretti), "Portrait of a Gentleman", ca. 1520–1525. Oil on panel transferred to canvas, 69.5 × 55.6 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art
© JOHN G. JOHNSON COLLECTION, 1917

himself. The notary lists these portraits directly after a catalogue of religious paintings, which included: two Madonnas, one of which also featured St. John; three images of Christ, two of these depicting him carrying the cross; a Mary Magdalene; and St. John the Baptist. A couple of the religious paintings also

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bore the Donà arms, thereby associating these pious figures with familial identity.[13] While the notary gives no clear indication of the display of the paintings in the Donà collection, it is quite possible that family members viewed the portraits in relation to the sacred images that also adorned the walls. When paired with a religious painting or other Christian symbol, the portrait could become a model of virtue and the devout self, a reminder to pray for departed family members, and a means to secure the fate of souls. Hanging portraits with or near religious images and goods also clearly announced the pious and moral nature of the family to all visitors of the home. The domestic portrait in the early modern Venetian interior was not simply a secular form of commemoration, but potentially enmeshed in a devotional network that involved viewer, sitter, and divine – thereby fostering the mingling of piety to family and faith.

The Donà residence was not unique in its presentation of religious pictures. Sixteenth-century Venetian inventories indicate that over ninety percent of the Republic's households contained articles of religious significance and function.[14] These post-mortem inventories list household goods of patricians and wealthy merchants, as well as artisans and individuals of lower classes.[15] The number and type of devotional goods increased in most households over the course of the Cinquecento. This accumulation of religious objects indicates that Renaissance Venetians conceived of their homes as sacred space where devotional practices could be pursued and expressions of religiosity were paramount.[16] Such a view of the household interior corresponds with the ideal domestic condition described by the Venetian Benedetto Arborsani in his memoir/vernacular treatise of household economy, written around 1543. Arborsani stressed the Christian and moral character of the home, even using the term *sagrestia*, or sacristy, to define the family residence as a model of divine order.[17] It is within this sacred domestic environment that we should reexamine the so-called independent portraiture of the early modern period.

13 Donà also displayed the likeness of Doge Andrea Gritti (1521–1523) and a battle scene in his home. Archivio di Stato di Venezia (hereafter ASV), Cancelleria Inferiore, Miscellanea Notai Diversi (hereafter Canc. Inf., Misc. Not. Div.) busta (hereafter b.) 43, n. 57, 3 February 1587, m.c.

14 Palumbo-Fossati I., "L'interno della casa dell'artigiano e dell'arte nella Venezia del Cinquecento", *Studi Veneziani* VIII (1984) 109–154: 131; Morse, "Creating Sacred Space" 158–159.

15 Palumbo-Fossati, "L'interno della casa" 111, 117, 131.

16 Morse, "Creating Sacred Space" esp. 152.

17 Grubb J., "House and Household: Evidence from Family Memoirs", in Marini P. – Lanaro P. – Varanini G.M. (eds.), *Edilizia privata nella Verona rinascimentale* (Milan: 2000) 118–133: 121–122. The Arborsani memoir can be found in ASV, Scuola Grande di Santa

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While the contents of household inventories provide evidence of how Venetians conceived of their dwellings, the documents are also frustratingly vague. They list all of the movable goods of an interior, but offer limited information about issues of display and use of objects. Venetian inventories did, however, typically catalogue objects by room, and they often list portraits in the midst of other images, the majority of which depicted religious subject matter. If we assume that the notary recorded the paintings on the wall of a room in the order in which they were displayed, portraits were likely exhibited in relation to devotional works of art, either directly adjacent to or in close proximity. Genevieve Carlton recently made a similar argument in the case of the display and reading of maps in early modern Venetian homes. She noted that maps that hung on walls were frequently coupled with religious images, most commonly the Virgin Mary. According to Carlton, such intentional pairings highlighted a family's devotion to religion as well as a particular place.[18] In a similar manner, the proximate display of portraits with religious images likely persuaded the viewer to create – consciously or unconsciously – visual and mental relationships between picture types.

An example of this kind of presentation of portraits comes from the 1557 inventory of Francesco della Vedova. The notary listed consecutively, in the *camera granda*, or the principal chamber, a large gilded painting of the Madonna – presumably in the style of an icon as was common in Venetian households [Fig. 5.3] – a painting of Christ, a portrait of Francesco's father, Gaspare, a portrait of Francesco, a copper cross with pearls, and a small wooden crucifix. With the exception of an old mirror, these are the only items hanging on the walls recorded in the room, so even if they did not all hang next to one another, there was likely some intentionality on the part of Francesco to display these items together in the space.[19] Francesco could see himself paired with the Mother of God, her Son, or other symbols of the faith and be reminded of his pious character and obligation to his devotion. The portrait of Gaspare may have served as a reminder of his lineage, but when viewed in relation to the Virgin Mary, Christ, and/or the crucifixes, Francesco may have been prompted to pray for the soul of his deceased father.

The 1537 inventory of Antonio Roda offers another instance where a family member exhibited a portrait with religious works. The notary listed several

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Maria della Valverde o della Misericordia, b. 50, n. 2, fols. 1r–13v and 14r–23v, the term 'sagrestia' on fol. 2r.

18 Carlton G., "Viewing the World: Women, Religion, and the Audience for Maps in Early Modern Venice", *Terrae Incognitae* 48, 1 (2016) 15–36, at 31–32.

19 Carlton, "Viewing the World" 32.

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FIGURE 5.3 Anonymous Cretan painter, "Virgin and Child", late 15th or early 16th century. Oil on wood, 332 × 332 cm. Louvre, Paris, France
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items hanging in a child's room, in the following order: an old, gilded painting of the Madonna 'alla grecha'; a gilded painting of Christ; a gilded copper mirror; a damascened oil lamp; six engraved scenes of the Passion of Christ; an old portrait of the head of the household, Antonio; a wooden crucifix; and five silk wall-hangings.[20] Given the way the notary recorded the items, the portrait of Antonio likely hung nearby one or more of these religious pictures and sculptural pieces. Beginning in the early fifteenth century and continuing through the late sixteenth century, domestic treatises advocated hanging pious images in the home for the spiritual and moral edification of children.[21] In the case of the Roda home, the child who primarily dwelled in this room would have also seen his or her father in relation to these images and signs of the Christian faith.

We know from the 1551 inventory of Giacomo Barbaro that the nobleman displayed in his bedchamber a painting of Christ at the column, presumably a flagellation scene, and an *ancona* – or an image with a tabernacle-like frame – featuring the Madonna. Further down the list of goods in this room the inventory records, one after the other: a small wooden crucifix, a small iron basin for holy water, and a portrait of Andrea Barbaro, whose relation to Giacomo was not stated. The grouping of these items suggests a kind of shrine; Giacomo could pray before a pendant of portrait and crucifix – viewing simultaneously family and faith – and sacralise the activities, and himself, with the use of the holy water hung nearby.

The presentation of these portraits amidst holy images imbued the painted likenesses with spiritual overtones. As the examples I have given suggest, Venetians may have displayed portraits as complements to sacred pictures and objects so that when a member of the household looked upon an image of a holy personage, event, or symbol while engaging in his or her devotions, the likeness of the loved one would have also been in view and thus considered in relation to the divine. As will be outlined below, the relationship between portraits and holy images was not unusual for this period, despite the tendency in modern scholarship to separate the two, and there are several reasons – stemming from formal, historical, religious, and social concerns – why early

20 ASV, Canc. Inf., Misc. Not. Div., b. 36, n. 52, 8–18 April 1537.

21 Coté A.B., *Blessed Giovanni Dominici. Regola del governo di cura familiare, parte quarta. On the Education of Children*, Ph.D. dissertation (The Catholic University of America: 1927) 34; *Decor Puellarum: Questa sie una opera la quale si chiama Decor puellarum: Zoe honore de le donzelle: la quale de regola forma e modo al stato de le honeste donzelle* (Venice, Nicolas Jenson: 1471) 44r; and Antoniano S., *Dell'educazione Cristiana e politica de' figliuoli* (Verona, Sebastiano delle Donne e Girolamo Stringari: 1584; reprint, Florence: 1852) 151 and 316. See also Maya Corry's essay in this volume, 310–341.

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modern viewers in Venice would have made connections between these art forms.

Precedents both inside and outside the domestic sphere may have shaped viewing experiences and practices in the context of household devotions. The portrait diptych contained two hinged panels that typically featured a holy figure – usually the Madonna and Child or Christ – on one half, and a portrait of the owner on the other. Deriving from portraits of book owners in late medieval Books of Hours, the format established a direct and intimate relationship between devout donor and the divine figure before whom he prayed.[22] But portrait diptychs were largely a Northern European phenomenon, and Venetians, despite being ardent admirers and collectors of Flemish and Netherlandish painting, had no such known tradition. Venetian portraits were, however, sometimes double sided or kept within covers that were also painted, often with coats of arms and allegories that would stand for the sitter's intangible traits.[23] These covers could slide up or to the side until the two pictures would eventually be in a position where they could be viewed together, and hence, relationally; the succession of actions provokes the viewer to make connections between different image types, with each one acquiring new meanings in this state of comparison that neither might have held otherwise.[24] While these portrait covers tended be allegorical, they demonstrate the relational nature of viewing and interpreting portraits in the early modern interior.

Donor portraits serve as another obvious bridge between portraiture and religious art in Venice. The presence of worldly figures in divine contexts made their spirituality and devoutness visible and concrete. Several sixteenth-century altarpieces bear portraits of their patrons, perhaps the most famous being the Pesaro altarpiece by Titian in the church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari.[25] Patricians and wealthy merchants of the city also employed the devotional portrait format in domestic works. The cavalier Andrea Maioli, for example, from the parish of San Zulian in Venice, displayed in his *camera* a painting of the Madonna that included a portrait of himself and his wife, who were most likely shown in the act of prayer or as witnesses to a miraculous

22 Hand J.O. – Metzger C.A. – Spronk R. (eds.), *Prayers and Portraits: Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych*, exh. cat., The National Gallery of Art (Washington DC: 2006); Gelfand L., "Devotional Portrait Diptychs and the Manuscript Tradition", in Hand J.O. – Spronk R. (eds.), *Essays in Context: Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych* (Cambridge, MA: 2006) 46–59.

23 Dülberg, *Privatporträts* 100, 190–191, 238–239, 293.

24 Bolzoni, *Il cuore di cristallo* 309; Cranston, *Poetics of Portraiture* 22, 28.

25 Humfrey P., *The Altarpiece in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven and London: 1993) 104–110. Venice also had a strong tradition of votive portraiture, particularly featuring the doge, which generally hung in the Doge's Palace, ibid. 82–83.

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FIGURE 5.4 Lorenzo Lotto, "Madonna and Child with Two Donors", ca. 1525–1530. Oil on canvas, 87.6 × 118.1 cm. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, CA
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vision.[26] While Maioli's painting cannot be identified today, a number of surviving domestic images from the Veneto region exist that may be akin to the Venetian gentleman's Madonna, such as Lorenzo Lotto's *Madonna and Child with Two Donors* [Fig. 5.4], painted around 1525–1530 and today housed at the Getty Museum. In Lotto's painting the wealthy couple kneels before the divine mother and her offspring, and look up at the Christ Child, who rewards their faithfulness with a blessing.

Donor portraits were the product of worldly and wealthy individuals concerned with social prestige and lasting fame, but who remained deeply religious and were all the more anxious over the salvation of their souls.[27] They played efficacious roles as 'surrogate selves' engrossed in perpetual prayer,

26 ASV, Canc. Inf., Misc. Not. Div., b. 41, n. 46, 9 April 1571.

27 Rosenberg C.M., "Virtue, Piety and Affection: Some Portraits by Domenico Ghirlandaio", in Gentili A. – Morel P. – Cieri Via C. (eds.), *Il ritratto e la memoria: materiali 2* (Rome: 1993) 173–196.

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carrying out what the patron could no longer do once he or she had left this world.[28] Portraits of donors placed within devotional images and religious narratives also helped the viewer imagine the divine, offering a relatable route by which to perceive and ultimately exceed the limits between physical reality and the spiritual world in one's own prayers.[29] Lina Bolzoni has suggested that it seems unlikely that the strength of the iconography of the pious donor within both public and private religious images – and the devotional codes associated with this format – would not have translated to so-called autonomous portraits.[30] The example of donor portraits thus underscores the familiarity Renaissance Venetians presumably had with seeing the likenesses of contemporary individuals in relation to religious images.

In independent portraits, however, the sitter is not always shown praying or in a pose of supplication, as in the donor image.[31] Instead the figure is typically presented half- or bust-length, in frontal or three-quarter view. What is striking about these autonomous portraits is that despite frequent attributes that marked a sitter's status, profession, or worldly interests, they can look quite similar to the devotional imagery of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and saints that was being produced around the same time.[32] The reasons for these shared formal strategies may extend beyond overall stylistic trends of the period to tie portraiture to religious imagery and its devotional meanings.

By the end of the fifteenth century, artists in Venice and elsewhere depicted divine and earthly figures alike with an increased naturalism, and turned the sitters to face the picture plane as a means to amplify their presence and enhance a sense of interaction between them and the viewer. Both portraits and a popular genre of devotional images featured a single individual often

28 Gelfand L.S. – Gibson W.S., "Surrogate Selves: The *Rolin Madonna* and the Late Medieval Devotional Portrait", *Simiolus* 29, 3/4 (2002) 125–126; Tsoumis K., *Bernardino Licinio: Portraiture, Kinship and Community in Renaissance Venice*, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Toronto: 2013) 153; Wheaton R., "Images of Kinship", *Journal of Family History* 12, 4 (1987) 392–395.

29 Bolzoni, *Il cuore di cristallo* 235.

30 Ibid., 235–236. Tsoumis argues that donor images introduced family portraiture into the Venetian home, *Bernardino Licinio* 155. She also connects these family group portraits with *sacra conversazione* and images of the Holy Family 157–161.

31 The profile pose used in portraits mainly from the early and mid-fifteenth century was likely borrowed from donor portraiture to carry associations of Christian piety and virtue. Wright A., "The Memory of Faces: Representational Choices in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Portraiture", in Ciapelli G. – Rubin P.L. (eds.), *Art, Memory, and Family in Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge: 2000) 92.

32 Cranston, *The Poetics of Portraiture* 17, 43–44, 76–77, 89–92.

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presented in bust or half-length, close to the picture plane and devoid of a specific narrative setting.[33] For example, Antonello da Messina's *Ecce Homo* [Fig. 5.5] in Piacenza and his *Portrait of a Man* [Fig. 5.6], today at the Louvre, share similar compositional formats. While the plainly dressed gentleman with a look of certainty and determination is a far cry from the naked and pitiful Christ, in both images Antonello presents bust-length figures who look out intently toward the viewer from behind a stone parapet that bears a realistic *cartellino* featuring the artist's signature. Highlighted before dark backgrounds, the subjects in each painting are vividly concrete and present, and 'exist both eternally and specifically in the moment of viewing'.[34]

The visual similarities between many portraits and devotional images, and the emphasis on the presence of the subject that such formal strategies achieved, are rooted in legends of the sacred origins of portraiture and notions of exemplarity and substitution. The three-quarter and frontal view poses assumed by subjects in portraits derived from icons of the Madonna, believed to be copies of the portrait of the Virgin Mary St. Luke painted from life, as well as images of the Holy Face, reworked facsimiles of the *vera icona*, or veil of Veronica, that bore the visage of Jesus Christ.[35] Such images were said to be true portraits of the Madonna and Christ as they replicated the original, unmediated likenesses of these divine figures that came about as the result of direct encounters. The presence of the sacred thus existed on the material surface of the canvas or panel. As such, the Holy Face and Madonna icons established an ideal of portraiture as medieval and early modern artists continued to advance the Christian legend with copies of these miraculous images.[36] Even in the later sixteenth century, theorists such as Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo and the Catholic reformer Gabriele Paleotti cited these examples as holy sources of

33 Ringbom S., "Devotional Images and Imaginative Devotions. Notes on the Place of Art in Late Medieval Private Piety", *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 73 (1969) 159–170, and *Icon to Narrative: The Rise of the Dramatic Close-up in Fifteenth-Century Devotional Painting*, 2nd edition (Doornspijk: 1984) 184. On Venetian portraiture in the later fifteenth century, see Humfrey P., "The Portrait in Fifteenth-Century Venice", in Christiansen – Weppelmann (eds.), The Renaissance Portrait 48–63.

34 Corry M., "The Alluring Beauty of a Leonardesque Ideal: Masculinity and Spirituality in Renaissance Milan", *Gender & History* 25, 3 (2013) 576.

35 Syson L., "Witnessing Faces, Remembering Souls", in Campbell et. alia, *Renaissance Faces* 21–22.

36 Syson, "Witnessing Faces" 21–22; Belting H., *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image before the Era of Art*, trans. E. Jephcott (Chicago and London: 1994) 21–22.

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FIGURE 5.5 Antonello da Messina, "Ecce Homo", 1475. Oil on wood, 48.5 × 38 cm. Museo Civico, Piacenza, Italy
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portraiture.[37] The frontal and sometimes three-quarters format of these bust- and half-length holy sitters, oriented close to the picture plane, enhanced

37 Lomazzo Giovanni Paolo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scultura ed architettura divise in sette libri* (Milan, Paolo Gottardo Pontio: 1585; reprint Rome: 1844) II: 377; Paleotti Gabriele, *Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images*, trans. W. McCuaig (Bologna, Alessandro Benacci:

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FIGURE 5.6 Antonello da Messina, "Portrait of a Man (Il Condottiero)", 1475. Oil on wood, 36.2 × 30 cm. Louvre, Paris, France
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their presence, as well as the sense of interaction between viewer and divine. Jodi Cranston has described portrait sitters from the period engaging in 'self-conscious poses that are oriented toward being seen', in a manner similar to images of Christ, the Madonna, and saints; this is because both portraits and

1582; reprint: Los Angeles: 2012) 212–213. See also Pommier E., *Théories du portrait de la Renaissance aux Lumières* (Paris: 1998) 159–160.

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devotional images in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries served as substitutes for the absent figure represented, and as such depended on a viewer to complete a dialogue, centred on prayer, faith, remembrance and, ultimately, salvation.[38] With such conventions of pose and figural orientation serving as memory markers, Renaissance viewers could have equated portraits and devotional images in their viewing experiences given the similar functions of the two art forms.

Portraits of saints further developed this notion of a spiritual presence captured in a portrait. Paleotti emphasized that saints were worthy of representation because of the virtuous lives they led, and the act of fixing their images in a portrait offered a model of devoutness for the beholder and a vehicle for continued reverence. Similar motivations, at least in theory, compelled the creation portraits of worldly men and women. Paleotti warned against portraits of the impious, heretical, and dishonourable as a harm to public good, but he also advocated the painting of persons 'whose moral goodness or Christian sanctity may act as an incentive to others to practice the virtues'.[39] The quality of exemplarity fused the Christian tradition of remembrance of the saints with that of the growing cult of fame. Virtuous figures were worthy of commemoration in art as their representation would be valuable to future beholders.[40] In his treatise *Do tirar polo natural* (1549), Francisco de Holanda stressed this emulative function of the portrait: 'It is right that children should keep the memory of their fathers and mothers and grandparents in portraits from nature, in order to have them always present, for the augmentation of their virtue and their consolation, imitating their ancestors as far as they can in goodness and enhancing their genealogy with them'.[41]

The devotional environment of the Venetian domestic interior provided the ideal setting for familial portraits to operate successfully as virtuous archetypes. In addition to replicating the formal qualities, or 'commemorative codes', as described by Allison Wright, of devotional art to ensure the character of exemplarity in familial portraits, Venetians could hang their likeness next to or in close proximity with these religious images, as well as other kinds of pious goods.[42] This manner of display allowed viewers to readily liken the moral virtue of a saint with the portrait of a contemporary or ancestor exhibited nearby, or see that earthly likeness within a devotional context and recognise

38 Cranston, *Poetics of Portraiture* 8.

39 Paleotti, *Discourse* 205.

40 Wright, "The Memory of Faces" 88; Jenkins M., *The State Portrait. Its Origins and Evolution* (New York: 1947) 4–7.

41 Quote from Woodall J., *Anthonis Mor: Art and Authority* (Zwolle: 2007) 251.

42 Wright, "The Memory of Faces" 89.

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it as a paradigm of a devout character and lifestyle, perhaps even prompting the viewer to pray.

Prayers for the soul were a primary concern for early modern Venetians well into the sixteenth century, directly tied to contemporary concepts of purgatory and salvation and perhaps even motivating the production of portraiture during the period.[43] One of the greatest perceived threats to the attainment of eternal paradise was purgatory, yet activities here on earth could minimise the time suffered in this intermediary place.[44] Devotions, the possession of certain objects, acts of charity, and pilgrimages made to holy sites to view relics were all means by which one could obtain Church-sanctioned indulgences that normally carried a defined period of remittance in purgatory. In addition to acts like these to prepare for one's own destiny in the hereafter, the living could work for the benefit of the already departed. In 1476 the system of salvation widened when Pope Sixtus IV officially declared that indulgences could be extended to include the souls of the dead.[45] The pressure to acquire indulgences expanded as individuals were now responsible for praying for the soul of a departed loved one.[46] But to be prayed for, one had to be remembered, and portraiture cemented such redemptive commemoration in domestic space.[47] The partnership was mutually beneficial, for it was believed that those who had reached heaven would in turn intercede on behalf of the living who had helped expedite their journey to salvation.[48]

Wright has argued that portraiture functioned as a response to recognition of the mortal nature of human existence and the need to be remembered; she allied the role of remembrance in portraiture with the remembrance that lies at the heart of Christianity – the observance of Christ's sacrifice, which images of the faith and saints facilitated.[49] As the belief in and practice of indulgences in early modern Europe indicates, remembrance served as the foundation of salvation. The nearly universal requests in wills for prayers and masses of remembrance, sometimes made more elaborate with the construction of memorial chapels and other visible markers of the deceased, were not merely formulaic demands but emerged from a legitimate belief in the

43 Ibid. 87; Syson, "Witnessing Faces" 16–21.

44 Gelfand – Gibson, "Surrogate Selves" 125.

45 Sabene R., *La fabbrica di San Pietro in Vaticano: Dinamiche internazionali e dimensione locale* (Rome: 2012) 54, n. 20.

46 Swanson R.N., *Religion and Devotion in Europe c. 1215–c. 1515* (Cambridge: 1995) 217–224; Welch E., *Art in Renaissance Italy 1350–1500* (Oxford: 1997) 147.

47 Syson, "Witnessing Faces" 16; Wright, "The Memory of Faces" 87.

48 Welch, *Art in Renaissance Italy* 148.

49 Wright, "The Memory of Faces" 86–87.

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necessity of prayer and other concrete means of commemoration for eternal salvation.[50] While the salvific function of donor portraits embedded in altarpieces or effigies prostrate on church tombs has long been recognised, it is entirely possible that independent portraits operated at times in similar ways. The Venetian domestic interior, beset with visible markers of faith, might have made such sacred commemoration of the individual part of religious practices in the home.

The early modern belief that likenesses and effigies were believed to be the physical embodiments of the persons they depicted advanced this devotional function of the portrait. In Florence, for example, citizens frequently left wax votive images of themselves, which were sometimes described by contemporaries as particularly lifelike, in churches before religious pictures as thanks and continued homage to the holy figure for his or her sacred intercession.[51] As substitutes for the figure represented, these wax portraits 'could establish a relationship with its audience, heavenly and terrestrial alike', and as such continued to engage in spiritual activity to ensure salvation and communicate with the divine even after the departure of the donor.[52] Painted portraits had a comparable effect. In the early fifteenth century, the theorist Leon Battista Alberti wrote that, 'Painting contains a divine force which not only makes the absent present, as friendship is said to do, but moreover makes the dead seem almost alive'.[53] In a similar manner, but about a century and a half later, Paleotti acknowledged that people might ask for a portrait of a relative or a friend, 'so as to make good the hurt of his absence by means of the presence of the picture'.[54] Domestic portraits thus served as substitutes for the family members they represented, living or dead, in a manner akin to devotional images of holy figures.[55] The similar surrogate function of portraiture and devotional pictures,

50 Ambrosini F., "Ortodossia cattolica e tracce di eterodossia nei testamenti veneziani del Cinquecento", *Archivio Veneto* 136 (1991) 5–64.

51 Panzanelli R., "Wax Effigies in Renaissance Florence", in Panzanelli R. (ed.), *Ephemeral Bodies: Wax Sculpture and the Human Figure* (Los Angeles: 2008) 13–40.

52 Van der Velden H., "Medici Votive Images and the Scope and Limits of Likeness", in Syson – Mann, *The Image of the Individual* 133. See also Bauman G., "Early Netherlandish Portraits, 1425–1525", *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 43 (1986) 17–18. The circulation of portraits between courts, and the collections of exemplary likenesses that were increasingly amassed by intellectuals and rulers during this period also indicates that portraits were understood to be direct substitutes for their sitters, and functioned as a way of bestowing immortality to the worthy subject depicted, Woodall, *Portraiture* 1–3.

53 Translated quote from Syson, "Witnessing Faces" 14.

54 Paleotti, *Discourse* 204.

55 Van der Velden, "Medici Votive Images" 133; Syson, "Witnessing Faces" 15; Daninos A., "Wax Figures in Italy: Outline for a Story yet to be Written", in Daninos A. (ed.), *Waxing*

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along with the aforementioned formal affinities to establish a dialogue with the beholder, suggests that the pairing of the art forms in domestic spaces may have been a logical extension of spiritual and commemorative practices to secure salvation for both the living and departed.[56]

Domestic portraits also pronounced in more public ways the devout and moral standing of the family. In addition to hanging portraits in bedchambers with devotional works as the aforementioned examples demonstrate, Venetians displayed them prominently within the *portego*, a space continually accessed by both members of the household and its guests.[57] The other rooms of the home flanked the *portego* on both sides, and stairs from the street, courtyard, or canal entrances all were directed into this large hall. The *portego* acted as a kind of receiving area and was often the only room of the house that a visitor would ever see, since not all guests would be invited into a family's personal chambers.[58] Given its large dimensions and central location in the house, the *portego* became a site for the assertion of social standing and success.[59] The display of portraits within this central space has prompted some scholars to describe the hall as an embodiment of dynastic ambition, but it is important to remember that in addition to likenesses of family members, Venetians also frequently filled the *portego* with religious images.[60] The visual and physical juxtaposition of religious images and portraits in the *portego* reinforced how the family wished to be seen: devout, moral,

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Eloquent: Italian Portraits in Wax, exh. cat. Palazzo Fortuny, trans C. Bolton (Venice: 2012) 13–42; Perkinson S., "Rethinking the Origins of Portraiture", *Gesta* 46, 2, *Contemporary Approaches to the Medieval Face* (2007) 142; and Belting, *Likeness and Presence* 10.

56 Cranston, *The Poetics of Portraiture* 75, 92.

57 Fortini Brown, *Private Lives* 71, 75; Palumbo-Fossati, "L'interno della casa" 144. Wolfgang Wolters suggests that the popularity of portraits in Venetian homes during the sixteenth century was linked to the absence of the likenesses of *uomini illustri*, or illustrious men, from recent history in the city's public edifices – with the exception of the Palazzo Ducale – largely due to the Republican mentality that disallowed the glorification of particular individuals. Wolters W., *Storia e politica nei dipinti di Palazzo Ducale. Aspetti dell'autocelebrazione della Repubblica di Venezia nel Cinquecento* (Venice: 1987) 70.

58 Fortini Brown, *Private Lives* 1, 71; Schmitter M., "The *Quadro da Portego* in Sixteenth-Century Venetian Art", *Renaissance Quarterly* 64, 3 (2011) 695.

59 Fortini Brown P., "Behind the Walls: The Material Culture of Venetian Elites", in Martin J. – Romano D. (eds.), *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297–1797* (Baltimore: 2000) 307–308; Fortini Brown, *Private Lives* 71–75; Palumbo-Fossati I., "La casa veneziana", in Toscano G. – Valcanover F. (eds.), *Da Bellini a Veronese. Temi di arte veneta* (Venice: 2004) 474; Lucco M., "Sacred Stories", in Brown D.A. – Ferino-Pagden S. (eds.), *Bellini, Giorgione, Titian, and the Renaissance of Venetian Painting* (New Haven – London: 2006) 106; and Schmitter, "The *Quadro da Portego*" 694.

60 Lucco, "Sacred Stories" 106; Morse, "The Venetian *portego*" 95–101.

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and favoured in the eyes of God. For example, Francesco Dall'Oca's inventory reveals that he hung a portrait of his father, Marc'Antonio, in his *portego*, along with a canvas depicting Jesus and the Four Evangelists, and a large painting of the Prodigal Son, perhaps a reference to paternal guidance and compassion when displayed in the same space with his father's likeness.[61] In the 1561 inventory of the merchant Piero Antonio Gentili, the first item listed in his *portego* is a Madonna – presumably a painting although the notary does not actually specify – followed by portraits of Piero Antonio and his wife, a fountain with an iron basin for washing hands, and a holy water stoup.[62] Similar to the aforementioned inventory of Giacomo Barbaro, the grouping implies a small shrine of sorts – perhaps to encourage viewers to pray on the couple's behalf – and a display of the piety of this merchant and his spouse.

Portraiture had long had a religious component, intimately tied to devotion, and ultimately, salvation of the living and deceased. The emergence of the so-called independent portrait in the Renaissance may have signalled a new way of thinking about individuals and their worth during this period, but the separate frame around the panel or the canvas did not automatically mean that distinct perspectives of portraits simultaneously arose, particularly when these likenesses continued to be displayed in contexts – in this case, the domestic sphere – with images and items of spiritual import. Portraits hung near religious works throughout the Venetian domestic interior, from more private bedchambers to the semi-public *portego*, and likely functioned in conjunction with the sacred to attach the personal to the more universal messages of the faith, secure salvation, and construct a visible message of pious familial identity to all who visited the home.[63] The spiritual dimensions of portraiture thus emerged when these likenesses of individuals operated as part of an ensemble with religious pictures and other Christian goods. Just as the Venetian household interior was not strictly secular space, neither were the portraits displayed there. Instead, the art form formed an integral part of domestic devotions.

61 ASV, Canc. Inf., Misc. Not. Div., b. 41, n. 32 (1566).

62 Ibid., b. 40, n. 9.

63 On portraiture's ability to link the personal to universal values, see Rubin P.L., "Art and the Image of Memory", in Ciapelli – Rubin, *Art, Memory, and Family* 74.

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CHAPTER 6

Domestic Religion and Connected Spaces: Isabella della Rovere, Princess of Bisignano (1552–1619)

Elisa Novi Chavarria

The concept of 'domestic religion' is certainly rich in interpretative potential; for example, it is useful in overcoming the restrictions inherent in the term 'civic religion', focussed as this is on the space and time of rituals and of religious festivity and collective devotional fervour.[1] It also avoids dichotomies such as high/low, noble/popular, or theory/practice, as well as many other fetters and impediments which have hindered scholars in approaching the idea of 'popular religion'. We can add this to Giuseppe Galasso's lucid interpretation of popular religion, which sidesteps sociology and class to define it as something simple, elemental and traditional (as historically determined).[2] Similarly, the usefulness of the concept of 'domestic religion' also lies in its ability to overcome the dichotomies intrinsic in the categories of 'centre/periphery' and 'confessionalisation/regulation' which have had a notable impact on the history of ecclesiastical structures and regulation, relating as they do to the modernisation of bureaucracy and procedure, leaving aside the questions of religious intimacy, pluralism, and the dissemination of rituals.[3] Above all, the concept of domestic religion fundamentally challenges the idea of a monolithic Catholic culture. Here, I emphasise the role of local groups in the promotion of religious renewal, and in particular the part played by women and their network of relationships.

1 On the use of this concept in early modern Naples, see Marino J.A., *Becoming Neapolitan: Citizen Culture in Baroque Naples* (Baltimore: 2011); Guarino G., "Public Rituals and Festivals in Naples, 1503–1799", in Astarita T. (ed.), *A Companion to Early Modern Naples* (Leiden – Boston: 2013) 257–279.

2 Galasso G., "La storia socio-religiosa e i suoi problemi", in *L'altra Europa. Per un'antropologia storica del Mezzogiorno d'Italia* (Naples: 2009) 385–401.

3 Novi Chavarria E., "Passato e presente della storiografia socio-religiosa", *L'Acropoli* 1 (2003) 54–68. See also Lotz-Heumann U., 'Confessionalization', in Bamji A. – Janssen G.H. – Laven M. (eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation* (Burlington: 2013) 33–54.

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In the following pages I will try to explain, via examination of a specific case-study, how the concept of 'domestic religion' can be interpreted. In other words, I will try to shed light on how analysis of a network, combined with a social and cultural microhistory, can reveal many of the traits of fluidity and mobility, plurality and transversality that I believe to be part of the 'Confessionalisation' process and the category of 'domestic religion'.[4] It is thanks to this approach that we can better situate religious phenomena within a constantly shifting panorama which was characterised in Naples by intense diversity, and by devotional and cultural pluralism.

As we refine and develop the concept of domestic religion, we need to ensure that it does not solidify into rigid use. The domestic should be considered an open, connected and malleable space. To do this, a methodology must be crafted which interweaves many different sorts of sources, bearing in mind the plethora of possible options. This should combine the practice of research with an awareness of theory – archival work with critical thought. This might help us to navigate to a middle ground, so to speak, between the history of institutions and that of mentalities, between religious history and cultural history, between the sphere of norms and the sphere of behaviours, treading the boundary between ecclesiastical structures, civil power and society, between institutional strictures and individual choices, between capital resources and symbolic systems.[5] I will come back to this and other similar issues in my conclusion. I will now turn to the analysis of my case-study.

1 The Characters

At the heart of our story are two individuals and a devotional image: the historical figures are Princess Isabella della Rovere of the Dukes of Urbino, wife of the Prince of Bisignano Nicolò Bernardino Sanseverino, one of the greatest barons of the Kingdom of Naples, and the blessed Geremia da Valacchia, one of the many 'living saints' who populated the city of Naples at the peak of the Counter-Reformation. Connecting these protagonists was a painting – a

4 Trivellato F., "Is there a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?", *Californian Italian Studies* 2.1 (2011), permalink: http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0294n9hq.

5 Novi Chavarria E., "Controllo delle coscienze e organizzazione ecclesiastica nel contesto sociale", in Chacon F. – Visceglia M.A. – Murgia G. – Tore G. (eds.), *Spagna e Italia in Età moderna: storiografie a confronto* (Rome: 2009) 305–325: 313.

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depiction of the Virgin and Child – which came to serve as a means of the circulation and sharing of a transnational cult.

Isabella is well-known to historians – and to historians of art and of the Counter-Reformation in particular – as the generous benefactress of Jesuits in Naples and in Rome, and as a sensitive patron and collector of Renaissance art works. She was born on 1 August 1552 to Guidobaldo II della Rovere, Duke of Urbino and his second wife, Vittoria Farnese, who was the sister of Ottavio, Duke of Parma and of cardinal Alessandro Farnese, and the granddaughter of Pope Paul III. Isabella was brought up in the refined Renaissance courts of Pesaro and Urbino, where as a child she met scientists, mathematicians, prelates, artists and scholars, including Federico Zuccari, Federico Barocci, Bernardo Tasso and a young Torquato Tasso. Her teachers were probably the same as those who educated her brother Francesco Maria in literature and mathematics, which is to say Vincenzo Bartoli from Urbino and Ludovico Corrado from Mantua. In addition, her mother instructed her in the more complex world of informal diplomacy and political negotiation, in the patronage of the arts, and in tending to the emotional well-being of relationships within the family.[6] Isabella placed special importance on relationships with other gentlewomen within the household and the court (the leading lights during Isabella's childhood were Ginevra Malatesta, Pantasilea Baglioni, Cornelia Varano, Ippolita Pico and her cousin Clelia Farnese, the natural daughter of cardinal Alessandro). Bernardo Tasso mentioned her, along with her mother and her sister Lavinia, in his heroic poem *Amadigi*, first published in Venice in 1560.[7] Five years later, in 1565, Isabella married the prince of Bisignano, heir to one of the biggest, and to one of the most heavily indebted, feudal states within the kingdom of Naples.[8]

6 Becker S., *Dynastische Politik und Legitimationsstrategien der della Rovere Potenziale und Grenzen der Herzöge von Urbino* (*1508–1631*) (Rome: 2015).

7 A hagiographic biography of Isabella can be found in Napoli, Biblioteca Nazionale (hereafter BNN), ms. XI A 52, *Della vita e morte dell'Ill.ma et Ecc.ma S.ra Donna Isabella Feltria della Rovere, Principessa di Bisignano*. On the text and on Isabella see Conelli M.A., "The Ecclesiastical Patronage of Isabella Feltria della Rovere: Bricks, Bones and Brocades", in Verstegen I.F. (ed.), *Patronage and Dynasty: The Rise of the della Rovere in Renaissance Italy* (Kirksville, MI: 2007) 123–140. On the text and on Isabella see Miretti M., "Vittoria Farnese: vita pubblica e privata" in Giallongo A. (ed.), *Donne di palazzo nelle corti europee. Tracce e forme di potere nell'età moderna* (Milan: 2005) 149–157; Miretti M., "Mediazioni, carteggi, clientele di Vittoria Farnese, duchessa di Urbino", in Arcangeli L. – Peyronel S. (eds.), *Donne di potere nel Rinascimento* (Rome: 2008) 765–784.

8 Becker, *Dynastische Politik und Legitimationsstrategien der della Rovere*, 183–187. The weddings were celebrated at the Della Rovere court in Pesaro. See Piperno F., *L'immagine del Duca. Musica e spettacolo alla corte di Guidubaldo II duca d'Urbino* (Florence: 2001) 93–96.

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As biographers would subsequently relate, hers was not a happy marriage. After a brief period spent in a house belonging to the Della Rovere family in Pesaro, the young couple moved to properties owned by the Sanseverino in Calabria. There, ensconced in provincial isolation in the castles of Cassano and Morano, during the long hunting seasons in which her husband took part with gusto, Isabella began to experience the first repercussions of a decidedly mismatched marriage. Despite having around her a small court of ladies-in-waiting which she had brought with her from Urbino, Isabella was hurt by the backbiting and intrigue of the Prince's entourage. She was homesick for the sophisticated setting of the court she had grown up in. Above all, though, she was wounded by the indifference and frequent absences of her husband.[9] She complained about it repeatedly in the letters she wrote to her mother, and in the prolific correspondence she maintained up to her death, both with other members of her large extended family, and also with Giulio Giordano, a gentleman from Pesaro who had acted as secretary for her husband, the Prince of Bisignano for some time.[10] To cope with her unhappy marriage and escape the oppressive atmosphere of her Calabrian home, she took to travelling: a brief stay in Urbino, and pilgrimages with her mother and her sisters to Assisi and the sanctuary of Loreto in 1567.[11]

In 1571, to coincide with the arrival of Don John of Austria who was organising the expedition against the Turks, the couple moved to the beautiful Chiaia palace in Naples, where they led a luxurious court life, going to parties, balls and plays. At the same time, marital relations were becoming increasingly strained, such that Isabella spent another two periods apart from her husband, going to stay with the Cesarini family in Rome, where she enjoyed the care of her cousin Clelia, who welcomed her into her own home, and encouraged her to join in with the lively social life she led.[12]

Being troubled by a painful lesion on her nose, Isabella temporarily made up with her husband only at the beginning of the 1580s. It was then that she managed to fulfil her wish to be a mother and to provide an heir to the dynasty with the birth, in 1581, of her son Francesco Teodoro. In those years, following

9 *Della vita e morte dell'Ill.ma et Ecc.ma S.ra Donna Isabella Feltria della Rovere*, fols. 5r–7v.

10 Some of this correspondence is in ASP, Carteggio Farnesiano Estero, Urbino, b. 591.

11 See Vernarecci A., *Lavinia Feltria Della Rovere, marchesa del Vasto da documenti inediti* (Rome: 1924) 24 and for additional thoughts on Isabella's marriage and familial relations.

12 Fragnito G., *Storia di Clelia Farnese. Amori, potere, violenza nella Roma della Controriforma* (Bologna: 2013) 131, 279.

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in her own mother's footsteps, Isabella also began to put in order the precarious Sanseverino finances, overseeing the reorganisation of the accounts both by streamlining spending and calling in old loans, as well as by doing away with certain privileges which the local nobility had usurped to give to vassals in their Calabrian estates.[13] In 1577 she got her husband to put the estate of Policoro in Basilicata in her name. Three years after this he transferred to her a considerable proportion of the (fiscal) yield on the customs duty on silk to the tune of 4,000 ducats, managing to extract this from the sequestration which had been placed upon the entire Bisignano patrimony.[14] Isabella made use of her own talents and of her social network to secure the support of the viceroy of Naples Don Juan de Zúñiga. He, spurred on by the urgent requests which came from the court of the dukes of Urbino, personally undertook to keep track of what happened to Isabella – though he managed neither to alleviate the numerous debts which her husband the prince had run up, nor to stop the sequestration, and much less to lift Isabella's spirits from a marriage which seemed unhappier every day. On 23 December 1581 Zúñiga informed Francesco Maria Della Rovere that the question of the Prince of Bisignano's assets 'is settled suitably' although 'there is great difficulty ascertaining them with precision', and therefore it would have been best to hope for the lesser evil. He added that he had advised the Princess (who in the meantime had expressed the wish to leave Castle Morano and move back to Naples) that he thought she should not abandon her conjugal home in Calabria.[15]

In Calabria, Isabella who, as we know, was a devoted follower of the Jesuits, was in contact with several members of the newly-formed Society of Jesus from the late 1560s, when she had been visited by two Jesuit missionaries, Lucio Croce and Juan Xavier, who were sent into the Valdesian community that existed on her estates.[16] These were the very same Jesuits who, at the same moment, in communication with the people of the Calabrian countryside and mountains, developed the metaphor of the *Indias de por açà*. This became a *topos* in contemporary missionary literature as a way of suggesting that, right in the heart of Catholic Europe, and in the South of Italy in particular, there

13 Galasso G., *Economia e società nella Calabria del Cinquecento* (*Naples*: 1992) 3–16.

14 AHN, legajo 3948, Papeles referentes al Principe Bisiniani y a su mujer Isabella de la Rovere.

15 BL, MS Add 28.413, Register of letters of Juan de Zuñiga Ambassador at Rome Spanish, vol. VI, June 1581-Aug. 1582, fols. 242v–243r. Other letters from Juan de Zúñiga to the dukes of Urbino and to the princess of Bisignano are at fols. 82v–85v, 242v–243r.

16 Marranzini A., "I gesuiti Bobadilla, Croce, Xavierre e Rodriguez tra i Valdesi di Calabria", *Rivista storica calabrese* 4 (1983) 121–129.

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FIGURE 6.1 The Church of Gesù Nuovo, Naples, 16th–18th centuries
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were communities characterised by such cultural backwardness and ignorance even of the basics of faith and of Christian doctrine that they could be grouped together with the indigenous populations of distant lands.[17]

Isabella took the message of the two Jesuits to heart. She started to finance them in their catechetical activities and in offering spiritual succour to her servants. When later she moved more or less permanently to Naples and the Chiaia Palace, the princess started frequently to attend the 'Casa Professa' run by the Jesuits in that city, to whom she regularly gave sums of money, precious objects, and a great many relics. Her financial support to the church of Gesù Nuovo was so generous that she was named the founder of the edifice, and her name can be read to this day in a stone of the tympanum over the main door [Figs. 6.1–6.2].

At the same time Isabella subsidised other institutions alongside the Jesuits: the College of the Massalubrense, near Naples; the novitiate of San Vitale in Rome (which at that time also received patronage and financial support of her uncle, the cardinal Alessandro Farnese); the brothers of the Order of San Francesco of Paola in Calabria; and, in Naples, the convents of Santa Maria della Sanità and Santa Maria del Carmine, and the Ospedale degli Incurabili, which she visited regularly, tending to the sick alongside the countess of Miranda, María de Zúñiga y Avellaneda, vicereine of Naples. It cannot be ruled out that she did this in part to keep safe a hefty slice of the family fortune, already lacerated by her husband's debts, from the clutches of creditors. But in Counter-Reformation Naples, in the years between the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, and in the pages of her appreciative biographers – who were none other than her own Jesuit confessors and spiritual fathers – the princess became a model of Christian virtue. She was praised for her attentiveness to the sacraments and to devotional practises, her modesty and spotless conduct, the patience with which she was able to face sickness, sacrifice and, eventually, the pain of the untimely death of her son in 1595, at only fourteen years old [Fig. 6.3].[18]

17 Prosperi A., *Tribunali della coscienza. Inquisitori, confessori, missionari* (Turin: 1996) 551–599; Novi Chavarria E., "Las Indias de por açà nelle relazioni dei gesuiti napoletani", in *Il governo delle anime. Azione pastorale, predicazione e missioni nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia. Secoli XVI–XVIII* (Naples: 2001) 141–156; Selwynn J., *A Paradise Inhabited by Devils: The Jesuits' Civilizing Mission in Early Modern Naples* (Aldershot: 2004).

18 BNN, ms. XV G 22, fol. 363r.

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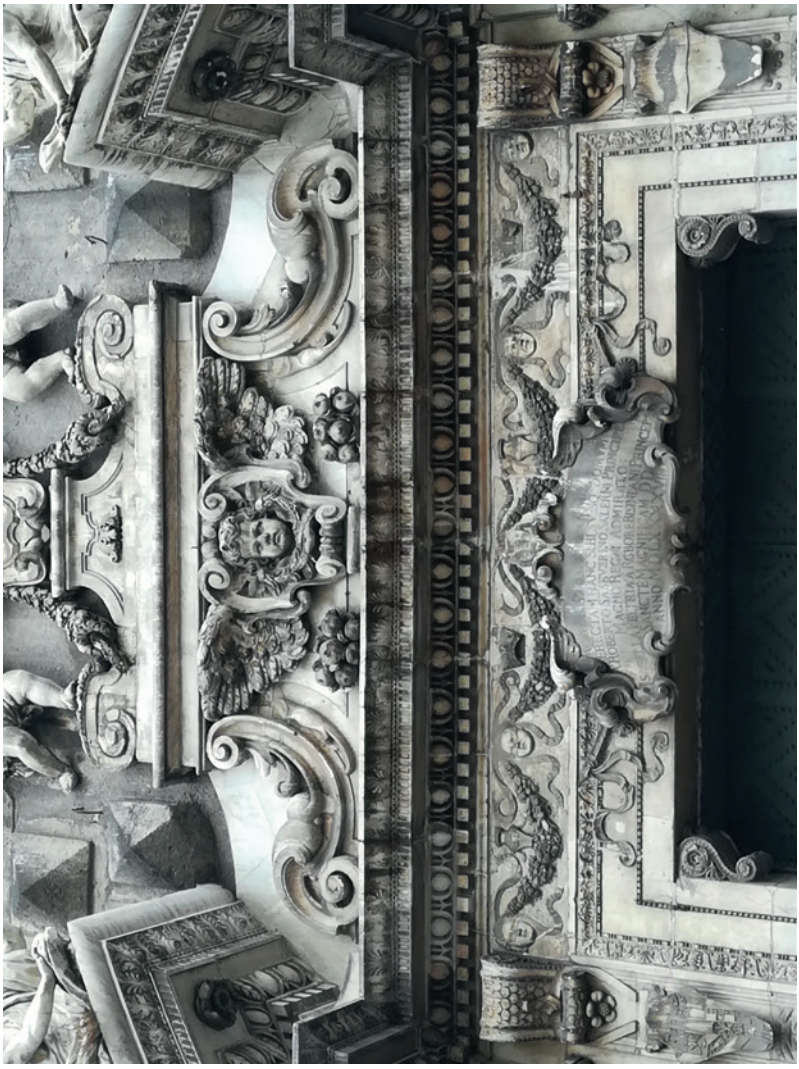


FIGURE 6.2 The epigraph on the *timpanum* of the *Casa Professa*
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This study argues, however, that the princess of Bisignano was not merely a typical example of a 'charitable and pious noblewoman', as many have described her [Fig. 6.4].[19] She participated actively in courtly cultural life in Urbino and in Naples, where she garnered sincere admiration and recognition from the many scholars who dedicated their works to her, including the aforementioned Bernardo Tasso, the poet Laura Terracina, the Jesuit Luca Pinelli, the Neapolitan historian Angelo di Costanzo and the poet Pietro Campollonio [Fig. 6.5].[20] She upheld the artistic and cultural connections that her own family, the Della Rovere, had with the Habsburg Court in Madrid, through which she commissioned several works from Federico Barocci, as well as other diplomatic gifts, amongst which were scientific instruments, watches and small luxury items, in addition to an extraordinary number of devotional objects, such as reliquaries, sacred images and *agnus dei*.[21] Her collection of scientific items went hand in hand with her collection of religious material. It was her recommendation that brought the Calabrian-born artist Felice Antonio Lettieri to the court of her brother Francesco Maria II; from 1603, Lettieri took on the role of supervisor of the artisanal workforce employed in the Della Rovere household in Pesaro.[22] She had a political sensitivity and a rare gift for mediation, as emerges from her regular correspondence with the court in Urbino, which entrusted her with a key diplomatic role to the court of the viceroy and vicereine of Naples. She was at the centre of a huge network which took in communications between Naples, Pesaro, and Rome, but also, as we shall

19 Examples include Conelli M.A., "A typical patron of extraordinary means: Isabella Feltria Della Rovere and the Society of Jesus", *Renaissance Studies* 18 (2004) 412–436; Conelli M.A., "The Ecclesiastical Patronage of Isabella Feltria della Rovere".

20 Orlandi A., "Donne nelle dediche", in Santoro M. (ed.), *La Donna nel Rinascimento meridionale*, Atti del Convegno Internazionale (Roma, 11–13 novembre 2009), Istituto Nazionale sul Rinascimento Meridionale, (Pisa-Rome: 2010) 383–392: 388.

21 See Pérez de Tuleda Gabaldón A., "Las relaciones artísticas de la familia della Rovere con la corte española durante el reinado de Felipe II en la correspondencia del Archivo de Estado de Florencia", in Martínez Millán J. – Rivero Rodríguez M. (eds.), *Centros de poder italianos en la monarquía hispánica* (*siglos XV–XVIII*) (Madrid: 2010) vol. III: 1543–1714; Denunzio A.E., "Isabella della Rovere e Isabella Gonzaga a Napoli: originali apporti collezionistici per via di matrimonio", in Denunzio A.E. – Di Mauro L. – Muto G. – Schütze S. – Zezza A. (eds.), *Dimore signorili a Napoli. Palazzo Zevallos Stigliano e il mecenatismo aristocratico dal XVI al XX secolo*, Convegno Internazionale di Studi (Napoli, 20–22 ottobre 2011) (Naples: 2013) 366–383.

22 See Morselli R., "In the Service of Francesco Maria II della Rovere in Pesaro and Urbino (1549–1631)", in Fumagalli E. – Morselli R. (eds.), *The Court Artist in Seventeenth-Century Italy* (Rome: 2014) 49–93.

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FIGURE 6.3 Portrait of Francesco Teodoro Sanseverino, BNN, ms. I B 36 G.B. Masculo (S.J.), *Isabellae Feltriae Roboreaque principis Bisiniani* [...] (Naples 1619)
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FIGURE 6.4 Portrait of Isabella della Rovere, BNN, ms. I B 36, G.B. Masculo (S.J.), *Isabellae Feltriae Roboreaque principis Bisiniani* [...] (Naples 1619)
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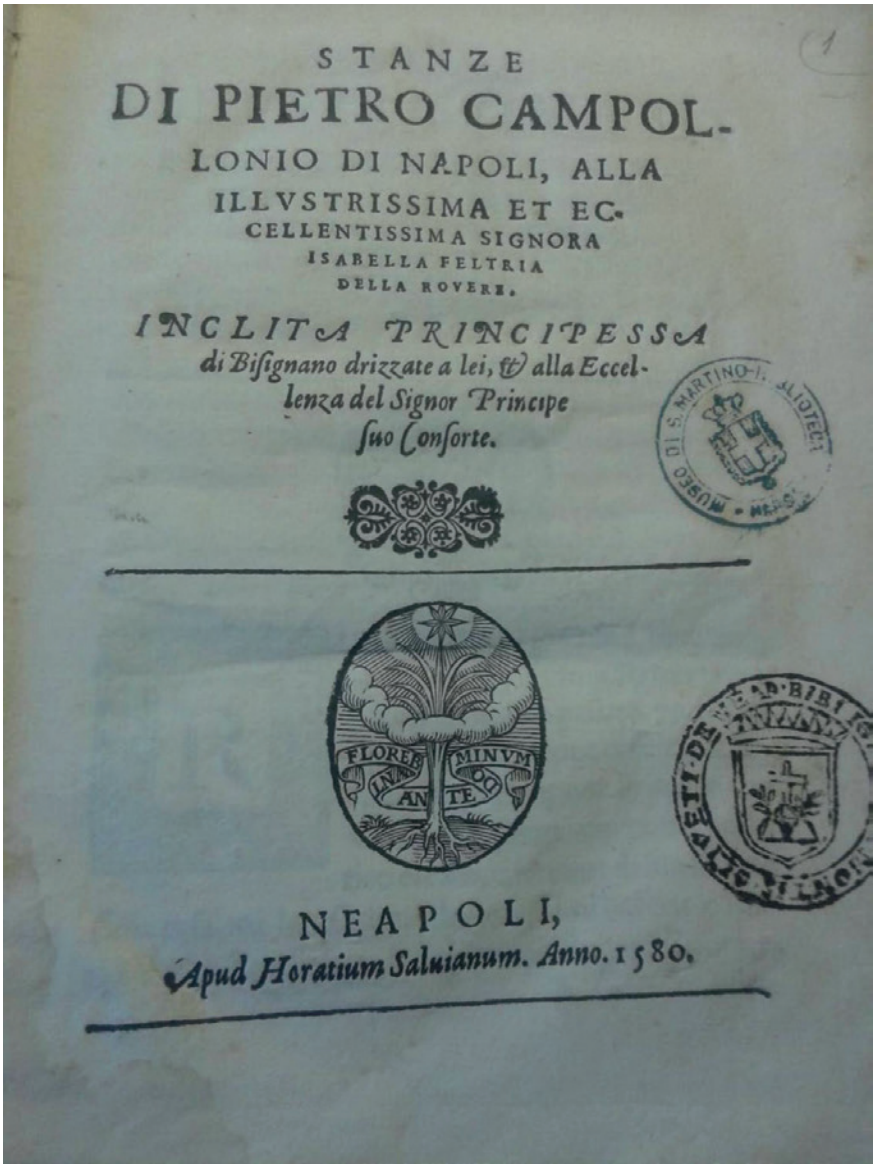

STANZE
DI PIETRO CAMPOL-
LONIO DI NAPOLI, ALLA
ILLVSTRISSIMA ET EC-
CELLENTISSIMA SIGNORA
ISABELLA FELTRIA
DELLA ROVERE.
INCLITA PRINCIPESSA
di Bisignano drizzate a lei, & alla Eccel-
lenza del Signor Principe
suo Consorte.
FLOREB MINVM
ANTE
NEAPOLI,
Apud Horatium Salvianum. Anno. 1580.

FIGURE 6.5 P. Campollonio, *Stanze di Pietro Campollonio di Napoli, alla illustrissima et eccellentissima signora Isabella Feltria della Rovere* [...] (Naples 1580)

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see, budding religious practices and circles of believers.[23] Thus she stands out among those many 'powerful noblewomen' who populated the courts of Renaissance Italy.[24] She was, in short, the rightful heir to her mother Vittoria Farnese and to her other forebears on her father's side, who in the mid-sixteenth century catapulted the small duchy from Padana into the orbit of imperial Spanish power.[25]

Upon her death, on 6 July 1619, at the funeral laid on by her brother the duke in Urbino, the elegy was spoken in Latin by Giulio Cesare Capaccio, canon and member of the Academy degli Oziosi (or 'Idlers' Academy'), a versatile writer and acute observer of contemporary Naples.[26] In Naples, where Isabella had spent most of her life, the Jesuits set aside a theatrical and encomiastic tomb for her, with lavish decoration in gold and lapis lazuli, entrusting the decorative and symbolic display to the ingenious Giovanni Battista Mascolo, also a player in the cultural life of the Neapolitan scientific academies. Mascolo's design celebrated Isabella's significance as a public figure, and her artistic and religious patronage, with solemn funeral honours.[27]

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23 Pérez de Tuleda Gabaldón A., "Las relaciones artísticas".

24 See Novi Chavarria E., "Dame di corte, circolazione dei saperi e degli oggetti nel Rinascimento meridionale", in Santoro M. (ed.), *La donna nel Rinascimento meridionale* 215–225.

25 Spagnoletti A., *Le dinastie italiane nella prima età moderna* (Bologna: 2003) 201. For the political relations of the duchy of Urbino with the Spanish court see Signorotto G., "Urbino nell'età di Filippo II", in Martínez Millán J.(ed.), *Felipe II (1527–1598), Europa y la monarquía católica* (Madrid: 1998) vol. II, 833–879. On the role of informal diplomacy and cultural diplomacy in the political relations of Spanish Italy, see Carrió Invernizzi D., "Diplomacia informal y cultura de las apariencias en la Italia española", in Bravo C. – Quirós Rosado R., *En tierra de confluencias. Italia y la Monarquía de España, Siglos XVI–XVIII* (Valencia: 2013) 99–109.

26 Vernarecci A., *Lavinia Feltria Della Rovere* 28. For a history of the Accademia degli Oziosi and its role in contemporary cultural life, see de Miranda G., *Una quiete operosa: forme e pratiche dell'Accademia napoletana degli Oziosi 1611–1645* (Naples: 2000); Gianfrancesco L., "From Propaganda to Science: Looking at the World of Academies in Early Seventeenth-century Naples", *Californian Italian Studies* 3.1 (2012), permalink: http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/1kf886k4. See Arbizzoni G., "Emblemi e imprese nell'apparato funebre per Isabella Della Rovere (Napoli 1619)", in *Imagines loquentes. Emblemi Imprese Iconologie* (Rimini: 2013) 143–175.

27 BNN, ms. I B 36, Masculo G.B. (S.J.), *Isabellae Feltriae Roboreaque principis Bisiniani ducis Urbinatuium sororis Parentalia, a Patribus Societatis Jesu in templo domus professae B.M. soluta*, Napoli 1619.

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The other central character of our case study is a Capuchin monk, Geremia da Valacchia, who was born in 1566 in the region of Tzazo in the lower Moldavia under the name of Jon Kostistk, and died in Naples in 1625. Such was his reputation for saintliness, and so many were the miracles which popular faith attributed to him, that a mere four years after his death the process of canonisation was already underway in the tribunal of the archdiocese of Naples.[28] The other Brothers told of how he had dreamed of moving to Italy since he was a child. Schooled by his parents in the basic tenets of the Catholic faith in a country where at the time Catholics were in a minority in comparison to the orthodox or Turkish populations, he had grown up with the idea that he would be able to find 'good Christians' in the Papal lands. When, at the age of 22, after many trials and tribulations, he reached Naples, he found the churches so well officiated and 'such frequent sacraments, with such a multitude of worshippers', that he was deeply moved. This was the context in which his vocation evolved, and he decided to take the habit of a Capuchin monk in the monastery of the Santissima Concezione.[29]

He was assigned to the care of the sick, a task to which he dedicated himself with great self sacrifice, making himself their protector. He treated them, he healed their putrid and malodourous wounds: 'However great the stink was', witnesses would later say at the tribunal for his beatification, 'he fed them without ever betraying worry or disgust'.[30] On more than one occasion, the support he provided resulted in an extraordinary recovery. Amongst the miraculously healed were many young people and above all children, and, in a world where childhood carried with it a strong risk of mortality, their recovery evidently had a particularly wide appeal, causing something of a commotion.[31] Brother Geremia's presence in the crowded city streets was reported because of the compassion he showed to the poor, and the simplicity and familiarity

28 ASDN, Fondo Cause dei Santi, 26, Geremia da Valacchia.

29 These reports are taken from the tribunal for his beatification, and from Emmanuele da Napoli, *Vita del Venerabile Servo di Dio frate Geremia da Valacchia de' Minori Cappuccini della Provincia di Napoli* (Naples, Vincenzo Pauria: 1761).

30 It was not possible to trace the original painting. This is only known in hagiographic sources. See ASDN, Fondo Cause dei Santi, 26, Geremia da Valacchia, f. n.n.

31 On the frequent recurrence of miraculous healings within the context of Neapolitan religiosity see Sodano G., *Il miracolo nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia dell'età moderna tra Santi, Madonne, guaritrici e medi*ci (Naples: 2010). Useful points of comparison are in Sangalli M., *Miracoli a Milano. I processi informativi per eventi miracolosi nel milanese in età spagnola* (Milan: 1993).

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(clearly founded on Franciscan principles) with which he treated the faithful.[32] In this way there sprung up around him miracles and the belief in these miracles, requests for celestial protection for people's children, expectations and hopes from ever more numerous believers of all social strata: nobles, titleholders, religious, and ordinary people. Among them was the viceroy of Naples the Duke of Ossuna Pedro Téllez Girón.

At the death of Brother Geremia many of his followers, with the monastery's collusion, stockpiled relics from his corpse: they pulled out hair and toenails, they ripped pieces of cloth from his habit, and they then swapped these with friends and relatives for other relics. Thus started a network of sacred souvenirs and remains, which broadened his fan base even further. Within a few days the sacristy of the Chiesa della Concezione was stuffed with silver ex votos given in gratitude for the intercession of Brother Geremia.[33]

2 A Picture of Thaumaturgic Power

What then, is it that unites our two protagonists? The conduit for the link between the Princess of Bisignano and Brother Geremia was a painting depicting the Virgin and Child, which was at the centre of many sensory experiences, and the object of transregional and transnational forms of worship and devotion. The painting hung in the Princess's palace, in her bedroom, beside other paintings of a religious theme, precious artefacts and other objects closest to her heart, all of which she would leave to the Jesuits' Casa Professa in Naples. 'The room in which she mostly dwelt,' wrote her biographer, 'she filled with holy images of Christ our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin and a great number of holy intercessors, in amongst brocades and tapestries'.[34]

His confreres told the tribunal that it had been Brother Geremia himself, appointed by the Princess, who gave directions to the artist who painted the work on the subject it should depict: a vision of the Madonna which had appeared to him in a dream [Figs 6.6 and 6.7]. He, 'had it painted', confirmed several monks at the tribunal, 'by an artist, at the insistence of the elderly Princess

32 On the acceptance of the Franciscans into the Kingdom of Naples and the south of Italy in general, see Galasso G., *L'altra Europa* 110–115.

33 For rituals performed at the death of servants of God, and in particular for the scavenging of relics from the body of Brother Geremia da Valacchia, see Sodano G., *Modelli e selezione del santo moderno. Periferia napoletana e centro romano* (Naples: 2002) 181–193.

34 BNN, ms. XI A 52, *Della vita e morte dell'Ill.ma et Ecc.ma S.ra Donna Isabella Feltria Della Rovere, Principessa di Bisignano*, fol. 53r.

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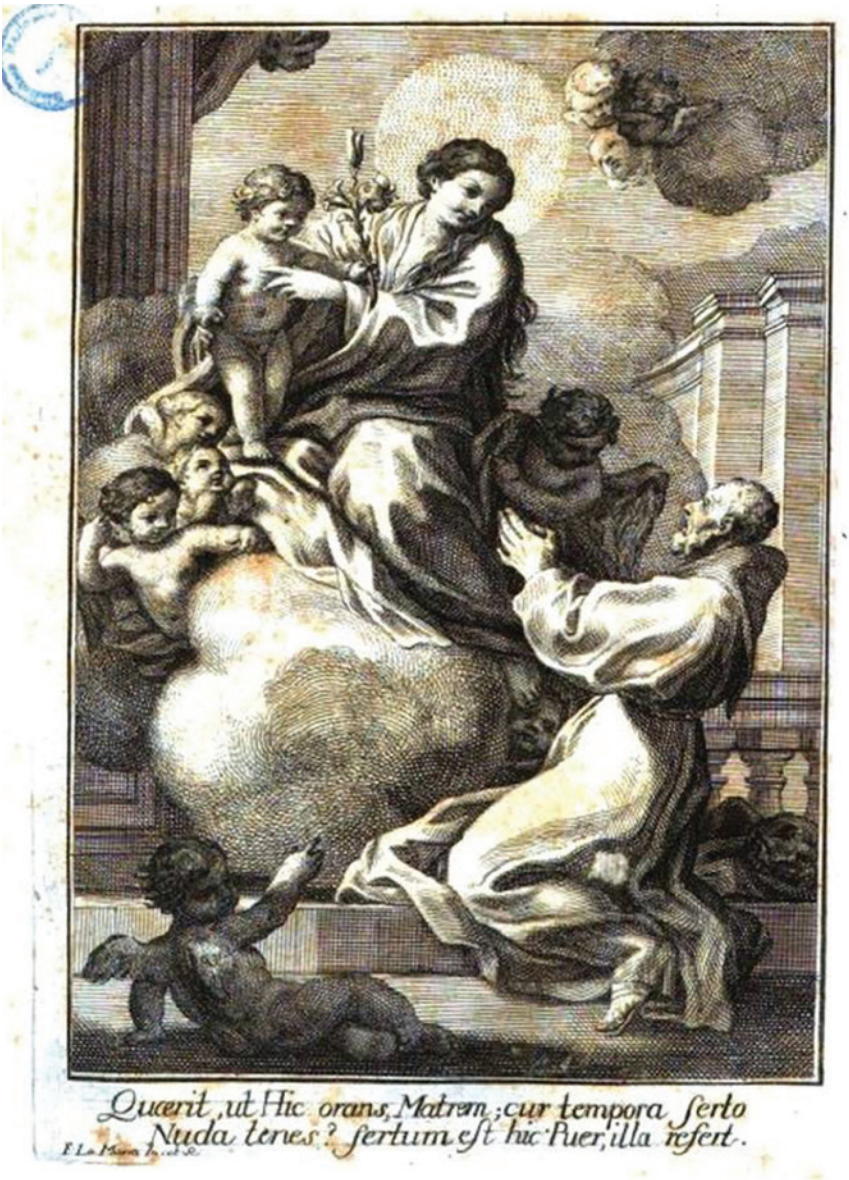


FIGURE 6.6 Friar Emanuele from Naples, *Vita del venerabile servo di Dio Frate Geremia da Valacchia de' Minori Cappuccini della Provincia di Napoli* (Naples 1761)

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FIGURE 6.7 The vision of Madonna, BNN, ms. XI A 52, ca. n.n
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of Bisignano, sister to the Duke of Urbino – the same image of the Most Holy Madonna in just the way he described, and as the painter was not sure how to go about it (there being in the lady's house many other paintings depicting the Blessed Virgin), Brother Geremia advised him to 'take a little from this one, and a little from that'.[35]

As in the vision, the painting shows Mary with a white dress interwoven with stars, bareheaded, her hair loose on her shoulders, and the Christ Child held in her right arm. This Marian iconography was unusual in Naples at that time because of the lack of a crown or veil on her head, in contrast with other images in both private collections and ecclesiastical ones.[36] At any rate, the depiction immediately found much favour: witnesses at the beatification process of Brother Geremia said that it was reproduced in a great many copies dispersed around Naples and also outside the city, as far, indeed, as Slovenia and Moldavia, the native lands of Brother Geremia. It was known as 'Brother Geremia's Madonna': 'Thus so many of these images were painted in the manner described by Brother Geremia,' his confreres recounted, 'that they not only filled Naples, but spread throughout Italy and even beyond its confines'.[37] The iconographic model in question was presumably a serene, intimate and emotional image of motherhood possibly similar to the style of the Madonnas by Federico Barocci, a painter who enjoyed great success at the court of the Della Rovere in Urbino as well as, following Isabella's introduction, the court of the viceroy of Naples and even Madrid.[38]

We know that a copy of the painting hung, at least till the late eighteenth century, in the Chiesa della Immacolata Concezione. The subject matter was also frequently replicated in wooden sculptures. Inside domestic spaces, in the Princess' rooms, the painting expressed, among its other possible meanings, maternity and childhood. For its unhappy owner, disappointed so many times as a wife and mother, it must have served a talismanic function, given that it

35 ASDN, Fondo Cause dei Santi, 26, Geremia da Valacchia, f. n.n.

36 See De Maio R., *Pittura e Controriforma a Napoli* (Rome-Bari: 1983) and more recently Labrot G., *Peinture et société à Naples. XVI–XVII siècle: Commandes Collections Marchés*, Préface de Aymard M. (Seyssel: 2010).

37 ASDN, Fondo Cause dei Santi, 26, Geremia da Valacchia, f. n.n.; Emmanuele da Napoli, *Vita del Venerabile Servo di Dio frate Geremia da Valacchia* 98.

38 Morselli R., "Nove quadri per il duca. Quello che resta delle opere di Federico Barocci nella collezione di Franceco Maria della Rovere nel 1631", in Continisio C. – Fantoni M. (eds.), *Testi e contesti. Per Amedeo Quondam* (Rome: 2015) 329–343.

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showed a mother with a son who was the sole heir of a great dynasty, who had similarly died young. With its moral and emotional content, the image of Mary as a mother taking care of her Child represented a sort of image-amulet of motherhood.[39] Outside the domestic space of the Sanseverino di Bisignano Palace, the painting represented the visions of a venerable monk from foreign lands, and was a multivalent thaumaturgic object. Brother Geremia himself made use of it when he was gravely ill, when he had the painting brought from the Princess to the monastery. There, in the intimate space of his cell (following a recurrent theme in miracles obtained via the intercession of the Madonna), he invoked the Virgin directly, touching and kissing the sacred image, which resulted in a remarkable recovery, thus revealing the extraordinary thaumaturgic power of the image.[40]

From then on, the fame of the image took a meandering path between Naples and Moldavia, tracing the route of the trip which Brother Geremia had taken, from his parents' guidance in Moldavia to the material and spiritual apostolate movement which he carried out among the sick of Spanish Naples. Thanks to the actions of missionary Capuchins, copies of the same subject sculpted in wood would also reach overseas territories.

The painting of Brother Geremia's Madonna found in the Princess of Bisignano's palace was a devotional image that was reproduced in many and widespread examples, one of those numerous 'everyday objects', brimming with emotional and affective potential, which filled domestic and ecclesiastical spaces of the time and which today attract the attention of historians of material culture and of domestic religion.[41]

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39 Miller S.R., "Parenting in the Palazzo: Images and Artifacts of Children in the Italian Renaissance Home", in Campbell E.J. – Miller S.R. – Carrol Consavari E. (eds.), *The Early Modern Italian Domestic Interior, 1400–1700 Objects, Spaces, Domesticities* (Burlington: 2013) 67–88. On the reassessment of maternal tenderness towards their children, see D'Amelia M, "La presenza delle madri nell'Italia medievale e moderna", in D'Amelia M. (ed.), *Storia della maternità* (Rome-Bari: 1997) 3–52.On the dissemination in Naples of cults linked to a new sensitivity towards childhood see Scaramella P., *I santolilli. Culti dell'infanzia e santità infantile a Napoli alla fine del XVII secolo* (Rome: 1997).

40 Casper A.R., "Display and Devotion: Exhibiting Icons and Their Copies in Counter-Reformation Italy", in De Boer W. – Göttler Ch. (eds.), *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden – Boston: 2013) 43–62. On recurring elements in visions of the Virgin and Marian miracles see Sodano G., *Il miracolo nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia* 87–96.

41 See Hamling T. – Richardson C., *Everyday objects. Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings* (Farnham: 2010).

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3 Domestic Religion and Connected Spaces

This episode, and the devotional image at its centre (which are extensively documented in sources relating to both the protagonists), can be considered emblematic of those which can be grouped together under the heading of 'domestic religion'. Both the image and the episode highlight above all the very close relationship between religious belief, with its transcendental, moral and emotional content, and the tangible experience of believers. This relationship is exemplified by devotion to Mary, as a compassionate mother who endures adversity, and the long-awaited, disappointing experience of motherhood of the unfortunate princess. This materialised in devotion to a miraculous image, and in faith in the power of the intercession of the Madonna – as we have seen, both widely-diffused aspects of religious life among Catholic populations in Southern Italy, and more generally in many areas of the early modern Mediterranean.[42]

The Princess of Bisignano's domestic space and Brother Geremia's cell represent both physical spaces and metaphorical spaces. They were spaces for intimacy and for prayer, for spiritual pain and for physical sickness. They were also spaces for sociability: aristocratic sociability in the Princess' court, with her lively social network consisting of cultural connections and exchanges of religious relics, scientific instruments, and artistic artefacts with the Della Rovere family in Pesaro and Urbino, the Farnese in Rome, the Viceroys of Naples, the counts of Lemos and Miranda, and the Habsburgs in Madrid; religious sociability among the brothers of the monastery of the Santissima Concezione in Naples and a band of faithful followers. They were both, therefore, physical places for religious practice, but also above all they were permeable spaces which were open to interaction between the internal and the external, that is between the house or convent, and the multitude of worshippers in a multiethnic, kaleidoscopic city characterised by strong socio-cultural mobility, as the capital of the Kingdom of Naples was at the time.

42 On the sixteenth-century prevalence of Marian devotion and on the worship of images which reproduced less common Christological visions see Galasso G., *L'altra Europa* 91–95; Christian W.A. jr., *Local religion in sixteenth century Spain* (Princeton, NJ: 1981) 71–91. On the predominance of Mary in religious iconography within domestic interiors see Labrot G., *Collections of Paintings in Naples. 1600–1780* (Munich-London-New York-Paris: 1992) 585–680; Revenga Domínguez P., *Pintura y sociedad en el Toledo Barroco* (Junta Comunidades de Castilla-La Mancha: 2002) 357–366.

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The domestic space of the Princess of Bisignano was also a space for the religion of 'things'. It was a space overflowing with objects of impressive diversity: both in the Cassano Palace in Calabria and in the Chiaia Palace in Naples, the princess's rooms were stuffed with sacred images (of the Virgin, of the Passion of Christ and of a great number of saints), instruments for self discipline, *agnus dei*, rosaries, *paternoster* beads in wood, ebony, gemstones and various other materials, stashed in chests covered in silk or velvet, next to more precious jewels or on more expensive furniture. The apartments of her husband the Prince, on the other hand, were arranged along completely different lines. First and foremost, they contained not one single devotional object. In their place were leather and velvet furnishings, tapestries, carpets, cushions, weapons, musical instruments, silverware, portraits, and mythological or landscape paintings.[43] It was the Princess who had personally attended to furnishing the private oratory within the palace in Naples. Here, nestled next to crucifixes, candelabras and other silver ornaments was her extraordinary collection of relics, gathered mainly thanks to connections with her mother's side of the Farnese family in Rome.[44]

The Princess of Bisignano's domestic space was also a fluid and plural space. It was a point of intersection for the religious requests of several prominent aristocratic Italian families (the Della Rovere from Urbino, the Farnese from Rome, and the Sanseverino from Bisignano), as well as several Spanish ones (the counts and countesses of Lemos and Miranda), and the spiritual needs of the religious and faithful who gravitated towards a small convent in the busy,

43 The inventory of Sanseverino goods in the Calabrian residence has been examined by Galasso G., "Aspetti e problemi della società feudale napoletana attraverso l'inventario dei beni dei Principi di Bisignano (1594)", in *Studi in memoria di Federigo Melis* (Naples: 1978) vol. IV, 255–277. The document in question is in ASN, Diversi della Sommaria, II Numerazione, 147. The Princess of Bisignano's will with the inventory of her personal possessions is in Notai XVI secolo, Notaio Francesco Antonio Stinca, 503/17, incc. 78, 82, 83. On the typology of the genre of devotional objects see Palumbo G., "Fede napoletana. Gli oggetti della devozione a Napoli: uno sguardo di genere", in Galasso G. – Valerio A. (eds.), *Donne e religione a Napoli. Secoli XVI–XVIII* (Milan: 2001) 285–310. More generally on female spaces in early modern Naples see Novi Chavarria E., "The Space of Women", in Astarita T. (ed.), *A Companion to Early Modern Naples* (Leiden – Boston: 2013) 177–196.

44 Sodano G., "Promozione dei culti e processi di canonizzazione nel Regno di Napoli in età moderna", in Pellegrino B. – Zarri G. – Michetti R. (eds.), *Ordini religiosi, santi e culti tra Europa, mediterraneo e Nuovo Mondo* (*secoli XV–XVII*), Atti del V Convegno Internazionale AISSCA (Lecce, 3–6 maggio 2003) (Galatina: 2009) vol. I, 277–296: 287.

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working-class area of Vergini, outside Naples' city walls. The impact of this contact rippled out across the Mediterranean, reaching as far as Slovenia and distant Moldavia, the native land of our humble friar. Focused in that space and around the devotional object of Brother Geremia's Madonna was what amounted to the international (or, indeed, transnational) circulation of a global network of local groups and families.[45]

Weaving together these multiple connections, we see that domestic religion and domestic space are central in understanding the sensorial experience of visions and of contact with religious objects and the material culture of paintings, of little talismans, of the repeated gestures of the kiss, of the genuflection and of making the sign of the cross. It was thus that apparently distant devotional spaces were linked and communicated with each other via the content of visions, the circulation of relics and the narration of miracles spread by the religious zeal of friar Geremia's brothers and his devotees.[46]

Isabella Della Rovere has been depicted as a model of the spirit of the Counter Reformation. The domestic religion of Princess Isabella is emblematic of the ways in which forms of worship and devotion could cross social boundaries, connecting aristocratic environments in Naples, Rome and Urbino, high-ranking members of religious orders, and the humble followers of Brother Geremia. This domestic devotion oversteps national and local borders. It coexists in the same spaces where very different experiences and presences were felt. It inverts conventional models of centre and periphery. It is connected with other spaces and other historical actors and continuously criss-crossed by new agents and new devotions, in a network in constant motion. It represents the triumph of the material culture of religious objects (devotional images, rosaries, *paternostri*) and of sensory and emotional experiences.

45 An example of this sort of methodology can be found in Jonson Ch. J. – Sabean D.W. – Teuscher S. –Trivellato F. (eds.), *Transregional and Transnational Families in Europe and Beyond. Experiences Since the Middle Age* (New Haven: 2011).

46 Emmanuele da Napoli, *Vita del Venerabile Servo di Dio frate Geremia da Valacchia* 155–156. On the circulation of the contents of visions via sermons see Novi Chavarria E., *Sacro, pubblico e privato. Donne nei secoli XV–XVIII* (Naples: 2009) 27–30.

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Abbreviations

AHN Archivo Historico Nacional, Madrid
ASDN Archivio Storico Diocesano di Napoli; Napoli
ASP Archivio Storico di Pesaro
BL British Library, London
BNN Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli, Napoli

Archival Sources

ASDN, Fondo Cause dei Santi, 26, Geremia da Valacchia.

BNN, ms. I B 36, Masculo G.B. (S.J.), *Isabellae Feltriae Roboreaque principis Bisiniani ducis Urbinatuium sororis Parentalia, a Patribus Societatis Jesu in templo domus professae B.M. soluta*, Napoli 1619.

BNN, ms. XI A 52, *Della vita e morte dell'Ill.ma et Ecc.ma S.ra Donna Isabella Feltria della Rovere, Principessa di Bisignano.*

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Pérez de Tuleda Gabaldón A., "Las relaciones artísticas de la familia della Rovere con la corte española durante el reinado de Felipe II en la correspondencia del Archivo de Estado de Florencia", in Martínez Millán J., Rivero Rodríguez M. (eds.), *Centros de poder italianos en la monarquía hispánica* (*siglos XV–XVIII*) (Madrid: 2010) vol. III: 1543–1714.

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CHAPTER 7

"And the Word Dwelt amongst Us": Experiencing the Nativity in the Italian Renaissance Home

Zuzanna Sarnecka

> Volo enim illius pueri memoriam agere, qui in Bethlehem natus est, et infantilium necessitatum eius incommoda, quomodo in praesaepio reclinatus et quomodo, adstante bove atque asino, supra foenum positus exstitit, utcumque corporeis oculis pervidere.[1]
>
> ST FRANCIS TO A NOBLEMAN GIOVANNI FROM GRECCIO

This fragment from the biography of St Francis shows the origins of the practice of re-enactments of the Nativity.[2] The *poverello* from Assisi visited Bethlehem, the historical birthplace of Christ, and asked Pope Honorius III for approval for his pious project of recreating the Incarnation. St Francis wished to see with his 'corporeal eyes' the Christ Child lying in the manger guarded by ox and ass, deprived of any luxuries. In 1223 he shared his ambition to celebrate the birth of Christ with a certain Giovanni from Greccio, who assisted him in fulfilling that spiritual desire. People from the small, Umbrian village spared no efforts in order to make manifest the saint's vision, in such a way that 'Greccio was transformed into a seemingly new Bethlehem', 'et quasi nova Bethlehem de Graecio facta est'.[3] The miracle that took place during the mass at Greccio,

1 Celano Thomas de, *Vita prima S. Francisci Assisiensis et eiusdem legenda ad usum chori* (Rome: 1926) 90. 'For I wish to enact the memory of the Babe who was born in Bethlehem: to see as much as possible with my own bodily eyes the discomfort of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, and how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he rested on hay'. Translation from Celano Thomas de, *The Francis Trilogy of Thomas of Celano* (Hyde Park, New York: 2004) 94–95.

2 Frugoni C., "Sul Natale di Greccio e le sue rappresentazioni", in Frugoni C. – Siddi F. (eds.), *Il mistero gioioso. Il presepe di Greccio e le sculture del Gesù Bambino benedicente* (Siena: 2012) 11–31.

3 Celano, *Vita prima S. Francisci Assisiensis* 90.

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when during St Francis's re-enactment the newly-born Christ apparently became physically present, nourished the demand for sculptural recreations of *presepi*. From the communal desire to act out the sacred mystery of God made man, arose the tradition of placing inside churches figures of the Christ Child with his Virgin mother, and other attendant figures such as St Joseph, the adoring Magi, the shepherds, and the asses and oxen.

The first three-dimensional *presepe* known to us was commissioned by Pope Nicholas IV (1288–1292) for Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. Its purpose was to recreate for all to see with their bodily eyes the events that took place in Bethlehem.[4] As the first Franciscan pope, Nicholas continued the mission of St Francis of bringing the Nativity closer to the faithful. Undoubtedly, the sculptural recreation by Arnolfo di Cambio was both visually and spiritually powerful, in particular since in the crypt in the main nave of the basilica, underneath the high altar, there were relics of the holy crib that had been brought to Rome from the Holy Land in the seventh century. In the late fifteenth century the popularisation of domestic *presepi* can be linked to the growing popularity of terracotta as a sculptural medium. Through the use of small-scale moulds, of which a few examples still survive, the mass-production of domestic *presepi* was relatively inexpensive. In particular in the Marche region and in Faenza in Emilia-Romagna potters created diverse representations through the use of different, vivid colours or memorable poses of modelled figurines. This article considers various sculptural forms developed for domestic devotions of the mystery of the Nativity. Objects described in inventories and surviving visual examples suggest that although it began as an ecclesiastic tradition, veneration of the Christ Child and the representations of the Nativity were soon adapted to the private sphere.

The tradition of making three-dimensional recreations of the Nativity was particularly important in Naples, and the Museo di Certosa di San Martino houses the most significant and comprehensive collection of *presepi* in Italy.[5] The collection includes the more than life-size wooden figure dated to 1340, showing the Virgin reclining after the birth of Christ. The statue was part of the commission of a crib for the Poor Clares in Naples made by Queen Sancia, the second wife of King Robert. Raised by her mother, Sclaramonda of Foix, in the spirit of devotion to St Francis, Sancia would have been particularly

4 Luciani R., *Santa Maria Maggiore e Roma* (Rome: 1996) 138–143.

5 Middione R., "La Sezione presepiale", in Spinosa N. – Muzii R. – Pezzullo A. (eds.), *La Certosa e il museo di San Martino: Museo nazionale di San Martino* (Naples: 2002) 75.

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FIGURE 7.1 Pietro and Giovanni Alemanno, polychromy Francesco Felice, "Presepe", 1478. Polychromed poplar wood. Naples, Museo di Certosa di San Martino
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

sensitive to sculptural representations of the Nativity.[6] Another early *presepe* was made for the church of San Giovanni a Carbonara in 1478 by the sculptors Pietro and Giovanni Alemanno, who had previously been active in northern Italy. The scale of the undertaking was extraordinary as there were originally forty-one near-life-size figures carved in poplar wood and polychromed by Francesco Fiore. Only twelve figures from this ambitious scheme have survived and are now displayed in a vast purpose-designed niche in one of the rooms in the Museum of San Martino [Fig. 7.1].

In the late fifteenth century all major churches in the city had a chapel with a sculptural representation of the Nativity, including San Domenico Maggiore,

6 Musto R., "Queen Sancia and the Spiritual Franciscans", in Kirshner J. – Wemple S. (eds.), *Women of the Medieval World: Essays in Honour of John H. Mundy* (Oxford: 1985) 183; Bruzelius C., "Queen Sancia of Mallorca and the Convent Church of Sta. Chiara in Naples", *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 40 (1995) 69–100.

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Santa Chiara, San Lorenzo Maggiore and Sant'Anna dei Lombardi. Later, in the first half of the sixteenth century, across the Italian peninsula new *presepi* were commissioned both for institutional and domestic contexts. In Urbino ca. 1560, at the Oratory of St Joseph, the sculptor Federico Brandani (1523–1571) created a monumental *presepe* with life-size stucco figures.[7] Such compositions were informed by the great importance placed on the devotion to the birth of Christ by the Franciscans.

Previous scholars have stressed the significance of figures of the Christ Child in the context of female spirituality. The cases of Italian mystics such as Camilla Battista da Varano have been used to explore how infant Jesus dolls shaped the relationship of women with the divine.[8] Christiane Klapisch-Zuber wrote about the documented use of such dolls by Florentine elite women.[9] Writing about Margaretha von Ebner, a German fourteenth-century mystic, Ulinka Rublack distinguished three kinds of interaction with a sculpted image of the Christ Child, namely physical contact, dialogue and meditation.[10] In a Florentine context, claims about interactions with figures of the Christ Child being a predominantly female activity seem to be confirmed by Savonarola's preaching against such practices:

> Se tu odi dire la tale monaca del tale monasterio è una santa e tu sappia che la si diletti di avere libriccini dorati e bambini di gesso vestiti di seta, e che in cella la tenga di molte cose superflue, subito tu ti scandalizzi, e nel cuore tuo tu di': certo costei non è santa come si dice; donde ne seguita che gli è vero quello che io ho detto, che alla santità della vita seguita la semplicità.[11]

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7 Zampetti P., *Scultura nelle Marche dalle origini all'età contemporanea* (Florence: 1993) 22.

8 For Camilla da Varano see Luzi P., *Camilla Battista da Varano. Una religiosità fra papa Borgia e Lutero* (Turin: 1989); Capriotti G., "Simulacri dell'invisibile. 'Cultura lignea' ed esigenze devozionali nella Camerino del Rinascimento", in Casciaro R. (ed.), *Rinascimento scolpito. Maestri del legno tra Marche e Umbria*, (Milan: 2006) 73–83; Catalogue entries for *Virgin adoring the Child* by Master of the Castello Nativity and *The Christ Child* attr. Domenico Indivini, M. Corry – Z. Sarnecka in Corry M. – Howard D. – Laven M. (eds.), *Madonnas and Miracles: The Holy Home in Renaissance Italy* (London: 2016) 92–93.

9 Klapisch-Zuber C., "Holy Dolls: Play and Piety in Quattrocento Florence", in *Women, Family and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, trans. L. Cochrane (Chicago: 1985) 312–313.

10 Rublack U., "Female Spirituality and the Infant Jesus in Late Medieval Dominican Convents", in Scribner B. – Johnson T. (eds.), *Popular Religion in Germany and Central Europe, 1400–1800* (Houndsmills-Basingstoke-London: 1996) 25.

11 'If you hear a nun from a nunnery called a saint and you learn that she delights in having gilded books or dolls in gesso clothed in silk, and that in her cell she keeps many superficial things, soon you will be shocked, and in your heart you will say: certainly she is not a saint as is said; from this can be inferred that what I said was true, that from the sanctity of life results simplicity'. Savonarola Girolamo, *Sermoni e prediche*, vol. 1 (Prato: 1846) 420.

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However, interaction with a three-dimensional figure of the Christ Child was by no means an exclusively female practice.[12] Fra Franceschino from Cesena, the keeper of the Biblioteca Malatestiana, had in his *camera*: 'Uno bambino bia(n)cho de terra vedriada cum una spera in mano cum certi patrinostri al collo' ['The Christ Child in white glazed terracotta with a *spera* in his hand and some rosary beads around his neck'].[13]

From this description the figure from Franceschino's *camera* appears to be somewhat similar to the Christ Child modelled in Andrea della Robbia's workshop ca. 1500 [Fig. 7.2].[14] The glazed terracotta statuette of relatively small dimensions (45.7 cm high) might have been made for a domestic space.[15] As pointed out by John Pope-Hennessy, there are no signs of it originally belonging to a bigger structure such as a tabernacle, and therefore it likely functioned as an independent three-dimensional statuette.[16] The immaculate whiteness of the body of the Christ Child stands in dramatic contrast to the intense colour of the base, which evokes porphyry. The only two other colours used by the artists were brown for the eyes and green for a leaf, which serves as a rear support. This support, which allows the figure to stand, is not without significance for the sculpture's function. Wooden infant Jesus dolls have been said to fall into two categories: those which could not stand and therefore had to be laid in a crib or cradled in the arms,[17] and those which could stand and perhaps encouraged more contemplative, physically detached interaction.[18]

In relation to a thirteenth-century figure (42 cm high) attributed to Ambrogio Lorenzetti, now in Berlin, Ursula Schlegel pointed out that the peculiar inclusion of the drapery under the Christ Child's feet indicated that the figure, depending on the occasion, could either stand or lie in a manger.[19] The figure from the Della Robbia workshop has been previously discussed in

12 Richard Trexler described the use of these "sacred" dolls by children. See his *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (Ithaca: 1980) 88.

13 Domeniconi A., "Un inventario relativo a un custode della Biblioteca Malatestiana: frate Franceschino da Cesena (1489)", *Studi romagnoli* 16 (1965) 185. Original inventory consulted in Archivio Notarile Mandamentale di Cesena, *Atti di Novello Borelli*, 18.08.1489 no. 108. It is possible that the object held by the Christ Child is in fact *una sfera*, a globe, which is his frequent attribute.

14 Pope-Hennessy J., *Catalogue of Italian Sculpture in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, vol. 1 (London: 1964) 225–226, cat. no. 217.

15 Catalogue entry for *The Christ Child* by the Workshop of Andrea della Robbia, Z. Sarnecka in Corry – Howard – Laven (eds.), *Madonnas and Miracles* 80–81.

16 Pope-Hennessy, *Catalogue of Italian Sculpture* 226.

17 Previtali G., "Il Bambin Gesù come immagine devozionale nella scultura italiana del Trecento", *Paragone* 21 (1970) 37.

18 Rublack, "Female Spirituality and the Infant Jesus" 23.

19 Schlegel U., "The Christ Child as Devotional Image in Medieval Italian Sculpture", *The Art Bulletin* 52 (1970) 4.

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FIGURE 7.2 Andrea della Robbia's workshop, "Christ Child", ca. 1500. Glazed terracotta, h: 45.7 cm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum (Inv. no. 7702–1861)
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relation to brides, who would receive similar objects 'as part of their marital goods'.[20] However, in the light of Fra Franceschino's inventory this hypothesis needs to be nuanced, and potential male ownership considered. A male owner could have handled and interacted with the Christ Child figure in much the same way as a woman, but more research needs to be done on the nature of such interactions. Literary sources, such as Teofilo Folengo's *La Palermitana*, describe how in the early sixteenth century friars would re-enact the Nativity.[21] After his experience of *sacra rappresentazione* in Palestine, Folengo imagined that he himself held Christ Child in his arms.[22] In so doing he mirrored Saint Francis and the Christmas Eve mass at Greccio.

It could be argued that the sculpted figures of the Christ Child should be linked predominantly to female and male convents. However, the iconography connected with the Nativity was certainly also present in lay houses, as is documented by a Neapolitan inventory. According to a document dated 14th July 1485, Alberico de Balbiano, Conte di Lugo di Cuneo, owned a *presepe*. Among various other possessions, the inventory lists: 'una cona de gesso colla figura de la Vergene Maria. Item un altra cona collo presepio de nostro Segnore', ['a work in gesso with a figure of the Virgin Mary. Another work with the Nativity of Our Lord'].[23]

Alberico's residence was on Piazza di Nido, which perhaps could account for a particular devotion to the image of the Nativity due to the proximity of the church of Santa Maria del Presepe located on the same square. This inventory is important for its confirmation that already towards the end of the fifteenth century the imagery of the Nativity was present in domestic space. The text has come down to us in a transcription made by Gaetano Filangieri from the original fifteenth-century document, which was destroyed in the fire at the Neapolitan archives during the Second World War.[24] From the wording of the inventory it is impossible to infer whether the altarpiece was sculpted, but perhaps the fact that the two objects follow each other in the document could indicate their formal similarity.

The word 'ancona', or its shortened form 'cona', has its origins in the Greek word for image – 'eikona' and is typically used to describe a sacred image

20 Musacchio J.M., "Conception and Birth", in Ajmar-Wollheim M. – Dennis F. (eds.), *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, exh. cat. Victoria and Albert Museum (London: 2006) 130.

21 Folengo Teofilo, "La Palermitana", in Renda U. (ed.), *Opere italiane*, vol. 3 (Bari: 1914) 119–122.

22 I am very grateful to Dr Marco Faini for this reference.

23 Archivio Filangieri, Naples Busta 46, notary Cesare Malfitano *Protocolli* 1484–85, fol. 276.

24 On the losses from the Neapolitan archives see Belli C., "Il fondo notarile quattrocentesco dell'archivio di stato di Napoli", *Napoli Nobilissima* 60 (1994) 195–202.

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painted on a panel or canvas, or carved in relief, and destined to be placed on an altar.[25] Indeed in some Neapolitan inventories the word 'ancona' seems to be interchangeable with the word 'image', but in many instances the word 'image' or 'figura' followed 'cona', which consequently seems to be a broader term. Recently, Chriscinda Henry, in considering the term 'quadro' as used in Venetian archival materials, has argued that this term was used not only to describe a painting but also a print or a wooden or terracotta relief.[26] This seems also to have been the case with the domestic 'ancone' in Renaissance Naples, which could be either sculpted or painted.[27] Whether a sculpted relief or a painted scene depicting the Virgin adoring the Christ Child, the object recorded in Alberico's house proves that large-scale wooden and terracotta representations of the Nativity were translated into smaller-scale, domestic objects with the same iconography.

In the first half of the sixteenth century we find entries in inventories which make specific reference to the presence of three-dimensional *presepi* in private residences in other parts of Italy. One such object is described in a list of possessions compiled in 1532 in Pesaro, in the house of Bastianus Semi. The inventory lists: 'Item doe madonne et uno presepio con proprio panisello' ['Two Madonnas and a crib with its drapery'].[28] The name of the cloth 'panisello' or 'pannicello', could have been a reference to a material used for covering the 'presepio' or as robes for the Christ Child.[29] What is striking about this brief description is the presence of two figures of the Virgin, which could suggest a narrative involved in the representation, perhaps with the depiction of the Virgin seated with her divine Son and another of her kneeling and adoring him in prayer.

We find a similar repetition of a figure, this time of the Christ Child, in a maiolica representation of the Nativity from the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, which shows two episodes described in the Gospels: the *Annunciation to the Shepherds* (*Luke*, 2: 8–18) and the *Adoration of the Magi* (*Matthew*, 2: 9–12).[30]

25 Battaglia S., *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*, vol. 1 (Turin: 1961–2009) 447.

26 Henry C., "What Makes a Picture? Evidence from Sixteenth-Century Venetian Property Inventories", *Journal of the History of Collections* 23/2 (2011) 253–265.

27 To give just a few examples, in an inventory of a house of Simone de' Guerrieri from 1497 there is a 'cona de gesso cum Vergine Maria' and a 'cona piczula cum figura Virginis Marie de argento'. In another inventory from 1478 in a chamber of the house of Andrea del Ponte there was a 'conam unam cum figura Virginis Marie et certorum angelorum'.

28 Archivio di Stato di Pesaro, Fondo Notarile, Notaio Germani Giovanbattista, vol. 364 (1532–1533), fol. 662r.

29 *Treccani. Vocabolario della lingua italiana* (Rome: 1987–1994) 658.

30 Poole J.E., *Italian Maiolica and Incised Slipware in the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge* (Cambridge: 1995) 244–245.

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FIGURE 7.3 Giovanni di Nicola di Manzoni di Colle (?), "The Adoration of the Magi", ca. 1509–1515. Glazed terracotta, 25.5 × 34.5 cm. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum (Inv. no. C.2180–1928)
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The object was clearly intended to be viewed from all angles and each side offers interesting details. Despite its considerable weight (6.2 kg, or 13.7 lbs) the piece welcomes physical interaction, and would perhaps have been contemplated whilst the head of the household narrated the sacred history. The narrative character of the representation is communicated through the figure of the Christ Child, who, in the scene of the *Adoration of the Magi*, is depicted seated on the Virgin's lap, and then appears again on a cloth in a manger whilst being adored by the Wise Men [Fig. 7.3].[31]

31 Catalogue entry for *The Annunciation to the Shepherds and The Adoration of the Magi*, attr. to Giovanni di Nicola di Manzoni of Colle, Z. Sarnecka in Corry – Howard – Laven (eds.), *Madonnas and Miracles* 22–23.

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The iconography of the Nativity appeared most consistently in domestic space on maiolica figures such as inkstands, which survive in large numbers.[32] They include figures of the Virgin, St Joseph and the Christ Child in a crib attended by an ass and ox. They often have a place for a coat of arms, to record the family's name and to assert the owner's devotion.[33] We know from an archival record that in 1508 Piero Soderini, the strongest opponent to the Medici, and first Chancellor of the Florentine Republic, ordered the destruction of all objects with coat of arms of the exiled Medici family, both in potters' workshops and in private houses.[34] This illustrates an established practice of including the arms of powerful families on pottery. Perhaps the seemingly scratched out space of the coat of arms on the *calamaio* from the Museum Ariana in Geneva points to the infamy of the family whose *stemma* once decorated the object [Fig. 7.4]. In other instances, the place for the coat of arms on maiolica nativity inkstands may have been left deliberately empty for marketing purposes, as in another example from Victoria and Albert Museum [Fig. 7.5]. These objects were made from moulds, which allowed for easy and fast reproduction.[35] Therefore, one can imagine that the personalisation of the object occurred at the final stage with the coat of arms painted in cold polychromy on the surface of white glaze. The *stemma* would therefore be the least durable part of the inkstand's decoration.

In the Museo Duca di Martina in Naples there is another *calamaio* with a scene of the Nativity [Fig. 7.6].[36] It has been dated to ca. 1509 by Luciana Arbace

32 Piccini A., "I calamai dei Manzoni", *Fimantiquari Arte Viva* 30 (2002) 37-51; Marini M., in Wilson T. – Sani E. (eds.), *Le maioliche rinascimentali nelle collezioni della Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Perugia*, vol. 2 (Città di Castello: 2007) 54–65, cat. no. 23. Other religious and non-religious subject matter can be found on inkstands, for instance the ambitious inkstand with St George and the Dragon (inv. 26.420) now in the Corcoran Gallery of Art, or another inkstand with a sleeping knight (inv. 26.415) in the same collection. See Watson W., *Italian Renaissance Maiolica from the William A. Clark Collection* (London: 1986) 38–41.

33 This practice is also well-documented in the production of domestic glazed terracotta reliefs from the Della Robbia workshop. Giovanni della Robbia received three florins for reliefs of the Virgin and Child which included the arms of specific patrons. See Santi B., "Una bottega per il commercio. Repertori, vendite, esportazioni", in Gentilini G., *I Della Robbia e l'"arte nuova" della scultura invetriata* (Florence: 1998) 88, n. 8.

34 Spallanzani M., *Ceramiche alla Corte dei Medici nel Cinquecento* (Modena: 1994) 142, document no. 3.

35 For images of excavated plaster moulds for inkstands from Montelupo see Berti F., *Storia della ceramica di Montelupo* (Montelupo: 1997–2003) vol. 3, figs. 78–79.

36 The same model as the one used in the *calamaio* from the collection of the Duca di Martina was repeated in similar objects found in the following museums and collections: in the Guicciardini Corsi Salviati collection (dated 1507); in Sèvres (dated 1509); in the Museo di Faenza; in the Ariana Museum in Geneva; in the Giulianini collection

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FIGURE 7.4 Giovanni di Nicola di Manzoni (?), "Nativity Inkstand", ca. 1509. Glazed terracotta, 24 × 23 × 22 cm. Geneva, Museum Ariana (Inv. AR 4092)
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FIGURE 7.5 Giovanni di Nicola di Manzoni (?), "Nativity Inkstand", ca. 1509. Glazed terracotta, 24.4 × 23.4 × 22.2 cm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum (Inv. no. 396–1889)
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on the basis of stylistic similarities with a dated inkstand from the Ariana Museum in Geneva, and with a similar object in a private collection in London, dated 1510.[37] The entire composition is raised on three lions, which was a

(dated 1509); in a private collection in London (sold at Sotheby's London, 20 March 1973, lot 17, dated 1510); in the Victoria and Albert Museum; in the Fitzwilliam Museum; in the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest; and an example formerly in Beresford Hope collection (sold at Christie's 1 July 1985, lot 265).

37 Arbace L., *La maiolica italiana* (Naples: 1996) 25.

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FIGURE 7.6 Giovanni di Nicola di Manzoni (?), "Nativity Inkstand", ca. 1509. Glazed teracotta, 24 × 23 × 23 cm. Naples, Museo Duca di Martina (Inv. no. 958) PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

common decorative form for the base of domestic objects, seen for instance in a fifteenth-century *fruttiera* made in Città di Castello, now in the Louvre.[38] The figures are flanked by two cylindrical vase-like containers, perhaps for pens or to be used as candle sockets. A place for a candle would be useful both for illumination whilst writing and for producing wax for sealing letters. The inkwell contains the mark of the maker and the signature 'Giovani Fecea' on the cushion on which the Virgin kneels. On the basis of archival finds the artist has been identified as Giovanni di Nicola di Manzoni, a potter with a workshop

38 Del Vita A., "Le maioliche della collezione Carrand", *Bollettino d'Arte* 10 (1924) 436.

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in Colle Val d'Elsa, some twelve miles from Siena, a centre renowned for its ceramics production.[39]

The theme of the Nativity, the arrival in the world of the true *logos*, was particularly suitable for the decoration of this indispensable writing tool. According to an unpublished inventory from 1531, a notary from Monte Santo had among his private possessions: 'una fontana de terra in vaso con una madona in cima con larmo de Papa' ['a glazed terracotta inkstand with the Virgin and the papal coat of arms at the top'].[40] The Virgin as the Mother of God could have acted as a patron of the written word, because, as the inscription included on many of these inkstands clearly states, it was from her that 'the Word was made flesh': 'Verbum charo factum est de Virgine Maria'. St Augustine in his writing about the Incarnation stressed that through the Virgin, from whom Christ took his physicality, human nature became sanctified and purified, and restored to its original condition, thus enabling the salvation.[41] The phrase on the inkstands partially quotes a passage from the Gospel according to St John 1:14 'Verbum caro factum est', which continues 'et habitavit in nobis', and not as on the inkstands 'de Virgine Maria'. The text is thus transformed and to it is added that the Word was made flesh from the Virgin Mary; moreover, an exaltation of the Mother of God is included with the words 'Ave Maria Gratia', which come from the greeting of the angel at the moment of the Annunciation. The inscription, as painted on the surface of this and other similar inkstands, stresses the glory of the Virgin as the Mother of God, rather than focusing solely on the Incarnation. Interestingly, the crucial word *caro* in all surviving inkstands of this type is spelled with 'ch' instead of 'c'. The fact that this additional 'h' is the most decorative and the widest of letters in the inscription seems significant. In fact, in the inkstand from Naples, the letter 'h' is so prominent that the artist omitted the letter 't' in the word 'factum' and moved the final letter 'm' to the back of the *calamaio*.

The text on the inkstand 'Verbum Charo Fa[c]tum est de Virgine Maria', could be linked to a popular hymn 'In hoc anni circulo', which existed in multiple versions.[42] The hymn, first published in 1582 in *Piae Cantiones* in Greifswald, Germany, has a refrain with exactly the same text 'Verbum Caro Factum est de Virgine Maria'. The earliest version of the hymn is in a manuscript

39 Marini M., *Le maioliche rinascimentali* 63, 65.

40 Archivio di Stato di Macerata, Notarile di Monte Santo, Notaio Giacomo Adriani, vol. 197, fol. 19r, 1st January 1531.

41 Verdon T., *Maria nell'arte europea* (Milan: 2004) 61–64.

42 Julian J., *Dictionary of Hymnology* (London: 1907) 1216–1217.

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version dated to the twelfth century,[43] now in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Lat. 1139, f. 48r).[44] This version, which is partly in Latin and partly in Provençal, contains the phrase 'de Virgine Maria' in the first stanza: 'In hoc anni circulo, vita datur saeculo, nato nobis parvulo De Virgine Maria'.[45] The late thirteenth-century Antiphonary of Bangor, *Cod. Tauriensis*, F I 4 (now in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan), includes in the refrain of the same hymn the entire phrase as it appears on the maiolica inkstands.[46] Evidently, the text circulated in Italy long before the second half of the sixteenth century.

The use of music in individual prayers deserves further attention in Italian Renaissance studies.[47] The similar presence of songs and musical notes can be observed in glazed terracotta representations of the Nativity from the Della Robbia workshop. Luca della Robbia's relief from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston [Fig. 7.7] includes musical notes and the opening line of the *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*.[48] The music is not a product of an artistic fantasy but a real piece of music, in this case the standard plainchant intonation for the *Gloria* section of the Mass.[49] Even though there are no musical notes on any of the published maiolica inkstands, it could be argued that the music which accompanied the text was widely disseminated and it can be assumed that users of the inkstand could have sung the lines without being reminded of the notes. Music was inextricably linked with the devotion to the crib and the friars depicted in the fresco of the *Mass in Greccio* in the Upper Church in Assisi are depicted singing. Thus, through the agency of these inkstands liturgical music might have permeated the home and the sounds from the ecclesiastical space informed and spiritually enriched everyday domestic space. That the music was implicit in the maiolica inkstands is further confirmed by the presence of various musical instruments held by shepherds in several versions of the Nativity maiolica sculpture. Moreover, in the catalogue of maiolica from the Bargello in Florence

43 Some scholars think that the text of the hymn might be as early as the late eleventh century. See Haines J., *Medieval Song in Romance Languages* (Cambridge: 2010) 214–215.

44 Du Méril E., *Poésies inédites du Moyen Âge* (Paris: 1854) 337–338, n. 6.

45 Ibid., 337, n. 6.

46 Dreves G.M., *Analecta Hymnica Medii Aevi*, 20 (Leipzig: 1895) 22.

47 Dennis F., "Scattered Knives and Dismembered Song: Cutlery, Music and the Rituals of Dining", *Renaissance Studies* 24/1 (2010) 156–184. On communal singing in religious contexts see Macey P., "Singing in and Around Florence Cathedral Oral and Written Local and Imported Traditions", in Radke G.M. (ed.), *Make a Joyful Noise: Renaissance Art and Music at Florence Cathedral* (Atlanta: 2015) 63–71.

48 For further discussion of this relief see Sarnecka Z., "Luca della Robbia and his Books. The Renaissance Artist as a Devotee", *Artibus et Historiae* 74 (2016) 297.

49 I am very grateful to Professor Iain Fenlon for his help with the musical aspect of my research.

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FIGURE 7.7 Luca della Robbia, "Nativity with Gloria in Excelsis", ca. 1470. Glazed terracotta, 88.9 × 73.7 cm. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts (Inv. no. 17.1463)
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FIGURE 7.8 Fontana Family Workshop, "Inkstand with a Man Playing an Organ", ca. 1580. Glazed terracotta, 38 × 27 × 22 cm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum (Inv. no. 8400–1863)
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FIGURE 7.9 Anonymous Artist from Faenza (?), "Inkstand with Crib scene", first half of the 16th century. Glazed terracotta, 22.5 × 14 cm. Cento, Private collection
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

there is an inkstand made in Urbino ca. 1570 in the form of organs with music making angels.[50] The object is of similarly small dimensions to the Nativity inkstands (40 cm high), and is painted in bright colours: blue, orange, yellow and green. From around the same time and also from Urbino, from the Fontana family workshop [Fig. 7.8], comes another inkstand with a man playing an organ, now in the V&A Museum.[51] The existence of similar forms shows that maiolica inkstands were particularly suitable for making reference to music

50 Conti G., *Catalogo delle maioliche di Museo Nazionale di Firenze. Palazzo di Bargello* (Florence: 1971) cat. no. 196.

51 Paolinelli C., "Calamaio", in Giannotti A. – Pizzorusso C. (eds.), *Federico Barocci 1535-1612. L'incanto del colore. Una lezione per due secoli* (Cinisello Balsamo: 2009) 401; Sani E., *Italian Renaissance Maiolica* (London: 2012) 156 fig. 180.

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either through the representation of instruments or through the inclusion of text which circulated most widely in a sung form.

The model which was repeated in so many versions is not the only example of an inkstand with the Nativity scene. A private collection in Cento, near Bologna, houses a *Calamaio con presepe*, which was probably made in Faenza in the first half of the sixteenth century.[52] It is again of small dimensions (22.5 cm high), and could have been destined for a domestic space. However, the typical stable is here substituted by a celestial vault with stars on the inside and trees on the outside of the cupola encompassing the figures [Fig. 7.9]. Unlike in other inkstands, the Virgin – glorified as the Mother of God – is placed at the centre of the composition and is much bigger than the other figures. Alongside St Joseph and the Christ Child, and the traditional ox and ass, there are two figures of shepherds who are both playing bagpipes. As has been pointed out, the setting for the figures is a cross-section of an upturned vase, perhaps proving that similar inkstands with Nativity scenes were made as a side-line production in an average potter's workshop.[53] However, this inkstand does not lack imaginative details, proving a certain level of artistic skill, such as a shepherd on the right hand side who protrudes into the space of the viewer, or a barrel on the left which balances the composition.

The close analysis of surviving sculptural examples of *presepi* provides information about the religious practices these objects encouraged. Dissemination of this iconography is most visible in Naples, where the tradition of *presepi*, both in ecclesiastical and domestic space, has flourished uninterruptedly from the thirteenth century until the present day. Outside the church of San Gregorio Armeno heaps of small-scale, affordable figurines in painted terracotta are still sold for domestic recreations of the Nativity. Those sculptural objects displayed within a home, either in the form of a single statuette of the Christ Child or more elaborate Nativity scenes on inkstands, made manifest St Francis's desire to visualise the mystery of God Incarnate. In the context of the home, they could have been used as a powerful visualisation of the sacred narrative as it was read out loud by the *paterfamilias*, or acted as lively reminders which prompted people to enact their daily devotions. Moreover, maiolica inkstands with three-dimensional representations of the Nativity often included inscriptions which circulated most widely in a sung form. Thus they seem to have encouraged the celebration of the Nativity through pious singing – the

52 Paolinelli C. (ed.), *Lacrime di smalto. Plastiche maiolicate tra Marche e Romagna nell'età del Rinascimento* (Ancona: 2014) 114, ill. 115.

53 Paolinelli, *Lacrime di smalto* 114.

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tradition initiated at the Mass at Greccio. They have been previously discussed in relation to scholars' *studioli*, as art objects designed to be used as writing tools and for the display of the head of the household's erudition.[54] However, as demonstrated in this essay, one needs to remember that they also responded to the tradition of three-dimensional *presepi* in churches and that they satisfied the need to share the joy of the Incarnation in a domestic environment.

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54 Thornton D., *The Scholar in his Study: Ownership and Experience in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven-London: 1997) 142–167, for a discussion of maiolica inkstands see 165–167.

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PART 3

The Materiality of Devotion

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CHAPTER 8

Religious Subjects on Sixteenth-Century Deruta *Piatti da Pompa*

Michael J. Brody

The small Umbrian hill town of Deruta, about 19 km south of Perugia, is one of Italy's most important centres for the production of sixteenth-century maiolica (tin-glazed earthenware). Among the wares for which Deruta is most famous are large, concave dishes with flat rims, painted at the centre with a wide variety of sacred and profane subjects. On most examples, the rim, which neatly frames the central image, is treated independently from the centre, and its decoration either circles the rim [Fig. 8.1] or consists of repeating radial segments of varying width and design [Fig. 8.2]. These works of art range from about 38 to 44 cm in diameter, and are commonly referred to in the specialist literature as *piatti da pompa* – 'show' or 'display' dishes.[1] The majority of them were made between 1500 and 1560, and because they remained in fashion for such a long time, and changed little stylistically, they are particularly difficult to date with any precision.

Of the two largest categories of decoration on these works, the first comprises the so-called *belle donne* dishes that typically feature bust or waist-length images of graceful and idealised women in contemporary dress, often accompanied by fluttering banderoles containing pithy aphorisms or moralising statements, or epithets extolling their virtue or beauty. The second category is religious images, most notably saints – like St Francis, the commonest saint depicted [Figs 8.1 and 8.2] – the Virgin, angels, and the sacred trigram. The present essay focuses on this latter category, and it includes suggestions pertaining to the decorative and devotional use of these objects for a variety of clients.

Two technical aspects regarding the dishes' manufacture shed light on their intended use, as well as help identify who the potential consumers were for these attractive objects. All maiolica is kiln-fired twice – once to become *terracotta* (the biscuit firing), and a second time, after being glazed and decorated, to fuse the painting and glazes to the object – but a good proportion of Deruta

1 This term is not a Renaissance one. One of the earliest instances of the use of *piatto da pompa* is the catalogue of the Campana maiolica (now mostly at the Louvre): *Cataloghi del Museo Campana. Classe X. Dipinture in majolica* [...] (Rome, n.d., but ca. 1858).

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FIGURE 8.1 Deruta, "St Francis Receiving the Stigmata", 1531. Maiolica, diam. 41.3 cm. Cleveland Museum of Art
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piatti da pompa – I would estimate 65–75% of surviving examples – are decorated in golden lustre [Fig. 8.2] rather than in polychrome [Fig. 8.1]. Lustring, or the application of metallic oxides, requires a third firing in a kiln within a reducing atmosphere; once removed from the kiln, the dishes are burnished to reveal an iridescent lustre with a tone ranging from bright yellow to light brown.[2]

Lustred pottery was Deruta's speciality, and only a few workshops in a few towns in Italy are known to have possessed the highly guarded secret of its production; consequently, this ware was in large part responsible for Deruta's

2 Red lustre sometimes also appears on Deruta wares, but for reasons unknown potters abandoned its use by the early 1520s.

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FIGURE 8.2
Deruta, "St Francis Receiving the Stigmata", ca. 1500–1530. Lustred maiolica, diam. 40.8. Pesaro, Museo delle Ceramiche
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fame as a pottery centre. The additional time and labour (not to mention the risk) involved in producing lustred maiolica meant that it could fetch more – perhaps six times more – than the price of its polychromatic counterpart; and such a price disparity, if credible, would indicate different consumers for these products.[3] Cipriano Piccolpasso, in his treatise of ca. 1557 on maiolica-making, estimated – perhaps with some exaggeration – that only 6% of lustred objects emerged from the third firing intact: 'è arte fallace che, spesse volte, di 100 pezzi di lavori, a ffatiga ve ne sono 6 buoni. Vero è che l'arte in sé è bella e ingegniosa, e quando gli lavori son buoni paiono di oro'.[4]

The high esteem afforded to Deruta lustrewares was also expressed by the Bolognese friar Leandro Alberti, who wrote in his *Descrittione di tutta Italia* (1550):

3 Biganti T., "Documenti: La produzione di ceramica a lustro a Gubbio e a Deruta tra la fine del secolo XV e l'inizio del secolo XVI. Primi risultati di una ricerca documentaria", *Faenza* 73 (1987) 214, 218. One hopes for documentary evidence of this presumed price disparity. Given the posited price difference, one might expect higher quality painting on lustreware, but that is not the case; Wilson T., *Italian Maiolica of the Renaissance* (Milan: 1996) 37, n. 8.

4 'The art [of lustring] is treacherous, for often of 100 pieces of ware tried in the fire, scarce six are good. True it is that the art itself is beautiful and ingenious, and when the wares are good they seem like gold'; Piccolpasso Cipriano, *I tre libri dell'arte del vasaio: The Three Books of the Potter'sAart, a Facsimile of the Manuscript in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London* (ca. 1557), ed. R. Lightbown – A. Caiger-Smith, 2 vols. (London: 1980) vol. I, folio 49 and vol. II, 90.

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> Sono molto nomati li Vasi di terra cotta quivi fatti, per esser talmente lavorati, che paiono dorati. Et anche tanto sottilmente sono condutti, che infino ad hora non si ritrova alcun artifice nell'Italia, che se li possa agguagliare, benché assai sovente habbiano isprimentato & tentato di far simili lavori.[5]

For these reasons lustreware might have been regarded a semi-luxurious product, and much of its appeal had to do with its iridescent glazes that mimic expensive metalware.[6]

A second technical aspect of the *piatti da pompa* germane to our discussion is the uniform presence of suspension holes through the footring on the underside [Fig. 8.3].[7] Most dishes are pierced with two holes about three cm apart, but a minority of dishes have three piercings spread further apart. Because on most surviving examples the glaze coats the insides of the holes, these holes were created when the clay was still pliable, i.e. before the first kiln firing. Since this convenient hanging feature is built-in to the objects, historians have concluded that the dishes' primary function was as domestic, wall-hung devotional art.

It is curious, and surprising, that in some cases – a significant but low minority – when the *piatti da pompa* are suspended by these holes, they do not hang in the proper orientation with respect to the painting on the front; possibly this is due to oversight by the painter, or the worker engaged in transferring a design. But it is also possible that the holes had a second purpose: to suspend, perhaps from a horizontal rod, the painted dishes inside the kiln during their second firing. Support for this derives from the observation that the fronts of the dishes lack scars from spurs or spacers – the devices that typically separate

5 'The earthenwares made here are renowned for being made to look as if they were gilded. And the technique is so subtle that up to now no other craftsman in Italy has been found to equal them, although experiments and attempts have often been made'; Alberti Leandro, *Descrittione di tutta Italia; nella quale si contiene il sito di essa, l'origine, & le signorie delle città, & delle castella* [...] (Bologna, Anselmo Giaccarelli: 1550) folio 85v.

6 It is worth recalling that tin, the essential ingredient of the white glaze that coats the surface of maiolica objects before painting, was an imported ingredient, and the majority of the tin used by Italian potters was mined in Cornwall, England. With respect to the hierarchy of materials during the Renaissance, it is probably the case that most Italians ranked even high-quality maiolica below pewter ('poor man's silver') in spite of the widespread encomia it received from patrician consumers. For the phenomenon of maiolica imitating metalware see Brody M.J., *The Evolution, Function, and Social Significance of Italian Renaissance Maiolica Services, c. 1480 to c. 1600*, DPhil thesis (University of Oxford: 2017) 39–43.

7 See also Wilson T., *Italian Maiolica in the Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria* (Melbourne: 2015) 56, where this detail is illustrated.

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FIGURE 8.3 Deruta, ca. 1540–1560. Lustred maiolica. Philadelphia, private collection. Detail of footring, underside of dish
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

stacked plates and dishes in the kiln. That *piatti da pompa* footrings are often fully covered by glaze also suggests they were not laid flat in the kiln.[8]

Although it is plausible, and likely probable, that the dishes were regularly hung on a wall or from a shelf, there is nothing that would preclude their owners from placing them flat atop furniture or shelves, or even propping them up in the Renaissance equivalent of a plate stand. Given the popularity of these dishes (based on their survival rate), it is somewhat puzzling that they never appear in secular or religious Renaissance paintings.

It is well established that houses were the locus for a wide assortment of pious objects and that the borders between domestic and public devotional spaces were consciously blurred in Renaissance Italy.[9] Objects could take the form of small religious paintings, tabernacles, relief sculptures, statuettes, maiolica, or inexpensive prints, according to the economic means of their owners. A detail of a bedchamber from Carpaccio's *St Ursula* cycle from the late 1490s shows, on the wall above the bed, a small devotional painting of

8 Piccolpasso states that large dishes were placed on their side, in a row, but his knowledge of techniques came primarily from observation and discussion with potters from and in Casteldurante (present day Urbania). Regarding lustre, he reveals that he was only able to observe the process in Gubbio (then part of the Duchy of Urbino) so it is almost certain that he had no direct knowledge of the methods used by Deruta potters for their specialty products.

9 E.g. Lydecker J.K., *The Domestic Setting of the Arts in Renaissance Florence*, Ph.D. dissertation (The Johns Hopkins University: 1987), particularly "Religious art in Florentine homes" (114–119), citing the domestic functions of images of saints, the Crucifix, Madonna and Child, and Jesus; and Cooper D., "Devotion", in Ajmar-Wollheim M. – Dennis F. (eds.), *At Home in Renaissance Italy* (London: 2006) 190–203.

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the *Madonna and Child* framed like a tabernacle, a common item in wealthy and patrician households [Fig. 8.4]. A seated Madonna with the Christ Child was among the most ubiquitous domestic Marian images in any medium, and numerous surviving Deruta *piatti da pompa* featuring this iconography attest to its popularity on ceramics [Fig. 8.5].[10] In several lustred versions of these dishes the figures are accompanied by banderoles with Latin inscriptions – perhaps prompts for the recitation of the rosary – such as 'SANTA MARIA ORA PRO NOBIS' (Holy Mary, pray for us) and 'AVE SANTISSIMA MARIA MATER DEI REGINA CELI' (Hail most holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven).[11] The Holy Virgin was the primary protector of all Catholics, and regardless of medium, these works served the same devotional, protective, and decorative functions.

Designs on many Deruta *piatti da pompa* reflect the influence of local artists such as Pinturicchio (d. 1513) and Perugino (d. 1523). They and their workshops executed a host of commissions throughout Umbria and beyond, and many *bella donna* profiles derive from the graceful female types pervasive in Pinturicchio's frescos. Although it has been suggested, though never proven, that Pinturicchio was married to a Deruta potter's daughter, it seems likely that he, Perugino, and their respective workshops collaborated with local potters. Drawings, or drawings of drawings, must have existed for works beyond the potters' reach, or for works located in what were then inaccessible places, such as the Vatican. The near identical pose and appearance of secular and religious figures on multiple Deruta dishes suggests that certain designs were serially produced from a workshop's stock repertory of cartoons, and typically transferred to the dishes through a pounce technique that involved pricking a cartoon and tapping the holes with a porous bag filled with dark chalk or charcoal.

A notable number of inscribed dishes are hybrids of a sort, since they pair religious subjects with secular mottos, or the opposite, secular images (usually

10 Fiocco C. – Gherardi G. – Sfeir-Fakhri L., *Majoliques italiennes du Musée des Arts Décoratifs de Lyon. Collection Gillet* (Dijon: 2001) cat. 85. The source for this and most of the Deruta *Madonna and Child* dishes is likely Perugino's *Madonna in Glory with Child and Saints* (ca. 1496, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Bologna) or *Enthroned Madonna and Child with Saints* (1521, Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, Spello). At least six other *Madonna and Child* dishes that differ only in small details are known to me.

11 Respectively, Curnow C., *Italian Maiolica in the National Museums of Scotland*, National Museums of Scotland Information Series, no. 5. (Edinburgh: 1992) cat. 29 and Wilson T., "Renaissance ceramics", in *The Collections of the National Gallery of Art, Systematic Catalogue. Western Decorative Arts, Part I: Medieval, Renaissance, and Historicizing Styles Including Metalwork, Enamels, and Ceramics* (Washington, DC and Cambridge, UK: 1993) 156–158.

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FIGURE 8.4 Vittore Carpaccio, Legend of St Ursula polyptych, "Arrival of the Ambassadors", ca. 1498. Oil on canvas, 378 cm × 589 cm. Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia. Detail
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FIGURE 8.5 Deruta, "Madonna and Child", ca. 1520–1530. Maiolica, diam. 40 cm. Musée des arts décoratifs de Lyon
© LYON, MTMAD – PIERRE VERRIER (1700)

belle donne) with pious inscriptions. The union of image and text that do not explicitly relate to one another could mean that potters were executing custom orders, but more likely it speaks to workshop practices – what sources were available, what was deemed attractive or saleable, what afforded variety. The dish with a standard *bella donna* accompanied by the inscription 'ORARE SEGRETO E MOLTO ACETTO A DIO' (To pray in secret is most acceptable to God) reminds its owner, presumably a woman, to pray alone or in the private spaces of the home, such as the bedchamber [Fig. 8.6].[12] In a similar

12 Wilson, *Italian Maiolica of the Renaissance* cat. 26. The same inscription appears on at least four dishes with a composition (based on a Raphael-school engraving) of a

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FIGURE 8.6 Deruta, *Bella donna* dish inscribed *ORARE SEGRETO E MOLTO ACETTO A DIO* (To pray in secret is most acceptable to God), ca. 1505–1520. Lustred maiolica, diam. 42.6 cm. Private collection
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

mother reading to a child, sometimes referred to as the *Virgin reading, with the infant Jesus: Catalogue d'une précieuse collection de faïences italiennes, Hispano-Moresques d'Alcora et de Nîmes* [Duc de Dino], sale catalogue, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 8 May 1894, lot 21; Rackham B., *Islamic Pottery and Italian Maiolica. Illustrated Catalogue of a Private Collection* (London: 1959) cat. 350; Busti G. – Cocchi F., "Umbria" maiolica entries in Ausenda R. (ed.), *Musei e Gallerie di Milano. Museo d'Arti Applicate* [*del Castello Sforzesco*]. *Le ceramiche. Tomo primo* (Milan: 2000) cat. 69; and Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, inv. 65.6.13. For the same inscription (highly abbreviated at its ending) with a Roman emperor in profile and the arms of Baglioni, lords of Perugia, see Chompret J., *Répertoire de la majolique italienne*, 2 vols. (Paris: 1949) vol. II, fig. 183. See Watson W.M., *Italian Renaissance Maiolica from the William A. Clark Collection* (London: 1986) cat. 32 for a dish in which a standard *bella donna* is transformed (through a halo and small prayer book in

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way, prayer is encouraged through another popular image repeated on *piatti da pompa*: an angel with clasped hands, which is a direct quote from interchangeable angel details in Perugino and Pinturicchio frescos.[13] It is conceivable that the small building that almost always flanks the angel on these dishes, and which is found on a host of other religious-themed Deruta pottery, is a simplified rendering of the St Francis or St Clare basilicas in Assisi; if so, its presence suggests these objects were souvenirs of a visit to a pilgrim centre.

Prayer is again the obvious theme in an early Deruta narrative painting, *Jesus praying in Gethsemane*, made ca. 1500–10 [Fig. 8.7].[14] The scene is adapted from a woodcut that appeared in the 1492 (or later) edition of Savonarola's pious *Tractato overo sermone della oratione*, and the dish provides evidence of the *invenzione* of a skilled painter in adapting a simpler print source – the increased perspective, delicate colouring, and the addition of buildings and narrative details such as a string of minute soldiers carrying torches in the background, on their way to arrest Jesus [Fig. 8.8].[15] While the religious subjects on *piatti da pompa* never reached the variety found in panel, canvas, and fresco painting – there is, for example, a dearth of Old Testament subjects – Christological and Marian subjects are particularly well represented: for example *The Resurrection, Agnus Dei, The Lamentation, The Assumption of Mary*, and *The Annunciation* [Fig. 8.9].[16] Marian images in particular, ubiquitous in household inventories, were the most popular subject for domestic devotional

her hand) into the Virgin; in what may be a unique subject on extant Deruta pottery, the *Incarnation of Christ*; see Glaser S., *Majolika. Die Italienischen Fayencen im Germanischen Nationalmuseum Nürnberg. Bestandskatalog* (Nuremberg: 2000) cat. 176 for a dish with the inscription 'IN TE DOMINE SPERAVI' (In you, Lord, I have placed my trust) and a female bust that may be an attempt at a portrait of an actual woman.

13 For the dishes, see Thornton D. – Wilson T., *Italian Renaissance Ceramics. A Catalogue of the British Museum Collection*, 2 vols. (London: 2009) cat. 280 (with references to nine others). The frescos are: Perugino, *The Eternal Father above Prophets and Sibyls* (ca. 1500, Collegio del Cambia, Sala delle Udienze, Perugia) and Pinturicchio, *Enthroned Virgin and Child with Saints* (ca. 1508, Church of Sant'Andrea, Spello).

14 Ravanelli Guidotti C., *Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche in Faenza. La donazione Angiolo Fanfani. Ceramiche dal Medioevo al XX secolo* (Faenza: 1990) cat. 94.

15 For an equally impressive dish with *Jesus Processing with the Cross amongst Soldiers*, based on a late-Quattrocento engraving, see Klesse B., *Majolika. Kataloge des Kunstgewerbemuseums Köln, II* (Cologne: 1996) cat. 293.

16 Respectively: Poole J.E., *Italian maiolica and Incised Slipware in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge* (Cambridge, UK: 1995) cat. 254; Rackham B., *Victoria and Albert Museum. Catalogue of Italian Maiolica*, 2 vols. (London: 1940) cat. 468 and 495 (also called a *Pietà*); Giacomotti J., *Catalogue des majoliques des musées nationaux. Musées du Louvre et de Cluny, Musée National de Céramique à Sèvres, Musée Adrien-Dubouché à Limoges* (Paris: 1974) cat. 479; and Cole B., *Italian Maiolica from Midwestern Collections*, exh. cat., Indiana University Art Museum (Bloomington: 1977) cat. 36.

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FIGURE 8.7 Deruta, "Jesus praying in Gethsemane", ca. 1500–1510. Maiolica, diam. 43 cm. Faenza, Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche
© MUSEO INTERNAZIONALE DELLE CERAMICHE, FAENZA

art, and Mary receiving news that she was to bear a son would seem to be a suitable bedchamber image for a wife hoping to become pregnant.[17]

17 For Marian images see Musacchio J.M., *Art, Marriage, & Family in the Florentine Renaissance Palace* (New Haven and London: 2008) 211. A striking example invocating for the conception of a son is a maiolica plate (part of a childbirth set) prominently inscribed with the word 'MASCHIO' (male), ill. Musacchio, J.M., *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven and London: 1999) 143, fig. 141. Fra Filippo Lippi's *Annunciation* (ca. 1453) for the Palazzo Medici in Florence is thought to have hung over a door or bed, or to have been set into a bedhead, and its pendant panel, *Seven Saints*, depicts the protector-saints of male members of the Medici family, both National Gallery, London, ill. Motture P. – Syson, L., "Art in the casa", in Ajmar-Wollheim – Dennis (eds.), *At Home in Renaissance Italy* 272–273, figs 19.4–19.5.

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FIGURE 8.8 Anonymous, Florence, "Jesus praying in Gethsemane", ca. 1492. Woodcut from Girolamo Savonarola, *Tractato overo sermone della oratione* (Florence, Lorenzo Morgiani: 1492)
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

An exceptionally ambitious Deruta dish is painted at the centre with the *Crucifixion* and on the rim with sixteen roundels containing scenes from the *Passion*, the short final period in the life of Jesus beginning with his entry into Jerusalem and culminating with his Resurrection [Fig. 8.10].[18] The centre

18 Ballardini G., "Eine Deruta-Schüssel mit der Passion Christi", *Pantheon* 6 (1930) 464–468 (where the subjects of all sixteen roundels are identified), Liverani F. – Reggi G.L., *Le maioliche del Museo Nazionale di Ravenna* (Modena: 1976) cat. 54 (where the likely design source, a Florentine print of the 1460s, is illustrated), and Fiocco C. – Gherardi G.,

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FIGURE 8.9 Deruta, "The Annunciation", ca. 1500–1520. Maiolica, diam. 40.1 cm. Kansas City, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art
© THE NELSON-ATKINS MUSEUM OF ART, KANSAS CITY, MO

consists of various vignettes disposed across a hilly landscape (such as soldiers casting lots for Jesus' clothing), and contains over forty-five figures in a variety of attitudes – on horseback, standing, sitting, or flying. The Virgin appears twice: at the foot of the cross and, lower down, collapsed in grief. The scenes on this dish (as well as less grand renderings of the subject on maiolica) allowed viewers to make a spiritual pilgrimage through meditation of the *Passion*, while contemplating their own end. This type of object, which offers an abundance of images in a compact space, seems particularly well-suited for display on the wall of a small chapel in a private home or confraternity hall,

La ceramica di Deruta dal XIII al XVIII secolo / Deruta Pottery from the 13th to the 18th Century (Perugia: 1994) cat. 30.

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FIGURE 8.10 Deruta, "The Passion of Jesus", ca. 1500. Maiolica, diam. 47.5 cm. Ravenna, Museo Nazionale
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or in front of a prie-dieu, or as an alternative to a tabernacle set on a portable household altar.[19]

Why did Deruta potters choose to paint religious and secular subjects on the curved surface of *piatti da pompa* so prodigiously when they also produced – in far lower quantities to gauge from the number of surviving examples – flat, rectangular plaques that were presumably easier to paint?[20] Perhaps they

19 Compare with a plate, probably Tuscan, formerly in the Beit collection, decorated with the *Crucifixion* and, on the rim, only four scenes from the *Passion*; Rackham B. – Van de Put A., *Catalogue of the Collection of Pottery and Porcelain in the Possession of Mr. Otto Beit* (London: 1916) cat. 751, now Cleveland Museum of Art, inv. 1943.55. For the use of the *Passion* as an aid to prayer in lay confraternities see the sources cited in Cooper, "Devotion" 195, note 30; for domestic altars see Cooper, "Devotion" 198–201.

20 The broader question of why so few maiolica plaques in general, with sacred or profane subjects, were produced in sixteenth-century Italy is also puzzling. The relatively small

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felt a professional impetus to fabricate three-dimensional objects that were primarily utilitarian, knowing full well that for some classes of objects their serviceability would be eclipsed by their decorative and/or devotional functions. To be sure, *piatti da pompa* were a Deruta trademark, and among the town's most recognisable products, so perhaps it was with a sense of both pride and tradition that potters persisted in utilising the form. Occasionally, however, a painter disregarded the dish's morphology in order to position a design over the entire dish, effectively treating it as a flat, uninterrupted surface. A complex and accomplished example of this is a dish with the *Crucifixion, IHS Christogram* (or *Sacred Trigram*), and *St Jerome and St Francis*, all set against a characteristically Umbrian landscape [Fig. 8.11].[21] The main portion of the composition was adapted, in reverse, from a late-fifteenth century Northern Italian print of the *Crucifixion with St Jerome and St Francis*, and the placement of the monogram below the crucifix may have been inspired by an illustration from a sacred text, such as the *Plenarium* (Augsburg, 1478) – although the maiolica painter has artfully made the cross an extension of the beribboned central letter 'h'.[22]

Saints had a special relationship with the divine and were seen as intercessors between humans and God, as protectors for the living.[23] In accordance with the dictates established at the Council of Nicaea in 787, saints were exemplars to be represented, venerated, and emulated. Maiolica display dishes depicting saints thus served as significant devotional tools in the service of such role models. The popularity of *St Francis Receiving the Stigmata* is easy to understand: not only was it the climactic event in the life of one of Italy's most beloved saints, but Deruta is only 25 km from Assisi, the saint's final resting place [Figs. 8.1 and 8.2]. Deruta potters were supplying wares to the Convent

number of religious-themed plaques made in Deruta include lustred examples with St Jerome in relief (1520s–30s), for which see Busti – Cocchi, "Umbria", cat. 78, and unlustred plaques made in the Mancini workshop (1550s–60s), e.g. *The Crucifixion* and the *Madonna and Child Enthroned, with St Anthony Abbot and St Sebastian*, for which see, respectively, Poole, *Italian Maiolica* cat. 275, and Bojani G.C. – Ravanelli Guidotti C. – Fanfani A., *Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche in Faenza. La donazione Galeazzo Cora. Ceramiche dal Medioevo al XIX secolo* (Milan: 1985) cat. 747.

21 Fiocco – Gherardi – Sfeir-Fakhri, *Majoliques italiennes* cat. 83, with illustrations of the probable print sources.

22 The monogram was popularised in the fifteenth-century by St Bernardino of Siena. To avoid suspicion of idolatry, Bernardino created a cross from the ascender of the 'h', although on the dish it appears as a full Crucifixion; see Thornton – Wilson, *Italian Renaissance Ceramics* cat. 282 for further remarks about the monogram.

23 See Goldthwaite R., *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy 1300–1600* (Baltimore and London: 1993) 109–114 for the cult of saints, including their politicization and the demand for, and ascendancy of, saint images.

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FIGURE 8.11 Deruta, "The Crucifixion, with St Jerome and St Francis", ca. 1540–1550. Lustred maiolica, diam. 42.2 cm. Musée des arts décoratifs de Lyon
© LYON, MTMAD – SYLVAIN PRETTO (1947)

of San Francesco as early as 1358.[24] Most renditions of this scene are faithful to its design source, a late fifteenth-century engraving, with the exception that Brother Leo, Francis's favourite disciple, is usually omitted.[25] That when Francis received the stigmata he himself was gazing raptly at an image of the Saviour must have resonated with the pious owners of these dishes, whether lay or religious.

24 De Mauri L., *Le maioliche di Deruta*, Monografie di arti decorative, 6 (Milan: 1924) 21.

25 For the print, see Hind A.F., *Early Italian Engraving* (London: 1938–48) vol. VII, plate 886. Wilson, *Italian Maiolica of the Renaissance* cat. 31, note 1, lists 32 recorded dishes with the subject; the ratio of unlustred (9, or 28.1%) to lustred (23, or 71.9%) versions nicely accords with the estimate I cite at the beginning of the present essay.

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St Jerome was one of the four doctors of the early Church, and his Latin translation of the Bible was among his greatest works. On *piatti da pompa* he is depicted either kneeling in the wilderness (with or without his lion), or seen in close-up, gazing at the crucified Jesus.[26] In both versions Jerome holds a stone with which he penitentially beats his bare chest in order to tame his sinful heart. In a unique rendering of the scene, a woman in contemporary dress, identified by name (*VICENTIA*), kneels in prayer in front of Jerome in the wilderness [Fig. 8.12]; as a sign of her humility she is depicted markedly smaller than the saint, a convention typical of some early Renaissance religious paintings.[27] This work is an unusual document, as it inserts the client into the work (via image and text), alludes to the devotional relationship between the holy image and the viewer, and demonstrates that Deruta *piatti da pompa* could be personalised.

The establishment of Hieronymite congregations in Tuscany and Umbria undoubtedly contributed to the saint's popularity on Deruta wares, and the contrite Jerome must have struck a chord with those seized with a desire for a life of ascetic penance. His very image was thought to be apotropaic, and it was said that demons feared to enter the cells of nuns who kept his image on the wall.[28] The notable prevalence in Deruta of St Jerome (d. 420) and St Francis (d. 1226) above other saints may stem from their shared devotion to prayer, asceticism, repetance, and virtuous obedience – their imitation of the life of Jesus himself. Through them, laypeople were able to participate more directly in religious life, an aspiration that was one of the most profound spiritual demands of the age.

In the hagiography of Catherine of Alexandria, the princess-scholar with unyielding Christian faith was condemned to death on a spiked breaking wheel, but miraculously, at her touch, the wheel shattered [Fig. 8.13].[29] If her virginity made her an appropriate model for unwed girls, her mystical marriage to the

26 See Wilson T. – Sani E.P., *Le maioliche rinascimentali nelle collezioni della Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Perugia*, 2 vols. (Città di Castello: 2006–7) vol. 1, cat. 14 (wilderness version) and Hausmann T., *Fioritura. Blütezeiten der Majolika einer Berliner Sammlung* (Berlin: 2002) cat. 33 (close-up version).

27 Sannipoli E. (ed.), *La via della ceramica tra Umbria e Marche. Maioliche rinascimentali da collezioni private*, exh. cat., Palazzo Ducale, Gubbio (Città di Castello: 2010) cat. 1–20 (entry by G. Busti and F. Cocchi).

28 Kalinke M.E., *The Book of Reykjahólar: The Last of the Great Medieval Legendaries* (Toronto: 1996) 161.

29 Rackham, *Victoria and Albert Museum*, cat. 484; for another example see Sotheby's, London, 21 November 1978, lot 37.

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FIGURE 8.12 Deruta, "St Jerome in the Wilderness", ca. 1550–1560. Maiolica, diam. 41.5 cm. Private collection
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

infant Christ made her an exemplar for wives and nuns.[30] The popularity of Catherine on Deruta wares surely also relates to the fact that she is the protector of potters – her attribute of martyrdom parallels the potter's wheel – and, because pottery was Deruta's main industry, she was also the town's patron saint.

Although the cult of St Roch as a protector against plague and pestilence developed slowly after his death around 1380, by the sixteenth century he had

30 Ajmar M. – Thornton D., "When Is a Portrait Not a Portrait? Belle Donne on Maiolica and the Renaissance Praise of Local Beauties", in Mann N. – Syson L. (eds.), *The Image of the Individual: Portraits in the Renaissance* (London: 1998) 142, with reference to the *Sermones* (1487) of preacher Vincent Ferrer.

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FIGURE 8.13 Deruta, "St Catherine" ca. 1510–1530. Lustred maiolica, diam. 40.5 cm. London, Victoria and Albert Museum
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become a popular saint. Following the standard iconography, Roch is dressed as a pilgrim leaning on a staff and pointing to the plague sore on his thigh [Fig. 8.14].[31] Despite the prevalence of plague, including local outbreaks in the 1520s, extant Deruta *piatti da pompa* decorated with St Roch are surprisingly uncommon.[32] The three examples known to me appear to be based on the image of St Roch in a Perugino fresco made for the Church of S. Francesco

31 Poole, *Italian Maiolica* cat. 245.

32 Busti G – Cocchi F., *Museo Regionale della Ceramica di Deruta. Ceramiche policrome, a lustro e terrecotte di Deruta dei secoli XV e XVI* (Milan and Città di Castello: 1999) 37 refers to a plague outbreak in 1522, on the outskirts of Perugia; and Poole, *Italian maiolica* 174 refers to a particularly virulent outbreak in 1527.

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FIGURE 8.14 Deruta, "St Roch", ca. 1500–1550. Lustred maiolica, diam. 41.8 cm. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum
© THE FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM, CAMBRIDGE

in Deruta, a convenient design source for the town's potters.[33] St Roch's curative and protective image is found on other Deruta pottery, such as a drug jar (albarello), whose contents label reads 'ELLE. CONTRA. PESTA' (electuary against the plague), and a large (h. 75 cm) lustred figure of the saint.[34]

A popular subject on *piatti da pompa* is *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas*, the gospel account in which Christ shows the wound in his side to Thomas, who

33 In addition to Fig. 14 here, there is one in the Hermitage and one illustrated in Guaitini G. (ed.), *Maioliche umbre decorate a lustro. Il Rinascimento e la ripresa ottocentesca: Deruta, Gualdo Tadino, Gubbio*, exh. cat., Spoleto (Florence: 1982) 116, fig. 37. The Perugino fresco is now in Deruta's Pinacoteca Comunale.

34 Respectively, Fiocco – Gherardi – Sfeir-Fakhri, *Majoliques italiennes*, cat. 59 and Thornton – Wilson, *Italian Renaissance ceramics* cat. 294.

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is thereby convinced of his resurrection. This evocative image surely helped quell the doubts of those whose faith was weak or being called into question. Although the figures of Thomas and Jesus are nearly identical from dish to dish, there is considerable variation among the accompanying inscriptions, e.g.: 'MITTE MANUM TUA IN LOCHO CLA[V]ORUM' (Place your hand in the spot of the nails) [Fig. 8.15];[35] 'IESUS NAZERENUS REX IUDEORUM X' (Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, Christ);[36] 'TOMA QVI ME VEDISTI ET CREDISTI' (Thomas, that he saw me and believed);[37] and 'BEATU CHI NON VIDERONT E CREDIDERONT IM ME' (Blessed be those who do not see yet believe in me).[38]

The variety of identifiable saints on Deruta *piatti da pompa* is impressive, and most exist in lustred and unlustred versions; examples include: St Barbara;[39] St Lucy;[40] St Peter;[41] St Paul;[42] St Augustine;[43] St John the Baptist;[44] St Anthony of Padua;[45] St Michael and St George (potent emblems of good over evil);[46] St Anthony Abbot (for whom a Deruta potters' confraternity was named);[47] St Secundus (patron saint of Asti);[48] St Ubaldo (patron saint of Gubbio);[49]

35 Gardiner Museum, Toronto, inv. G83.1.335; for another version with the same inscription (except that *CLAORUM* is written as *CRAORUM*), see Busti – Cocchi, *Museo Regionale della Ceramica* cat. 154.

36 Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 29.100.93 and (with minor letter changes) Giacomotti, *Catalogue des majoliques* cat. 567.

37 Rackham, *Victoria and Albert Museum* cat. 483.

38 Mancini Della Chiara M., *Maioliche del Museo Civico di Pesaro. Catalogo* (Bologna: 1979) cat. 115.

39 Giacomotti, *Catalogue des majoliques* cat. 503, 519, and 595; and Cole, *Italian Maiolica* cat. 38.

40 Giacomotti, *Catalogue des majoliques* cat. 521; Fuchs C.D., *Maioliche istoriate rinascimentali del Museo Statale d'Arte Medioevale e Moderna di Arezzo* (Arezzo: 1993) cat. 297; and Hausmann T., *Majolika und Fayence. Vermächtnis Rolf Lahr.* Kataloge des Kunstgewerbemuseums Berlin, Band XI (Berlin: 1986) cat. 10.

41 Busti – Cocchi, *Museo Regionale della Ceramica* cat. 68.

42 Fiocco – Gherardi – Sfeir-Fakhri, *Majoliques italiennes* cat. 73.

43 Chompret, *Répertoire*, vol. II, fig. 177.

44 Rackham, *Islamic Pottery and Italian Maiolica* cat. 355; Béalu C., *50 majoliques. Faïences italiennes de la Renaissance*, dealer's cat., JM Béalu & Fils (Paris: 2010) 28–29.

45 Béalu, *50 majoliques* 22–23.

46 Respectively, Fiocco – Gherardi, *La ceramic di Deruta* cat. 180 and Rackham, *Victoria and Albert Museum* cat. 760 and 762.

47 Busti – Cocchi, *Museo Regionale della Ceramica* cat. 153, with the inscription 'SANCTE ANTONIO ORA PRO NOBIS' (St Anthony, pray for us).

48 Sold Christie's, London, 23 November 1981, lot 212 (recorded as being a remarkable 63.5 cm in diameter); with respect to attribution, I cannot rule out Siena or another Tuscan centre.

49 Ravanelli Guidotti, *Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche* cat. 100.

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FIGURE 8.15 Deruta, "The Incredulity of St Thomas", ca. 1500–1530. Lustred maiolica, diam. 40.5 cm. Toronto, Gardiner Museum
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St Geminianus (patron saint of San Gimignano);[50] St Constance (first bishop of Perugia and one of that city's saint-protectors);[51] St John the Evangelist and St James;[52] St Benedict with four saints from his order: Scholastica, Justina, Maurus, and Placidus;[53] and Sts Cecilia, Magdalene, Augustine, John the Baptist, and Paul.[54] Surprisingly, Clare of Assisi (d. 1253), best known for

50 Sold Christie's, London, 26–27 November 2013, lot 14.

51 Thornton – Wilson, *Italian Renaissance Ceramics* cat. 279.

52 Giacomotti, *Catalogue des majoliques* cat. 480.

53 Thornton – Wilson, *Italian Renaissance Ceramics*, cat. 253; the footring is pierced four times. The figures closely follow their source, a ca. 1500 engraving, but the maiolica painter omits the names of the saints and the background landscape.

54 Fiocco – Gherardi, *La ceramica di Deruta* cat. 165; this object is actually a ewer stand/basin, but as it closely reproduces a Marcantonio Raimondi engraving, it stands to reason the subject was painted on *piatti da pompa* was well.

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founding the Order of the Poor Clares, a monastic religious order for women in the Franciscan tradition, appears on only one dish that I am aware of.[55] In general, even given this variety of saints, most likenesses are to be expected given Deruta's location and its proximity or connection to particular religious sites or orders. This largely identifiable pool of saints also suggests that, contrary to what one might expect, consumers did not regularly personalise them with images of their own saint's name.

Historical religious figures make very rare appearances on *piatti da pompa*, and only two examples, both lustred, are known to me. One shows Judas Maccabeus, the Jewish priest who led the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucids in the second century BCE, after their ruler issued decrees forbidding Jewish religious practices.[56] The other depicts Constantine the Great, whose dramatic conversion and military victories made him the first Christian Emperor of Rome; he is shown on horseback, with hands clasped in prayer, an attitude echoed in the rim inscription 'IO MA RE CHOMA[N]DO A DIIO' (I commend myself to God).[57]

Identifying precisely who purchased or commissioned Deruta display dishes is difficult at the current state of scholarship. I know of no documents (potters' records, commission contracts, or household inventories) in which these works can be definitively identified.[58] Given the dishes' size, cost, and – in the case of secular subjects – inclusion of moralising inscriptions (often in Latin), it seems likely that as souvenirs they were beyond the means of poor pilgrims and those of modest means.[59] More likely, consumers included the fairly well off, what we call the 'middle class' today, or the reasonably wealthy – in particular those who could display these works in houses that contained bedchambers, spaces designated for prayer, or even private chapels.[60]

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55 Museo regionale della ceramica di Deruta, inv. 1100; I thank Dott.ssa Iolanda Cunto for confirming its location for me.

56 Fiocco – Gherardi, *La ceramica di Deruta* cat. 136.

57 Prentice von Erdberg J. – Ross M.C., *Catalogue of the Italian Majolica in the Walters Art Gallery* (Baltimore: 1952) cat. 21.

58 Maiolica references in the archives of pilgrim centres such as Assisi could add significant understanding to the dishes' likely role as souvenirs.

59 Prints would have been among the cheapest available effigies of saints and pious subjects.

60 On an empirical note, in three decades of extensive travel throughout Italy I have never encountered sixteenth-century *piatti da pompa* inside churches. The medieval tradition of inserting large dishes (*bacini*) into the church facades, still visible in various cities in Lazio, Umbria, and Tuscany, had largely died out by 1500. With respect to devotional maiolica in the domestic sphere, the 1609 inventory of the Palazzo Ducale in Urbino lists several elaborate maiolica sculptures, all almost surely made in Urbino, including: 'un eramo grando con un San Girolomo un Christo et un angelo et la Chiesa accima, di rilievo et dipinto' (a large painted hermitage in relief with St Jerome, a crucifix, an angel, and a church above), for which see Sangiorgi F., *Documenti urbinati. Inventari del Palazzo Ducale (1582–1631)*, Accademia Raffaello, Collana di Studi e Testi, n. 4 (Urbino: 1976) 189;

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Lay members of confraternities were likely key consumers of religious-themed Deruta maiolica. Present in every city and town, confraternities were the vehicles through which the laity could, in varying degrees, engage with the Church and act out their faith; for some, membership was a viable alternative to committing to the strict behaviours of monastic or convent life.[61] Confraternities had a critical role as custodians of civic cult images – including the supervision of shrines and organisation of processions – and it is likely their members owned, for private use, versions of those images in various media.[62] Because the social and economic status of confraternities differed so widely, one might posit that polychrome *piatti da pompa* appealed to members of moderate means, while lustred *piatti da pompa* (which appeared gilded and were at least marginally more expensive) were suitable objects for more prosperous confrères.

As we saw above with the example of the St Jerome dish inscribed 'VICENTIA', in spite of an array of consistently repeated images, religious-themed Deruta dishes could be customised. This is likely the case with a dish depicting a woman in a Franciscan robe (presumably a nun) in a landscape holding a book, with 'FRANCESCO SCRIVE / FAUSTINA LEGIE' (Francis writes, Faustina reads) inscribed behind her, presumably a personal declaration of esteem for the writings of St Francis.[63] The unique subject on a naïvely-painted dish of a tonsured Franciscan monk preaching from a pulpit to a segregated congregation, with a fervour reminiscent of the Dominican reformer Savonarola (d. 1498), also suggests customisation [Fig. 8.16].[64] No printed design source has been identified for this dish, and it would not surprise me if it had been commissioned by a monastic, as a reminder of his sacred calling.[65]

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an extant object approximating this is the Urbino model of a wayside altar in the V&A, for which see Sani E.P., *Italian Renaissance Maiolica* (London: 2012) 184, fig. 213.

61 See Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art* 114–121 for confraternities and guilds as important consumers of religious artwork. Goldthwaite notes a revival of confraternities in the sixteenth century as an instrument by which the secular laity could participate in Church reform, and observes that even the small town of Spello, about 20 km from Deruta, had about a dozen confraternities. For confraternities as patrons of art and architecture, see Wisch B. – Cohl Ahl D. (eds.), *Confraternities and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Italy: Ritual, Spectacle, Image* (Cambridge, UK: 2000); sixteenth-century Rome had approximately 112 confraternities, many with more than 500 members.

62 Wisch – Cole Ahl, *Confraternities* 11–12.

63 Rackham, *Islamic Pottery and Italian Maiolica* no. 360.

64 Gardelli G., *Italika. Maiolica italiana del Rinascimento. Saggi e studi* (Faenza: 1999) cat. 183.

65 The scene on the dish echoes (though was not based on) a woodcut of Savonarola preaching in his *Compendio di revelatione* [...] (Florence, Francesco Bonaccorsi per Piero Pacini: 1496).

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FIGURE 8.16 Deruta, "A Franciscan Monk Preaching from a Pulpit", ca. 1540–1560. Maiolica, diam. 46.5 cm. Private collection
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

The message of yet another bespoke dish is not easily decipherable: at the centre is a female pilgrim saint with the flowing Latin inscription 'IBIT AD GIEMINOS LUCIDA FAMA POLLOS FIAT' (roughly translated, He [or She] will go to the twins; the fame will be bright).[66] It seems possible that this dish commemorates the safe birth of twins, accomplished through the intercession of the particular saint portrayed.

The presence on Deruta maiolica of prelates' coats-of-arms or symbols or insignia associated with religious orders or communities demonstrates that

66 Gardelli, *Italika* cat. 186 and Béalu, *50 majoliques* 30–31. An alternative reading of the inscription is 'He (or She) will go with bright fame to the twins; let it be done.'

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clerics at every level were enthusiastic consumers of the wares. A lustred *piatto da pompa* with the arms of the Della Rovere pope Julius II (r. 1503–13) is one of many with papal armorials.[67] While it cannot be ruled out that such dishes were made for direct use by pontiffs, it seems more likely that they were made for papal supporters. Rome was an important market for Deruta potters, and if armorial products were fashionable among clerics there and elsewhere in the Papal States, it stands to reason that religious-themed dishes were as well.

At least a dozen pieces of extant Deruta maiolica are decorated with the arms of the Baglioni family, who ruled Deruta in the early sixteenth century.[68] A *piatto da pompa* with the arms of a Baglioni bishop indicates ownership by a high-ranking prelate, probably Troilo Baglioni, Bishop of Perugia from 1501.[69] Troilo commissioned frescos from Pinturicchio and perhaps even Raphael, and his death in 1506 is presumably the *terminus ante quem* for the dating of the dish. The griffon, a symbol of Perugia, flanks the arms, and in this context it probably alludes to the bishop's civic and institutional duties. Patronage of Deruta display dishes thus extended to the uppermost echelons of secular and religious society, which included educated and cultured consumers capable of appreciating the allegorical or symbolic meanings behind some of its paintings and inscriptions. The Baglioni family's dominance ended in 1540 when the Papal forces of Paul III ousted them from Perugia in the brief war over salt taxes. Deruta sided with the papacy against Perugia, and the region settled down to an uneventful history as part of the Papal States. These political events likely resulted in an increased market for religious-themed Deruta maiolica after 1540; but whatever the tangible effect, they surely created an expanded market for its wares in Rome.

Turning to secular patronage, it is well recognised that women (and wives in particular) played a central role in maintaining the Renaissance household, including the choice and placement of decorative and devotional items such as *piatti da pompa*. The dishes can be seen in the context of the attention paid to the comportment and household obligations of women, for example as reflected in contemporary manuals and dialogues regarding the ideal conduct of wives and daughters.[70] The female saints and martyrs on these dishes (such as St Barbara, St Catherine of Alexandria, St Lucy) could be viewed as moral

67 Thornton – Wilson, *Italian Renaissance Ceramics* cat. 277.

68 Busti G. – Cocchi F. (eds.), *La ceramica umbra al tempo di Perugino* (Milan: 2004) 23–24 and cat. 7–12.

69 Busti – Cocchi, *La ceramica umbra* cat. 10.

70 For references to such manuals, the most well-known of which is probably Castiglione's *Il cortegiano* (1528), see Clarke A.J., *Prestige, Piety and Moral Perfection: Deruta Maiolica and the Social and Cultural Value of a Decorative Object*, Ph.D. thesis (The University of

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exemplars, with prayer to their images – it was hoped – having a salutary effect or facilitating spiritual goals; one of these goals could be assisting a husband's work toward his own pious refinement. A wife was considered an 'ornament of the family': she contributed to her family's reputation and was emblematic of its capacity for virtue.[71] But more broadly, all family members were expected to demonstrate piety, a requisite element of social respectability and of public prestige.[72] To the extent that Deruta display dishes with secular *belle donne* were suitable gifts from fiancés or husbands to women at any point during their courtship or marriage, more pious couples would have preferred the exchange of dishes with saintly and religious subjects, and the spiritual and protective values associated with those images.[73] One suspects too that some individuals gave sacred-themed dishes as dowry or wedding gifts, but no archival evidence for this practice has yet come to light.

The difficulties in assessing how far the movement towards reform leading up to and including the Council of Trent (1545–63) influenced religious art displayed in sacred spaces is amplified when it comes to Deruta wares. What effects, if any, were there to the market for religious-themed *piatti da pompa*, or on the popularity of specific subjects? Given the dishes' generally sombre and standard depictions of saints, Jesus, and Mary, it is easy to see how there would be a long-standing and robust market for them. A significant figure at the Council, Cardinal-Bishop Gabriele Paleotti is best remembered for his *Discorso intorno alle imagini sacre e profane* (1582), which codified the Church's views on the content and proper role of art.[74] Although his text slightly post-dates the period of *piatti da pompa* under consideration here, his commentary on the value of sacred images in domestic and public spaces surely reflects lay and ecclesiastical attitudes prevalent throughout in the century.

Paleotti wrote that the noblest Christian images serve the glory of God, and are testaments of our obligation, subjection, obedience and hope; they delight (sensually, rationally, and spiritually), 'instruct the intellect, move the will, and refresh the memory of divine things' and 'in an instant […] cause in us a desire for virtue and horror of vice'.[75] He further points out that pious images are

British Columbia: 2006) 2, 283–285 and Ajmar – Thornton, "When Is a Portrait" 141–142, incl. note 11.

71 Clarke, *Prestige, Piety and Moral Perfection* 162.

72 Cooper, "Devotion" 190.

73 For a study, including taxonomy, of the broad class of *belle donne* maiolica, see Ajmar – Thornton, "When Is a Portrait".

74 Paleotti Gabriele, *Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images*, trans. W. McCuaig (Bologna, Alessandro Benacci: 1582; reprint, Los Angeles: 2012).

75 Ibid., 110 (Book 1, ch. 20).

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easily understood by everyone, and we obtain from them not only 'the theory of all that we need for salvation' but 'the practice of all the virtues and the true institution of our lives, represented before us with the examples of holy persons who, to serve God, drove out their own vices, held iniquity in abhorrence, and overcame the difficulties of the world, embracing piety, charity, modesty, justice, and true obedience to the law of God'.[76]

In underlining the clear preference for viewing religious stories over hearing them, Paleotti states: 'To hear the story told of the martyrdom of a saint, or the zeal and constancy of a virgin, or the Passion of Christ himself – those are things that really hit one inside. But when the saintly martyr practically materializes in front of your eyes in vivid color, with the oppressed Virgin on one side and Christ pierced by nails on the other – one would have to be made of wood or stone not to feel how much more it intensifies devotion and wrenches the gut.'[77] As proof of the efficacy of pious and devout images in times of need – and, by extension, proof of heavenly power itself – Paleotti points out their supernatural ability to restore health, eliminate peril, and defend cities and sites threatened by enemies.[78] In this framework, Deruta *piatti da pompa* are sacred images *par excellence*, and their placement in the home – whether in a private space, such as a *camera*, or less private one, such as a *sala* – made them accessible to owners at all times, to 'instruct the intellect, move the will, and refresh the memory of divine things'.[79] The display of the dishes in a reception space such as the *sala* communicated to invited guests (and indeed to anyone who entered the house) the religious affiliation of their owner, and, via the objects' painted decorations or scenes, which aspects of their faith were most meaningful to them.

Large maiolica dishes and plates are consistently listed in Renaissance household inventories, and while those that formed part of table or credenza sets were used in food service, consumption, or related rituals, the one-off Deruta dishes under discussion here were very likely used exclusively for display, following a tradition of hanging single large ceramic plates on walls that

76 Ibid., *Discourse* 116 (Book 1, ch. 23).

77 Ibid., *Discourse* 119 (Book 1, ch. 25).

78 Ibid., 120 (Book 1, ch. 26).

79 The humanist Giovanni Pontano (*De splendore*, 1498) surely would have considered Deruta *piatti da pompa* among the ornamental household objects acquired 'as much for use as for embellishment and splendour' and whose sight 'is pleasant and brings prestige to the owner of the house'; see Welch E., "Public Magnificence and Private Display: Giovanni Pontano's 'De splendore' (1498) and the Domestic Arts", *Journal of Design History* 15, 4 (2002) 211–221.

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dates from at least the early Quattrocento.[80] It is reasonable to assume that both their specific location in the house and the degree of piety of their owners determined the extent to which the dishes served as actual foci for prayer, intercession, and reflection. Earthenware plates or dishes described as large (*grandi*) appear in the inventories of various rooms, including the bedchamber, *sala, guardaroba*, and kitchen, but these cursory references rarely contain further details (such as place of manufacture), except perhaps to note which objects are armorial (*con arme*), and I know of no contemporary descriptions of stand-alone dishes that specify subjects, pious or otherwise. Because most maiolica is readily moveable, it can shift within a house according to the owner's needs, and the locations cited in postmortem inventories may represent the consolidation of some goods in certain areas of the house for the benefit of the inventory takers; consequently any discussion of use based on inventory location can only be speculative.

In spite of such hurdles, one suspects that the placement and use of religious-themed Deruta *piatti da pompa* paralleled that of other pious images in the household, and it was a client's means that largely guided the choice of medium (metalwork, textile, painting, ceramic, print, and so on) for such images. In as much as one can speak of a general hierarchy of materials, maiolica ranked below precious metal and tempera and oil painting, and above prints.[81] The relative cheapness of prints is highlighted by an episode involving Savonarola that simultaneously informs us about a suggested household use of pious images: in his sermon on the art of dying well, delivered in 1496, the friar describes three pictures that the public should display in their bedrooms and contemplate each morning, and to ensure their maximum dissemination, he urges that they be produced as woodcuts accompanying his text, which they ultimately were. Two of the scenes show bedchambers with Death approaching sick or dying men confined to a bed; in both instances large, religious works – a crucifix above an altar, and a Madonna and Child tondo, (analogues of each of which can be found in Deruta maiolica) – decorate the wall.[82] For Savonarola

80 Syson, L., "Italian Maiolica Painting: Composing for Context," in Wilson T, *Maiolica. Italian Renaissance Ceramics in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: 2016) 19–20; there Syson illustrates a late-sixteenth-century engraving that includes two large plates flanking a kitchen doorway, though it is impossible to know the plates' medium or to discern what figures or scenes are represented on them.

81 On maiolica pricing, attitudes, and hierarchy see Brody, M.J., *The Evolution, Function, and Social Context of Italian Renaissance Maiolica Services, c. 1480 to c. 1600*, DPhil thesis (University of Oxford: 2017) 131–154.

82 *Predica del arte del bene morire*, various editions ca. 1497 to ca. 1502; see www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/356702 and www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/savonarola-girolamo-1452-1498-predica-dellarte-del-5662543-details.aspx; the copy in the Library of

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'dying well' consisted of dying in the comfort of one's own bed, surrounded by religious images whose intercession presumably could minimise one's suffering and thwart Death until God's final calling; but for the majority of their owner's life, these works, visible from the bed, served as reminders of Christian values and morality, and as catalysts for prayer and contemplation.

To conclude, extant *piatti da pompa* number in the high hundreds, and they may even exceed 1,000 examples worldwide; the longevity of the dish's form merits calling it a phenomenon. The high repetition of the same saints (particularly Francis and Jerome) suggests there was a thriving market fuelled by the desire to adorn one or more rooms of the house with these charming works of art, which were available in polychrome and (more costly) lustred versions. The regular appearance on the dishes of Italian and Latin inscriptions (especially humanist and moralising ones) suggests that at least a portion of the production was tailored to literate consumers, and to those of some means. Display dishes were but a single category of object in an overall production of religious-themed Deruta wares so varied (plates, cups, bowls, basins, bottles, ewers, vases, plaques, ex-votos, and pharmacy vessels) it could satisfy the needs of consumers at every economic level of image-hungry Italy and beyond – from pilgrim-tourists and the religious, to labourers and merchants, to patricians and other elites, many of whom belonged to confraternities and guilds that required their own devotional images for halls and private devotional spaces.

Although *piatti da pompa* were naturally popular in and around the religious centres and pilgrim sites of Umbria and central Italy, the fame of lustred Deruta pottery was more widespread. Already by 1498 the Masci family of potters claimed in their tax return that their lustrewares were 'beautiful and unprecedented and sold throughout the whole world, and because of this the city of Perugia takes pride and increases in fame, and everyone marvels to see these maiolica works'.[83] By transporting these portable objects back to their home towns, pilgrims and other pious-minded visitors helped popularise the wares. Whether purchased as devotional souvenirs or domestic decoration, *piatti da pompa* were attractive, veritable art objects, available off-the-shelf in a broad array of religious subjects, or easily customisable, and they were one way by which different segments of Italian Renaissance society sacralised their domestic surroundings.

Congress is digitally available at www.loc.gov/item/48036828/. In some editions of the *Predica* the Madonna and Child in the woodcut is rectangular and smaller.

83 Wilson, "Renaissance Ceramics" 138, incl. note 3, where the original Latin is transcribed.

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CHAPTER 9

Investigating the 'Case' of the *Agnus Dei* in Sixteenth-Century Italian Homes

Irene Galandra Cooper

On 26 July 1582, Giulia Diamante signed a deposition against her Spanish husband Francisco da Cordoba in front of the Vicar of the Neapolitan Archbishop, who acted on behalf of the Roman Inquisition.[1] Giulia started her statement by recounting episodes of her unhappy married life: Francisco, who was extremely poor, had only married her for her large dowry and had tried to kill her many times over the years. However, this was not what brought Giulia to the Inquisition tribunal. Rather, she was spurred to denounce her husband on account of a *borsetta di fattocchierie*, 'a pouch full of magical items', that Francisco had been carrying around his neck and under his shirt for about three months. Giulia knew what the pouch contained because the previous Friday, while Francisco was asleep, she had stolen it to look at its contents. Shocked by what she saw, Giulia took it to the Inquisitor's vicar who, without further ado, initiated the trial against Francisco. Witnesses were called to testify against him; their testimonies, which repeated the same story, signalled the object's inexplicable mysterious charge. As one witness stated:

> [I saw] Giulia holding an *agnus dei*, that is, a little round black velvet pouch, and it was open and inside I saw a piece of wood as little as the tip of a finger, a small piece of magnet, some flesh that looked like a pulsing heart, a broken piece of iron, some peppercorns and some other tricks.[2]

Francisco, however, told another story. To the Inquisitor's routine question about whether he knew the reason that had brought him to trial, he answered: 'because of the *breve* that I used to carry'.[3] Scholars who have studied *brevi*

1 Archivio Storico Diocesano di Napoli (ASDN hereafter), "Fondo Sant'Ufficio", 47.542 1582: "Io vidi Giulia tenere in mano un *agnus dei*, cioè una borzetta de velluto negro tonda quanto un giro de mezza grandezza et era aperta et subito dentro ce viddi un pezzo de ligno piccolo quanto una punta de ditto, un pezzetto piccolo de calamita, un poco di carne che parea un core che pulsava, un ferro ritorto, alcune acine de pepe e altri imbrogli".

2 Ibid., fol. 9r.

3 Ibid., fol. 12r.

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have identified them as prayers that, written on a small piece of paper, were kept close to the body, at times within fabric containers, as wearable amulets.[4] He explained that he had worn his *breve* since the day his mother had given it to him as protection against life-threatening situations. From further questioning we gather that Francisco had never opened the pouch to see its contents, and that he believed it contained 'the *agnus dei* made of blessed wax […] and I used to carry it as a sign of my devotion'.[5]

Francisco's accusation and subsequent trial are tied to the existence of two very different objects, both identified as *agnus dei*: a sanctioned wearable wax sacramental and a pouch containing illicit and magical objects. His case provides a window onto the heightened anxiety surrounding these items of domestic devotion and the interplay between correct and actual usages in early modern Italy. Devotion took many forms in early modern Italy, and by combining archival and material evidence, this essay will explore the 'case' of the *agnus dei* as a means to shed light on the nuanced devotional experiences of early modern Italians when not in Church.

1 The Sacramental of the *Agnus Dei*

The *agnus dei*, or 'Lamb of God', belonged to a category of devotional objects that, from the thirteenth century, was known as 'sacramentals' (*sacramentalia*), as opposed to sacraments (*sacramenta*).[6] Originally, the term 'sacramentals' was exclusively used to indicate prayers and gestures performed during the administration of one of the seven sacraments, both in church and elsewhere. During the early modern period, 'sacramentals' also came to identify, extra-liturgically, all the objects blessed by the power of the Church and subsequently carried home, such as candles, flowers, palm leaves as well as rosary beads.[7] In a time when childbirth, pestilence, wars and natural calamities could upturn the devotee's world, 'sacramentals' functioned as sanctioned

4 Cardini F., "Il 'breve' (secoli XIV–XV): tipologia e funzione", *La Ricerca Folklorica* 5: La scrittura: funzioni e ideologie (1982) 63–73. See also Tycz K., "Material Prayers and Maternity in Early Modern Italy: Signed, Sealed, Delivered", in this volume.

5 ASDN, 'Fondo Sant'Ufficio', 47.542 1582, fol. 14r.

6 Walker Bynum C., *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: 2011) 145.

7 Quinn J.R., "Sacramentals", in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia* 12 (London – Munich: 2003) 479–481, 480. For a study on 'sacramental' practices in seventeenth-century southern Italy see Gentilcore D., *From Bishop to Witch. The System of the Sacred in Early Modern Terra d'Otranto* (Manchester – New York: 1992) 95.

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intermediaries with the divine, as pre-Christian, or non-Christian amulets had done for centuries.[8] In search of protection, early modern men and women sought out the sacred, in all its multiple forms, as the most powerful means of ordering an otherwise unpredictable and potentially dangerous world.[9]

Agnus dei were first conceived as wax tokens made from the remains of the Paschal candle of the previous year, which was blessed liturgically during the Easter celebrations as a sign of the Resurrected Christ.[10] Meaning 'Lamb of God', their Latin name *agnus dei* simultaneously reveals their connection with Christ in the New Testament and with his prefiguration in the Old Testament. In fact, in Exodus, Christ is represented by the sacrificed lamb whose blood painted on Jews' households spared them from the wrath of God.[11] In the New Testament, Christ's fulfilment of the Old Testament's prefiguration is sealed by John the Baptist, when he addressed Christ with the words: 'Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world'.[12]

The blessing of the *agnus dei* has ancient origins.[13] Sources point to the fifth century and the papacy of Zosimus who, in 417, granted a Paschal candle to all Roman parish churches. Probably responding to the requests of their parishioners, parish priests then started to distribute the remains of the Paschal candle of the previous year to the masses, who were eager to own a piece of the wax that was the symbol of the resurrected Christ as the light of the world.[14] Over the centuries, the pieces of wax were shaped as small wax lambs, but subsequently came to adopt the simpler form of oval cakes. These were impressed with the image of the Lamb of God as well as the words *Agnus Dei Qui Tollit Peccata Mundi* on the recto, 'Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world', and were dated and stamped with the name of the Pope who blessed them on the verso. From the mid-sixteenth century, the Pope sometimes chose alternative devotional representations of his name and arms to decorate the verso of the wax cakes.[15] One of the rare surviving sixteenth-century wax examples is an *agnus dei* that Gregory the XIII blessed and gave to the Jesuits

8 Amulets have been used since ancient times. See Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality* 21–22.

9 Scribner R.W., *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany* (London: 1987) 7.

10 McBrien R. (ed.), *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (London: 1995) 961.

11 Exodus, 12: 1–28.

12 John, 1: 29.

13 Bertelli S., *Il corpo del re. Sacralità del potere nell'Europa medievale e moderna* (Ponte Alle Grazie: 1995) 121–122.

14 Bertelli, *Il corpo del re* 117–127.

15 Moroni Romano G., "Agnus Dei di cera benedetti", in *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica da S. Pietro fino ai nostri* giorni, 10 vols. (Venice: 1840) vol. 1, 83–132.

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he sent to the British Isles. More specifically, this sixteenth-century *agnus dei* might have belonged to Saint Edmund Campion, as it was found in the attic of his last residence during renovation works carried out in 1959 [Figs. 9.1 & 9.2].[16]

While the sources are unclear about who made the wax discs, the most reliable information available suggests that the 'pontifical apothecary' (the so-called *Magistrum Cerae Palatii Apostolici*) manufactured the wax discs. This remained the case until 1592, when Clement VIII entrusted their creation to the Cistercians in the Church of Santa Pudenziana in Rome.[17]



FIGURE 9.1 Agnus Dei, front, 16th century. Wax, Campion Hall Collections, Oxford
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16 http://jesuitinstitute.org/Pages/Campion.htm [accessed on 29.01.2018].
17 Moroni Romano, "Agnus Dei" 129.

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FIGURE 9.2 Agnus Dei, back, 16th century. Wax, Campion Hall Collections, Oxford
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2 Blessing and Distributing the *Agnus Dei*

Early modern and modern sources attest to a striking continuity – of gestures, colours and instruments – in the ritual of the blessing of the *agnus dei*. From the sixteenth century the rite took place on the first Saturday after Easter, known as *in Albis*, of a Pope's pontificate, and then every seventh year.[18] In his diary, Johann Burchard, Master of Ceremonies to a succession of popes,

18 Bonardo Vincenzo, *Discorso intorno all'origine, antichità et virtù degli Agnus Dei di cera benedetti* (Rome, Vincenzo Accoliti: 1586). The most recent source that attests to such continuity is a video of Pope John XXIII blessing the *agnus dei* on his 78th birthday in

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FIGURE 9.3 Bartolomeo Faleti, "Pope Pious V consecrating the 'wax lamb'", 1567. Etching on paper, 40 × 54, British Museum
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gives a detailed description of Pope Innocent VIII blessing the *agnus dei* on 28 March 1486.[19] Evoking the rites of baptism, the wax discs were dipped into silver basins filled with holy water, and then subsequently 'fished' with a silver ladle and handled over to the Cistercians who laid them on a nearby table to allow them to dry.

Strikingly, a century after his textual description, an almost exact visual counterpart to Burchard's words is found in a 1567 etching now at the British Museum [Fig. 9.3]. Printed in 1566 and dedicated to Pius V, the etching illustrates the Pope – clearly recognizable by his Dominican cap – as he moves around the room where the blessing took place. In the print, as in Burchard's description, there are silver basins and ladles, wax discs of a variety of sizes ready to be blessed and Cistercian monks busy handing wax cakes to the

1959: http://www.britishpathe.com/video/pope-blessing-angus-dei. The ritual of the blessing of the *agnus dei* ceased with the Second Vatican Council, 1962–1965.

19 *The Diary of John Burchard of Strasburg*, ed. A.H. Mathew (London: 1910) vol. 1: 1483–1492, 143–144. The 28th March 1486 was a Tuesday, and not a Saturday; because the Pope was unwell the ceremony had been moved to a different date.

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Pope or carefully laying them on a table to dry.[20] In combination, the written text and its visual counterpart give us a clear idea of what the blessing involved.

However, both Burchard's diary and the print omit a fundamental detail that is recorded in other early modern sources. The *agnus dei*, tangible and portable reminders of the utmost immaterial Christ, were purposefully created to be given to the faithful and carried home: this important fact, which is also mentioned in the *Ordines Romani*, transformed the *agnus dei* into a household 'sacramental', sanctioned by Church authorities.[21]

3 At Home

In 1556 the Neapolitan Theatine Gian Pietro Carafa, then Pope Paul IV, commissioned the Dominican Vincenzo Bonardo to write the first treatise on the origins and the virtues of the *agnus dei*, entitled *Discorso intorno all'origine, antichità et virtù degli Agnus Dei di cera*, 'A Discourse On the Origins, History and Virtues of the Wax *agnus dei*'.[22] Following a historical investigation into the origins of the blessing of the *agnus dei*, Bonardo's essay introduces the important detail mentioned above: 'during the Saturday *in Albis*, after the mass and the communion, the *agnus dei* were distributed in church and given to the masses to take home'.[23] Within the home, as Bonardo specifies, the *agnus dei* could be kept at the head of the bed, *a capo del letto* – a detail of particular interest in the context of domestic devotion.[24] The association with the bed is further illuminated by a sumptuary law from Ascoli Piceno in the Marche, which expressly limited the decoration of babies' cradles to a cross or an *agnus dei*, which was to be of a value not above ten florins and unpainted.[25] Inquisition trials also attest to the practice of keeping the blessed *agnus dei* close to the bed. In one, an *agnus dei* is reported as being attached to a bed in the *camera* of a couple of Neapolitan newlyweds. More specifically, the *agnus dei* was hanging from the *travacca*, a Neapolitan term referring to the outer frame of a bed. Unfortunately, the location of the *agnus dei* was detected because of the irreverent acts of the husband, named as Giovanni Spinola, who threw it

20 The video mentioned in note 18 still shows the Cistercian monks.

21 As mentioned in Bertelli, *Il corpo del re* 117.

22 Bonardo, *Discorso*.

23 Ibid., 29.

24 Ibid., 29.

25 Archivio di Stato di Ascoli Piceno, *Delle colationi dell'infante, et spese superflue delle culle et ornamenti de fanciulli. cap.o vi*, fol. 8v.

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angrily to the floor and smashed it to pieces – the reason behind his trial and imprisonment by the Inquisitor's vicar on 11 October 1595.[26]

Furthermore, Bonardo says that devotees were invited to bring the blessed wax cakes home and were also encouraged to burn them to release 'their perfume to help them in times of need' – their divine smell was produced by the added baptismal balsam.[27] Evidently, many ignored this advice and treasured their *agnus dei* instead. In fact, according to Bonardo, the *agnus dei* would keep Satan, *il Demonio*, away from any household.[28] Moreover, the blessed wax cake would assist women during childbirth and protect men and women from earthquakes, sea storms, wild winds and rains, hail, lighting and thunder, fires, inundations, plague and any diseases, as well as from sudden death.[29]

The aforementioned protective virtues were well known before the second half of the sixteenth century, as evidenced by the poem that Pope Urban VII wrote to accompany the *agnus dei* that he sent to the Byzantine emperor John Paleologus in 1362, together with the plea to unify the Eastern and the Western churches:

> Balm and pure wax with the water of the chrism
> Made the Agnus, that I give you as a great gift.
> Born from a font, mystically sanctified,
> It destroys ghosts and any malice,
> Helps pregnant women in childbirth,
> If carried with purity, it protects from the waves,
> Shutters sin and suffering with Christ's blood.
> It brings precious gifts, puts out fires,
> Protects against sudden death, and from Satan's ruin.
> If honoured, it wins trophies from enemies.
> The smallest part alone is worth the whole.
> Lamb of God, who takes away sins, have mercy on me.[30]

Given such understanding of their protective functions, it is not surprising that the laity employed the *agnus dei* in their daily lives by assigning them a variety of layered meanings that went beyond the univocal sacred power they represented. The most detailed and lively descriptions of the variety of ways

26 ASDN, 1106, 'Processo contro Giovanni Spinola', 1595, fol. 1r.

27 Bonardo, *Discorso* 29.

28 Bonardo *Discorso* 29.

29 Ibid., 55.

30 The text of the letter is transcribed in Ceresole A., *Notizie storico morali sopra gli Agnus Dei Benedetti* (Rome: 1896) 36.

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in which people employed the sacramental of the *agnus dei* is found in a collection of miracles relating to Pope Pius V. Printed in 1672, the *Ristretto della vita, virtù e miracoli del Beato Pio V* draws on a variety of sources relating to the Pope's life and especially the transcripts from the trials for his beatification. The book is a eulogistic account of the Pope and the chapters are divided according to his virtues (such as temperance, fortitude, and purity). The last section, entitled *Virtù mirabili degli Agnus Dei Benedetti dal Beato Pio Papa V*, concerns the miracles that took place involving those *agnus dei* that bore the impression of the Pope's name on their verso and that were produced and distributed until his death in 1572.[31] The miracles are categorised according to the virtues attributed to the *agnus dei*, making this seventeenth-century book the most comprehensive source for examples of the efficacy of the *agnus dei*.

Firstly, there are miracles relating to fire. Pius V's *agnus dei* are reported to have been thrown into burning houses in order to extinguish the flames and to have subsequently been retrieved unscathed; likewise, wounds vanished when the *agnus dei* was laid on badly burnt skin.[32] These are followed by miracles relating to water. Flooding rivers and tumultuous seas are tamed by the throwing of the wax *agnus dei* into them, accompanied by the recitation of a 'Paternoster et una Ave Maria'. These same qualities of incombustibility and indestructibility were assigned to the Communion host, as well as to saints and their relics.[33] The similarities between the blessed *agnus dei* and relics are furthered by another passage, which indicates the efficacy granted even to broken pieces of their wax. A *felucca* (boat) was heading from Rome towards Naples when a storm hit and threatened the lives of the passengers. A Franciscan friar who was on board asked all the passengers to kneel and recite one *Paternoster* and a Hail Mary while asking for the intercession of Pius V, and threw into the sea a *particella* (small piece) of the *agnus dei*. The grace was granted and the storm ceased, but only for a little while. Twice again the storm raged and twice again the friar broke two more pieces from his wax *agnus dei* and the wild winds and waves stopped. On the fourth, and last time, the skies blackened and the storm roared over the little boat, but the friar was left with his last piece of the *agnus dei* and did not want to be parted from it. The other passengers started crying and pleading with him to throw it into the waves as he had done three times before. The friar agreed, but not before having secured the last piece with a long string. Finally the storm stopped, the winds calmed

31 *Ristretto della vita, virtù e miracoli del Beato Pio V* (Rome, Angelo Tinassi: 1672) 237–251.

32 Such reports of incombustibility also appear in the history of Protestantism just after Luther's death. See Scribner, *Popular Culture* 323–353.

33 Ibid., 328.

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down and the boat sailed all the way to Naples with the *agnus dei* trailing in the water. When the little *felucca* finally arrived in Naples, the friar retrieved the wax to find not the little piece, but a whole *agnus dei*, bearing the marks where he had broken it.

The treatise continues to list further miracles. The wax sacramental, whole or in pieces, was shown to protect the victims from bandits' attacks, or firearms and could be deployed during childbirth or any other instance when there was a great loss of blood. The examples reveal that the efficacy of the *agnus dei* resided in the whole cake as well as, like relics, small pieces of the blessed wax, a point emphasised by Urban VII's poem as well as Bonardo.[34] This was perhaps to avoid devotees discarding the blessed wax cakes when broken. In the absence of validating documents, the division, indestructibility and miracles associated with the *agnus dei* were taken as proof of their authenticity.

Furthermore, assessing the sacramental's authenticity was necessary as the popularity of the *agnus dei* led to them being illicitly reproduced by stamping a wax form. The ease of making these fake *agnus dei* meant that they were manufactured all over Italy.[35] In 1571, for instance, a silversmith named Sebastiano de Isopo was interrogated by the Neapolitan Inquisitor's vicar, after being accused of selling metal moulds for counterfeiting *agnus dei*.[36] Both ecclesiastical authorities and the laity were thus faced with a concern about the authenticity of the *agnus dei*; if these objects were not genuine, it would undermine their efficacy once home.

4 Wearing the *Agnus Dei*

Church officials' belief in the powers of wax fragments of the *agnus dei* was probably a response to the impracticality of keeping the *agnus dei* intact. Although varying in size, surviving *agnus dei* are so thin that if held up to the light, they acquire a sort of translucency. The wax could be broken but could also easily collect dirt that would in turn corrupt their very important whiteness, a symbol of Christ's purity. The whiteness of the *agnus dei* was so important that in 1572, Pope Gregory XIII issued a Papal Bull dedicated to the

34 Bonardo, *Discorso* 55.

35 Musacchio J.M., "Lambs, Coral, Teeth and the Intimate Intersection of Religion and Magic in Renaissance Italy", in Cornelison S.-J. – Montgomery S.B. (eds.), *Images, Relics and Devotional Practices in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Tempe: 2005) 139–156, 145; Lightbown R.W., *Medieval European Jewellery with a Catalogue of the Collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: 1992) 229.

36 ASDN, 157.1571.

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preservation of the wax's original colour, and prohibiting their painting and decorating: anyone, whether a 'man, or woman, lay or religious', who violated this rule, was subject to excommunication.[37] Because of its physical fragility, Bonardo advises devotees to protect the *agnus dei* 'with fabric covers or containers made in bone or crystal'.[38] If broken, small pieces of the blessed wax could be encased in bronze, silver and crystal cases, and then attached to rosaries or worn as pendants from necklaces.[39]

Once enclosed in a container, the *agnus dei* was more likely to take on a life beyond the home as its devotional and apotropaic virtues were transferred to the individual that wore it close to his or her body. Official support for the encasing and wearing of the blessed wax generated the production, and trade, of a multitude of containers. John Cherry has investigated some of the French and English examples, but there is still little scholarship on the surviving early modern Italian ones.[40]

An examination of twenty-five sixteenth-century Neapolitan post-mortem inventories suggests that, after the rosary, the *agnus dei* was the second most popular devotional object.[41] As the materials of the *agnus dei* are rarely mentioned, it is hard to distinguish between the whole Roman wax cakes and their containers. The array of materials used to make *agnus dei* containers was vast, and some were so luxurious that they transformed these items into stunning devotional pieces of jewellery. There are containers made of gold and crystal, or of gold, surrounded by pearls and garnets, or – in one case – of painted glass and black bone with a silver rosette.[42] There are fabric containers, some

37 *S.D.N.D. Gregorii PP. XIII Constitutione Agnus Dei benedicti minio inficiantur nec venales proponanur* (Romae, Apud Haeredes Antonij Bladij Impressores Camerales: 1572).

38 Bonardo, *Discorso* 59.

39 Ibid., 59.

40 Cherry J. "Containers for Agnus Dei", in Endwistle C. (ed.), *Through a Glass Brightly: Studies in Byzantine and Medieval Art and Archaeology Presented to David Buckton* (Oxford: 2003) 171–183.

41 Archivio di Stato di Napoli (hereafter ASN), 'Fondo Notai del Cinquecento'. The inventories I surveyed dated from 1521 to 1601 and belonged to non-élite Neapolitan citizens. The limited number of inventories surveyed is mainly due to the significant loss of materials in the archive during the Second World War. It is also partly a consequence of the lack of systematic cataloguing of sixteenth-century notarial records, which makes it difficult to navigate the archive. Although limited in number, the inventories of the less well-to-do Neapolitans have allowed me to work laterally from the trials and object-led analysis, and thus to expand the study of devotional objects found in the homes of ordinary people.

42 ASN, 'Fondo Notai del Cinquecento': Notary Cav. Gio. Domenico, 88, vol. 1, *Inventarium bonorum quondam Spetatoie Moaglio*, 1575; notary Stinca F. Antonio, *Inventarium bonorum quondam Joseph Cesarani*, 1596 and *Inventarium bonorum quondam Ferdinandi Funari*, 1601.

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embroidered, some in velvet of unspecified colours, and cheaper silver containers are also present.[43] The only case in which the presence of the 'wax *agnus dei*' is specifically recorded is amongst the possessions of a deceased Neapolitan citizen named Ferdinando Funari.[44]

Blessed in Rome, carried home for their devotional and protective virtues, suspended from people's necks as constant reminders of the sacred in their daily lives, *agnus dei* became one of the most popular portable devotional objects in early modern Italy. But were the *agnus dei* listed amongst people's devotional possessions all indicators of their owners' firm faith? If so, why was Francisco, with whom we opened this chapter, tried? The job of deciphering the nature of the laity's interaction with objects such as the *agnus dei* remains a difficult one. What is certain is that Francisco's trial was not an isolated case, and the *agnus dei* were not the only objects that were used in suspicious ways. During the Counter-Reformation, Church officials initiated militant and widespread action against a multitude of practices that involved a variety of sacramentals.[45] Recent studies have shown that throughout the sixteenth century, the layered meanings ascribed by individuals to the sacred objects that they carried home became a point of unresolved tension between the ecclesiastical powers and the masses of devotees.[46] Furthermore, there is scholarly agreement that the authorities' quest to eliminate any superstitious or magical behaviour was 'highly problematic, due to a pervasive uncertainty as to what constituted an offence in this matter'.[47]

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43 ASN, 'Fondo Notai del Cinquecento', notary Stinca F. Antonio, *Inventarium bonorum Joseph Cesarani*, fol. 2v: 'di tela d'oro recamato de perle et granatelle' and fol. 5r: 'otto de velluto'.

44 ASN, 'Fondo Notai del Cinquecento', notary Stinca F. Antonio, 1600, fol. 2r.

45 Fantini M.P., "Saggio per un catalogo dai processi dell'inquisizione: orazioni, scongiuri, libri di segreti (Modena 1571–1608)", *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento* 25 (1999) 587–668; Fantini M.P., "La circolazione clandestina dell'orazione di Santa Marta: un episodio modenese", in Zarri G. (ed.), *Donna, disciplina, creanza cristiana dal XV al XVII secolo. Studi e testi a stampa* (Roma: 1996) 45–65; Burke P., *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy: Essays on Perception and Communication* (Cambridge: 1987); Gentilcore, *From Bishop to Witch*; Gentilcore D., *Healers and Healing in Early Modern Italy* (Manchester-New York: 1998); O'Neil M., "*Sacerdote ovvero strione*: Ecclesiastical and Superstitious Remedies in 16th Century Italy", in Kaplan S.L. (ed.), *Understanding Popular Culture. Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (Berlin-New York-Amsterdam: 1984) 53–84.

46 Prosperi A., *Tribunali della coscienza: inquisitori, confessori, missionari* (Turin: 1996) 461–463. On the efficacy on the campaign against superstitious behaviour see: De Boer W., 'Defining the Sinful: The Case of Superstition' in Id., *The Conquest of the Soul. Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* (Leiden – Boston: 2001) 295–322.

47 De Boer, *The Conquest of the Soul* 296.

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The *agnus dei* could be encased and worn on the skin for constant protection. Uncertainty over what was contained inside generated great anxiety not only in church officials, but also amongst family members, neighbours and friends. Some pendants were easily identified as containers for sanctioned wax, but others were not. The attempt to unravel the accusation made against Francisco has led me to examine extant examples of Italian early modern *agnus dei* pendants.

5 The Materiality of the *Agnus Dei*

The British Museum holds two unusually thick *agnus dei* pendants that would have contained a piece of the blessed wax.[48] The first example is catalogued as 'pendant/cameo', and it is likely to have been serially produced by an average-skilled craftsman. The frame is in gilt-copper, the recto bears a Lamb of God imprinted onto a white material, possibly shell, and inscribed with the Latin *Agnus Dei Qui Tollit Peccata Mundi* [Fig. 9.4]. The colour of the front evocatively points to the white wax that could have been enclosed; and the verso has a *niello* decoration of a knotted cross [Fig. 9.5]. The frame on the verso of the pendant shows signs of usage, which suggest that this was probably the side that was worn close to the body, leaving the white shell exposed.

The second example is catalogued as a gilt-bronze 'medallion' [Fig. 9.6]. Both its recto and verso are decorated in *niello*, the former with the familiar 'Lamb of God', and the latter with a cross rising from a highly decorative inscription of the 'IHS'. In common with the first pendant, the back decoration and metal frame show signs of usage. The *niello* decoration of the *agnus dei* on the recto reveals similar rubbing marks, as if the owner were accustomed to touching it.

While the British Museum pendants are thick enough to have contained whole wax discs, the Victoria and Albert Museum holds two examples that point to an alternative way of wearing the blessed piece of wax.[49] One pendant measures only one centimetre in diameter and is finely crafted [Fig. 9.7]. The recto is beautifully incised with a standing 'Lamb of God', while the verso bears the image of Christ's face impressed onto the so-called vernicle, or Veronica, which further encourages devotion to Christ. In fact, although an

48 British Museum, Inv. No. 1902,0527.26 and Inv. No. AF.2898.

49 Victoria and Albert Museum, Inv. No. M.94–1962. This speculation emerged during a fruitful discussion with Kirstin Kennedy from the Metalwork department of the museum, to whom I am very grateful.

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FIGURE 9.4
Pendant/Cameo, front, 16th century. Silver, shell, niello, gold, copper, 2.5 cm in diameter, British Museum
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FIGURE 9.5
Pendant/Cameo, back, 16th century. Silver, shell, niello, gold, copper, 2.5 cm in diameter, British Museum
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FIGURE 9.6
Medallion, 16th century. Silver, niello, gold, 2.5 cm in diameter, British Museum
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early medieval legend attributes the name Veronica to the woman who offered Christ a sweat cloth to wipe his face on his way up towards Mount Calvary, its name is etymologically tied to the *Vera Ikon*, or true image, that was forever impressed onto it.[50] The frame is delicately worked with twisted silver-gilt strings. The second example is a little larger than the first one, and its decoration is less refined.[51] The obverse shows a rougher version of the Lamb of God, the back features the 'IHS' script and the twisted frame is a little coarser. This second example is distinguished by a ring of pointed hooks that might have held a piece of wax right on top of the incised *agnus dei*.

A more elaborate example is preserved at the British Museum [Fig. 9.8].[52] The central section can be opened to reveal the red velvet underneath, a later replacement of its original fabric, upon which the blessed wax once sat, and on the front the inscription *Agni Dei Miserere Mei Qui Crimina Tollis*, 'Lamb of God Who Takes Away the Sins Have Mercy on Me', whereas the back is engraved with the image of the Veronica [Fig. 9.9].

50 Hamburger J., *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: 1998) 317.

51 Victoria and Albert Museum, Inv. No. M.95–1962.

52 British Museum, Inv. No. AF.2699.

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FIGURE 9.7 Pendant, 1400–1500. Silver, silver-gilt, 4 × 2.8 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum
© VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

The examples examined so far are made of gilt-copper, gilt-bronze and silver-gilt. Thanks to the gilt-dipping process, these were visually enticing. Other materials – for example copper and bronze – were more affordable and allowed for the popularization of *agnus dei* [pendants or containers?] not only in Italy, but also throughout Europe.[53] The physical characteristics of these museum objects allow us to speculate on these pendants originally being containers

53 Cherry, "Containers for Agnus Dei"; Lightbown, *Medieval European Jewellery*.

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FIGURE 9.8 Medallion, front, 16th century. Silver, niello, gold, 2.5 diameter, British Museum
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FIGURE 9.9 Medallion, back, 16th century. Silver, niello, gold, 2.5 diameter, British Museum
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for *agnus dei.* However, the survival of other very thin pendants, without devices such as hooks, raises the possibility that they might never have held the blessed wax, but were worn as reminders of Christ's divine presence.[54]

6 The Distribution of the *Agnus Dei*

It is important to remember that the papal blessing and the distribution of the *agnus dei* only happened during the first Easter of the pontificate and every seventh year after that. It is likely that when the faithful arrived in Rome during the intervening six years when the Pope did not bless the wax *agnus dei*, small pendants with only the impression of the 'Lamb of God' were distributed as pilgrim tokens. A tiny pilgrim souvenir made from a humble lead alloy is held in the Museum of London.[55] It was found on the Thames' shore, and yet its shape and its iconography point to Rome, and to the blessed wax discs. Of course, devotees could have owned *agnus dei* even if they never went to Rome: they could have been gifts from pilgrims; passed down from generation to generation; exchanged as dowry and childbirth gifts; or given as diplomatic gifts.[56]

Archival evidence attests to more unexpected ways in which *agnus dei* were distributed throughout Italy, and possibly beyond. For example, on 12 October 1595 the Venetian Inquisitor tried a certain Arduino da Vicenza, who was accused of falsely wearing a hermit's attire.[57] Arduino was in fact a pilgrim, travelling from Naples with a letter of permission for his holy journey written on 24 March 1591 by the Archbishop of Naples, which included his destinations: the Holy House in Loreto, St Francis of Susa, the Blessed Mary Magdalene in Marseille and 'many other holy places' that he wanted to visit 'on account of his devotion'.[58] Amongst Arduino's belongings, confiscated by the ecclesiastical officials, there was a box full of rosaries and *agnus dei*, that he had collected in Rome and was planning to give to monasteries and convents in exchange for alms.[59]

54 See, for instance: British Museum: AF.2898; Kunstgewerbemuseum, Berlin: F.1277g.

55 Museum of London, Inv. No. 2001.87.

56 de Olarra Garmendia J. – de Larramendi M.L., "Correspondencia entre la nunciatura en España y la Santa Sede durante el Reinado de Felipe III (1598–1621), II, Años 1602–1605", *Anthologia Annua* 9 (1961) 495–816, 579 & 584. I wish to thank Elisa Novi Chavarria for alerting me to this publication.

57 ASV, 'Fondo Sant'Ufficio. Savi all'eresia', Busta 68, fasc. 4. I wish to thank Katherine Tycz for this information.

58 Ibid., fols. 1v and 2r.

59 Ibid., fols. 1r and 3r.

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Although not all the pendants examined in this essay could have contained wax, their decoration with the 'Lamb of God' may have given them the status of orthodox devotional objects. The problems started to arise when similar pendants to these were produced but without the image of the 'Lamb of God', instead bearing what Jacqueline Musacchio has defined as 'secular' representations.[60] Examining the image of a couple in profile on the recto of a pendant held at the British Museum, Musacchio defines the object as a marriage token. However the back of the pendant shows the 'IHS', and the same pairing of a marriage portrait with a devotional inscription is present on other sixteenth-century pendants.[61] The shape, thickness and style of the pendants may have been so familiar to both the giver and the recipient that the explicit decoration of the 'Lamb of God' was not necessary. These pendants were not entirely secular, but were probably exchanged as wedding gifts invested with devotional and protective virtues.

The surviving pendants examined here suggest the tensions and negotiations that existed between the rituals of the Church and the everyday religion lived by ordinary men and women. More specifically, the *agnus dei* pendants signalled an open dialogue with Rome, the Pope, and ultimately the body of Christ that it was supposed to represent.

7 Rising Anxiety

Harder to reconcile with this argument are those pendants that bore neither images, nor inscriptions. Many sixteenth-century portraits of women show the sitters wearing what look like strings, small cords or chains tucked inside their clothes. We do not know what hung from such strings. Perhaps this very uncertainty about concealed objects contributed to the anxieties evident in Francisco's trial. There is no mention of any inscriptions on the black velvet pouch, which he wore under his shirt, and therefore no evidence to link it to the official Church. Perhaps this is the reason why Francisco's wife became suspicious of that velvet pouch. Strikingly, Francisco himself did not feel the need to question its devotional content as his mother had given it to him so that he could be protected against any dangers, thus signalling that a familial connection might have been even stronger than a sanctioned Church seal.

60 Musacchio, "Lambs, Coral" 149.

61 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Inv. No. 17.190.965; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 69.74.

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Giulia Diamante's denunciation of her husband Francisco occurred just a few years before the publication of Bonardo's treatise. The ambiguity evident in the words of the accused and the accusers, that is, the description of the object as an *agnus dei* or a *breve*, is also present in Church sources. The most telling example is found in the biography of Suor Maria Villani (1584–1670), the founder of the Neapolitan convent of the 'Divino Amore', first published in 1676.[62] The religiosity of Suor Maria was marked by an emotional relationship with Christ and the Virgin, characterised by ecstasy and visions which in turn inspired her apostolic mission towards her convent sisters, the secular clergy and her lay devotees. During the time of her illness, Maria's days were filled with visions during which she was surrounded by her Guardian Angel who on one occasion helped her to make 'brevetti o *agnus dei*'.[63] Suor Maria describes her *brevetti*, or *agnus dei*, as pouches that contained some relics of Saints, pieces of blessed wax, and pieces of paper upon which she wrote the beginning of the Gospel of St John, *Verbum caro factum est*, and all the different names of God.[64] Suor Maria encased these treasures, at first with silk and golden thread but, worried that the nuns would keep them for their beauty rather than their content, she subsequently wrapped them in *carta vergine*, or virgin parchment, that she decorated with beautiful coloured flowers.[65] Suor Maria's so-called *agnus dei* were then distributed to her convent sisters, the clergy and ordinary people who came to her because of her famous visions, who no doubt prized them for their protective and devotional qualities.

The ambiguity that characterised the 'sacramental' of the *agnus dei*, as well as of other objects such as the rosary as well as relics, provoked rising anxiety among Church officials.[66] After Trent, ecclesiastical authorities tried to instruct the faithful on how to distinguish between orthodox and unorthodox devotional practices, by attempting to discipline the laity's relationship with sacramentals.[67] However, as Adriano Prosperi has argued, the Tridentine Church failed in its attempt to control lay interactions with the sacred through

62 *Vita della serva di Dio Suor Maria Viallani dell'ordine de' Predicatori* (Milan, Federico Agnelli: 1676).

63 *Vita della serva di Dio* 315.

64 John, 1:1; *Vita della serva di Dio* 315.

65 *Vita della serva di Dio* 317. For *carta vergine*, see Skemer D.C., *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages*, (University Park, PA: 2006) 131, he defines it as the 'parchment made from the tough membrane of an aborted fetus. […] The purity of the parchment, uncontaminated by the outside world, could make a powerful amulet'.

66 For more examples of ambiguous behaviour towards sacramentals see: Galandra Cooper I., *The Materiality of Domestic Devotion in Sixteenth-Century Naples*, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Cambridge: 2016).

67 Prosperi, *Tribunali* 460.

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the means of devotional objects.[68] The laity embraced and depended upon a kind of magical spirituality that they fit within their religious beliefs but that the authorities in Rome set against orthodox religion. This was true across Europe but perhaps especially so in southern Italy, where any form of uncontrolled recourse to sacred powers was seen with great suspicion.[69]

A similar dichotomy between 'official' and 'popular' that characterised the early modern Church has often structured the study of sixteenth-century devotional practices. In her research on early modern French religiosity, Virginia Reinburg has criticised the assumption that what was 'official' was indeed 'religious' whereas 'popular' is taken to mean 'superstitious or magical'.[70] Reinburg also points to the fact that 'the magic/religion framework prevents us from understanding pre-modern Christianity and early modern Catholicism, where earthly and spiritual freely mixed, and God's grace was understood [by the laity] to flow by means of words, rites and material objects'.[71] It is likely that Francisco's attitude towards his *agnus dei* fitted within this more nuanced devotional experience.

The *agnus dei*, together with other devotional objects such as the rosary, was identified as a sort of 'badge of Catholicism' and condemned for its superstitious qualities by the followers of the new Protestant tradition. In 1579, *agnus dei* were depicted in Bernard Garter's *A newe yeare's gifte dedicated to the popes holinesse.* The print at the back of the book entitled 'Certaine of the Popes Merchandize lately sent over into Englande' showed the Catholic objects most representative of such superstitious faith, amongst which is illustrated an *agnus dei* pendant.[72]

The importance of the *agnus dei* to Catholic identity and its simultaneous denunciation by Protestants is attested to by another Inquisition trial from Naples.[73] In 1594, Giovanni Osso was accused of 'being a Lutheran', and during his interrogation he recounted how he had once followed another Lutheran named Annibale Virgilio from Rome to Germany, during which time Annibale had asked Giovanni to fill his boots with blessed *agnus dei* and rosaries, so that when they arrived in Germany, they could hang them in their dog-house.[74]

68 Ibid., 461.

69 Gentilcore, *From Bishop to Witch.*

70 Reinburg V., *The French Book of Hours. Making an Archive of Prayer, c.1400–1600* (Cambridge: 2014) 161.

71 Reinburg, *The French Book of Hours* 160.

72 Garter B., *A newe yeare's gifte dedicated to the popes holinesse* (London, Henry Bynneman: 1579) 57.

73 ASDN, 78.937.1594, fol. 1v.

74 ASDN, 78.937.1594, fol. 1v.

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8 Conclusions

While previous studies have shed light on the popularity of the *agnus dei* amongst people's possessions in early modern Italy, little attention has been given to their materiality in relation to everyday devotional practices.

Although made to be handed to the faithful in Rome and to be brought back into their homes, this essay has illustrated how small pieces of the blessed wax were often encased in pendants and worn outside the home. True enough, written evidence, from post-mortem inventories to early modern treatises and private correspondence, tends to situate *agnus dei* within the domestic sphere. Nevertheless, research conducted in the Neapolitan archives draws attention to the conscious decision on the part of some devotees to be separated from their so vital 'sacramental'. The archive of the sanctuary of Madonna dell'Arco just outside Naples holds an anonymous manuscript book of all the objects and textiles brought to the miraculous image of the Virgin and Child between 1592 and 1594.[75] The entries fill 195 folios and reveal an ample array of objects taken to the shrine by people from all levels of society. Among them are wax *agnus dei*, and also containers, often of humble metals. Kept at home, worn close to the body or even taken back to the Church as an ex-voto, the 'case' of the *agnus dei* can take the study of early modern lived religion beyond the opposition between popular and high religion, or sanctioned and magical beliefs, to show more nuanced possibilities of what it meant to be Catholic in early modern Italy.

Early modern people acquired these objects for their devotional and protective qualities, and the sacred could thus be brought into the secular world to aid them in keeping order in their daily lives and the natural world.[76] Simultaneously, during moments of extraordinary and ordinary need, for example a natural calamity or an illness, the same objects were used as 'trading tokens' with the Deity: *agnus dei* vowed in exchange for the granting of a grace.

In the hands of the faithful, the small wax cake with the imprint of the *agnus dei* was more than just a devotional symbol. The imprint of the Pope's seal embodied the official seal of the Church, and the presence of the *agnus dei* was a reference to Christ. Furthermore, the fleshy materiality of the wax, its density, grain, colour and brilliance, may have sparked a strong analogy with

75 *Libro nel quale si notano giornalmente tutte li mobili come sono voti d'argento, o oro, calici, lampe d'argento, panni d'altare, tovaglie et ogni altra sorte di paramenti di lino, lana et seta, che si donano alla Madonna devotissima dell'Arco di Santo Nastase dal sottoscritto dì avanti, et così anco anella o altre cose d'oro o d'argento eccetera*, (1592–1594).

76 Scribner, *Popular culture* 1–2.

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the consecrated host that was supposed to be the sole bearer of the flesh and blood of Christ. Once in the homes of the faithful, the divine presence was marked even further by burning parts of the blessed wax.

The spiritual virtue given by the Pope's blessing, the tactile wax, the perfumed balsam, the reference to the consecrated bread and the Latin antiphon recited during mass, gave the *agnus dei* added sensorial virtues that enhanced devotees' experiences. Moreover, Christ's wax seal in the form of the *agnus dei*, produced with the intent of helping to form pious domestic environments, was entirely left in the hands of the laity. The transcendental and the mysterious thus came within close reach of the familiar.

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CHAPTER 10

Material Prayers and Maternity in Early Modern Italy: Signed, Sealed, Delivered

Katherine M. Tycz

> Fu in Siena, al tempo che reggeva l'officio de' Nove, una gentil giovane di pochi anni andata a marito, e quelli figliuoli che facea, facea con grandissima pena e fatica; e al presente era gravida di sette mesi; e come paurosa, ognora cercava di leggende di santa Margherita, e di medicine e di brievi, e d'ogni altra cosa che credesse che li giovasse alla sua passione.[1,*]

Novella 217 of Franco Sacchetti's *Il Trecentonovelle* begins with a young married woman, seven months pregnant, who had undergone much pain and frustration to have her previous children. Afraid for her own well-being, as well as that of her unborn child during the pregnancy and birth, she seeks out 'legends of Saint Margaret, medicines, *brevi*, and every other thing'.[2] In other words, all the usual items available to a pregnant woman to allay her fears and pain. How might the resources used by the young woman in Sacchetti's story illuminate actual practices and objects in early modern Italy, thus allowing us to better understand women's lives?

1 'There was in Siena, when the Officio de' Nove governed, a polite young woman who had been married only a few years, and the children she had, she had had with the greatest pain and exertion; and at that moment, she was seven months pregnant; and as she was afraid, she continually sought out legends of the life of Saint Margaret, and medicines, and *brievi*, and every other thing that she believed would help her through her suffering': Sacchetti Franco, "Novella CCXVII" in *Il Trecentonovelle*, ed. E. Faccioli (Turin: 1970) 666.

* The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007–2013) / ERC grant agreement n° 319475 for the project hosted by the University of Cambridge, *Domestic Devotions: The Place of Piety in the Renaissance Italian Home, 1400–1600* (Principal Investigators: Abigail Brundin, Deborah Howard, and Mary Laven). I would like to offer my gratitude to Abigail Brundin, Irene Galandra Cooper, and Sophie Pitman for their thoughtful comments on earlier versions of this essay and to the editors for their helpful suggestions.

2 *Brevi*, the more common spelling, will be used throughout this chapter.

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It is important to acknowledge the roots of Sacchetti's protagonist's fear regarding her impending labour. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber and David Herlihy have demonstrated high mortality rates among pregnant women in early fifteenth-century Florence, where at least a fifth of deaths in the demographic of women of childbearing years were attributed to complications related to pregnancy or childbirth. They propose that this percentage may have been higher due to incomplete records, especially for the poorest.[3] While Florence cannot be viewed as completely representative of the situation across Italy, it offers a glimpse of this perilous time in women's lives. Many women also wrote wills during their pregnancies in the event that they did not survive.[4] Depending upon their social status, women might be concerned with producing heirs in a timely manner, safely delivering a healthy child, or ensuring that the addition of children did not burden the family's financial situation.[5] The number of children relinquished to various orphanages, such as the Ospedale degli Innocenti in Florence, further illustrates how families might be unable to care for a child, sometimes after the death of a mother.[6] Infancy was also a precarious time as babies were susceptible to disease and malnutrition leading to high infant mortality rates.[7]

Scholars such as Jacqueline Musacchio have studied how the need to replenish the population in post-plague Italy spurred the production of objects associated with pregnancy from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. Referred to

3 Klapisch-Zuber C. – Herlihy D., *Tuscans and Their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427* (New Haven – London: 1978) 276–277.

4 Chojnacki's study of Venetian wills indicates that pregnant women wrote wills between 1331 and 1450 with increasing regularity: Chojnacki S., "Dowries and Kinsmen in Early Renaissance Venice", *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 5, 4: The History of the Family, II (1975) 571–600, 584–585.

5 On the use of objects to assist with conception: Musacchio J.M., *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven – London: 1999) 125–141. On early modern Catholic attitudes to impotence, contraception, and abortion: Noonan J.T., *Contraception: A History of Its Treatment by the Catholic Theologians and Canonists, Enlarged Edition* (Cambridge – London: 1986); Christopoulous J., "Abortion and the Confessional in Counter-Reformation Italy", *Renaissance Quarterly* 65 (2012) 443–484; Baernstein P.R. – Christopoulos J., "Interpreting the Body in Early Modern Italy: Pregnancy, Abortion and Adulthood", *Past and Present* 223 (2014) 41–75.

6 Other children might be given up if they were born to single mothers: Gavitt P., *Charity and Children in Renaissance Florence: The Ospedale degli Innocenti, 1410–1536* (Ann Arbor, MI: 1990) 187–272; Sandri L., "Fuori e dentro l'ospedale. Bambini nel Quattrocento" in Ulivieri S. (ed.), *Le bambine nella storia dell'educazione* (Rome – Bari: 1999) 75–109, 75–93.

7 On infant mortality rates in Florence: Klapisch-Zuber C., "Blood Parents and Milk Parents: Wet Nursing in Florence, 1300–1530", in Klapisch-Zuber C. (ed.), *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Tuscany*, trans. L. Cochrane (Chicago – London: 1985) 132–164, 148–153.

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as 'maternal mediators' by Musacchio, these objects were meant to encourage mothers to focus on the acquisition of meaningful material possessions rather than the fear of childbirth.[8] The material culture of childbirth and maternity, particularly in upper-class households, revolved around items such as *deschi da parto* [birth trays], special maiolica *impagliata* [accouchement] sets, and luxurious textiles for mother and child, which were usually procured by anxious husbands and proud fathers or were presented as gifts by friends, family, and neighbours.[9] Like the expectant mother in Sacchetti's story, women across the social spectrum exercised their own agency by acquiring both spiritual and medicinal aids, such as the 'legends of Saint Margaret, medicines, *brevi*, and every other thing', to comfort and protect themselves and their unborn children.

Religious protection offered the most socially acceptable route for women to confront their fears. By concentrating on the material qualities and powerful holy words inscribed on devotional pregnancy aids, this essay will analyse the 'legends of Saint Margaret', the '*brevi*', and will offer suggestions regarding 'every other thing' Sacchetti's protagonist might have used. Investigating the devotional tools women employed at the moment of their initiation into motherhood illuminates how practices and objects associated with pregnancy and maternity were ascribed efficacy by medieval and early modern Italian women.

1 Pregnancy

1.1 *Legends of Saint Margaret*

Explicitly mentioned in Sacchetti's account, Saint Margaret of Antioch, the patron saint of childbirth, was a likely focus for supplicatory prayer. The legend of Margaret's escape from the belly of the dragon, interpreted as a metaphor for safe childbirth, illustrated how faith during pregnancy could help women survive the perilous ordeal. Records demonstrate that women called upon Margaret's intercession in public spaces, but very little is known about related devotional practices carried out in the domestic realm.[10] Some extant sources

8 Musacchio, *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth* 125–147.

9 Ibid., 36–51.

10 Gilbertson L., "Imaging St. Margaret: *Imitatio Christi* and *Imitatio Mariae* in the Vanni Altarpiece", in Cornelison S.J. – Montgomery S.B. (eds.), *Images, Relics, and Devotional Practices in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 296 (Tempe, AZ: 2006) 115–138, 115.

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and objects demonstrate how devotees prayed for Margaret's assistance with pregnancy and childbirth.

In 1481, Antonio Guarino, a professor of medicine in Pavia, promoted reading the story of Margaret's life aloud during labour in his *Tractatus de matricibus*.[11] The story of Margaret's life as preserved in the *Legenda aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine circulated in books of hours and manuscript miscellanies over the centuries. Eventually, versions of Margaret's legend and prayers dedicated to the saint were disseminated in printed form. Many of these versions overtly announced the importance and uses of Margaret's hagiography in their titles by explaining that the legend itself offered spiritual and physical protection. An illustrated printed booklet entitled *La Legenda devotissima de santa Margarita vergine et martire* continued with the note that it was *vtilissima per le donne parturiente*.[12] Others contained more explicit instructions, such as the *Legenda et oratione di Santa Margherita vergine, & martire historiata; laqual oratione legendola, ouer ponendola adosso a vna donna, che non potesse parturire, subito parturirà senza pericolo* [Fig. 10.1]. This *Legenda et oratione* contains both the complete story of Margaret's martyrdom recounted in rhyming verse as well as prayers in both Latin and the vernacular. The title proclaims its ability to aid a woman who is struggling to give birth 'senza pericolo (without danger)'. To unlock its power the woman should read the prayer or place the text on her body. The practice of applying holy texts, particularly prayers and legends of Margaret, in the form of manuscript codices and rolls, to a woman's body during labour was a popular practice across Europe.[13] While differing levels of literacy may have prevented Italian women from consuming the burgeoning scholarship on women's medicine, the literal application of the holy words

11 Musacchio, *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth* 142.

12 'Very useful for women in labour': *La Legenda devotissima de santa Margarita vergine et martire vtilissima per le donne parturiente* (Milan, Jo. Antonio da Burgho: 25 January 1536) Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, no shelfmark.

13 Draped over or wrapped around the woman's body, manuscript rolls bear affinities to the girdles discussed later. Amulet rolls are sometimes described as 'girdles' by scholars: Volf S.L., *A "Medicyne of Wordes": Women, Prayer, and Healing in Fourteenth – and Fifteenth-Century England*, Ph.D. dissertation (Arizona State University: 2008) 261–268; Jones P.M. – Olsan L.T., "Performative Rituals for Conception and Childbirth in England, 900–1500", *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 89, 3 (2015) 406–433; Skemer D.C., *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages* (University Park, PA: 2006) 240–250; Carolus-Barré L., "Un nouveau parchemin amulette et la légende de sainte Marguerite patronne des femmes en couches", *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 123, 2 (1979) 256–275.

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associated with Margaret to their bodies offered women the opportunity to exert control over their health.[14]

Before her martyrdom by beheading is described in the *Legenda et oratione*, Margaret's final words are recorded in a prayer. Margaret announces that those who say her prayer with contrition be forgiven for their sins. She proclaims that keeping the written prayer in the home will protect from illness, as the prophylactic powers of the words associated with the Saint are activated by their physical presence alone. Finally, Margaret asks that pregnant women be accompanied safely through their labour by wearing her prayer. Both the recitation of the holy words of Margaret's prayer and interaction with their material expression unlocked her intercessory power. After the story of Margaret's death, a rubric contained within the prayer addresses the husband of the pregnant woman saying: 'se nel parto tua donna è in periglio, meglior medico qui, non te consiglio'.[15]

With the increased circulation of prayers facilitated by the invention of print, some vernacular texts of Margaret's legend inevitably aroused suspicion from the Tridentine Church. Among those banned in 1604, 'per contenere esse respettivamente cose false, superstitiose, apocrife e lascive', was another prayer to Margaret, the *Oratione di S. Margarita in ottava rima, per le donne di parto: O dolce madre*.[16] In this era of reform, Church authorities prohibited prayers with rubrics offering specific protection or assistance, such as those for 'le donne di parto (pregnant women)', explaining that they detracted from pure devotion

14 Most women who owned medical books through the early sixteenth century were of noble or bourgeois status: Green M.H., "The Possibilities of Literacy and the Limits of Reading: Women and the Gendering of Medical Literacy", in Green M.H. (ed.), *Woman's Healthcare in the Medieval West* (Aldershot: 2000) 1–76, 9–18.

15 'If during childbirth your lady is in danger, a better medic than this, I cannot suggest to you': *Legenda et oratione di Santa Margherita vergine, & martire historiata; laqual oratione legendola, ouer ponendola adosso a vna donna, che non potesse parturire, subito parturirà senza pericolo* (Venice, Francesco de Tomaso di Salò e compagni: 1550) fol. 21r.

16 'Because they contained false, superstitious, apocryphal, and lascivious things': "Parte terza. Avertimenti in materia de libri prohibiti e sospesi etc", in *Sommaria instruttione del M.R.P. Maestro Fr. Archangelo Calbetti da Recanati dell'ordine de' Predicatori Inquisitor generale di Modona, Carpi, Nonantola e loro diocesi, e della Provincia di Garfagnana A' suoi RR. Vicari nella Inquisition sodetta intorno alla maniera di trattar alla giornata i negotii del Sant'Ufficio per quello che a loro s'appartiene* (Modena, Gio. Maria Verdi: 1604) in *Scriniolum sanctae Inquisitionis Astensis in quo quaecumque ad id muneris obeundum spectare visa sunt videlicet librorum prohibitorum indices* [...] (Asti, Virgilium de Zangrandis: 1610) 342. Many thanks to Marco Faini for transcribing and sharing the content of this list. For a discussion of this list of prohibited books: Caravale G., *Forbidden Prayer: Church Censorship and Devotional Literature in Renaissance Italy*, trans. P. Dawson (Farnham – Burlington, VT: 2011) 191–192.

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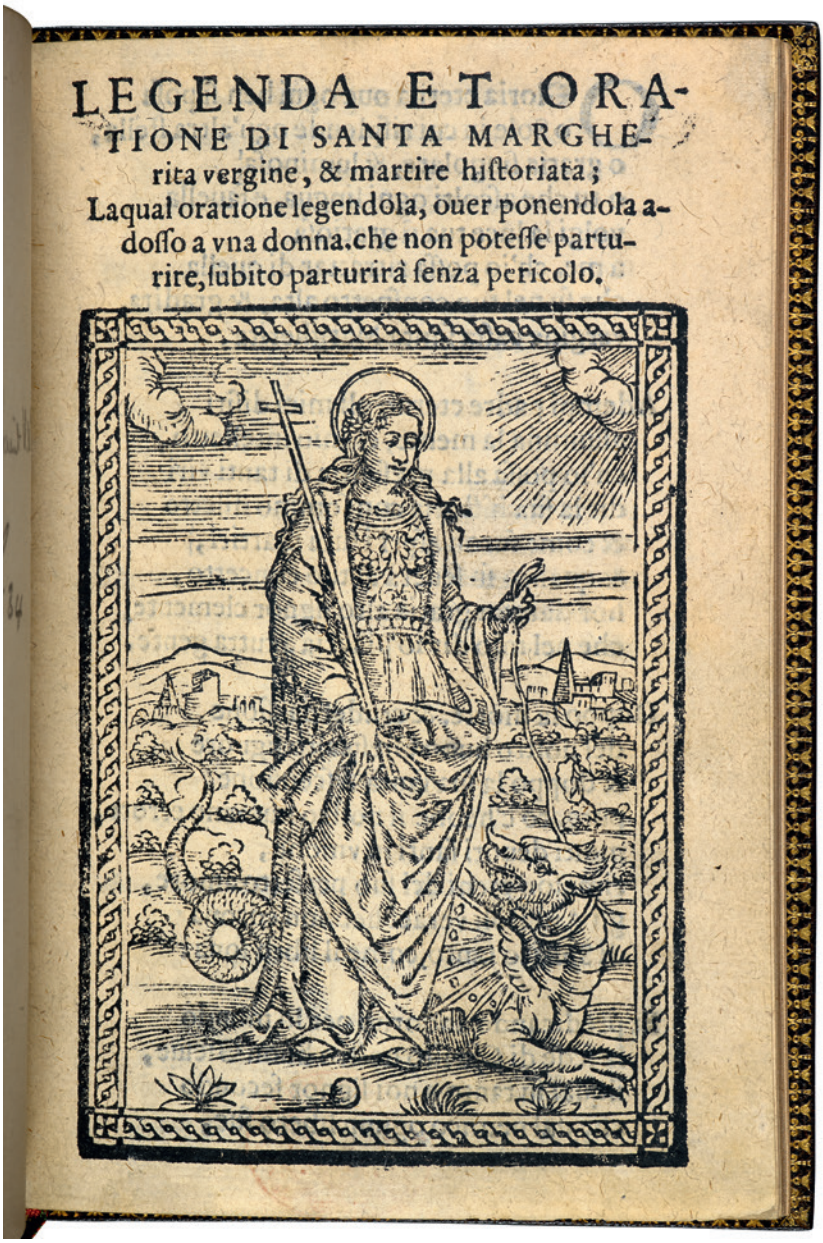


FIGURE 10.1 Title page of the *Legenda et oratione di Santa Margherita vergine, & martire historiata; laqual oratione legendola, ouer ponendola adosso a vna donna, che non potesse parturire, subito parturirà senza pericolo*, (Venice, Francesco de Tomaso di Salò e compagni: 1550). Woodcut and print on paper, octavo. London, The British Library, General Reference Collection C.38.b.34., not paginated.
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to saints and their supplicatory abilities, concentrating instead upon 'a merely mechanical and material value'.[17]

1.2 *Brevi*

Unlike the 'legends of Saint Margaret, medicines […] and every other thing', which are only mentioned at the beginning of Sacchetti's novella, the story revolves around the woman's attempt to acquire a pregnancy *breve*, a more mysterious aid. Apotropaic and protective objects called *brevi*, or more specifically *brevi da portare addosso* (*brevi* to wear),[18] took their name from brief texts sealed within a container. The paper or parchment *breve* would be folded and sealed or sewn shut, a requirement that maintained the efficacy of the text. It would then be placed in a pouch and worn on the body, usually around the neck. The texts were often composed of prayers, biblical phrases, and holy names interspersed with symbols such as crosses.[19] Sometimes *brevi* contained other objects in addition to or in place of the prayer sheets – from substances that might have been considered relics to other more 'superstitious' materials, like magnets.[20] While amulets of a textual nature, such as *brevi*, had long been employed by both men and women across Europe, those used by Renaissance Italians have been misunderstood, relegated to the realm of magic and superstition by both contemporary ecclesiastical figures and modern scholars.[21] This chapter argues that *brevi* should be considered alongside the devotional

17 Caravale, *Forbidden Prayer* 192.

18 These are sometimes called *brevi da portare al collo* (*brevi* to wear around the neck).

19 Cardini F., "Il 'breve' (secoli XIV–XV): tipologia e funzione", *La Ricerca Folklorica* 5: La scrittura: funzioni e ideologie (1982) 63–73, 63; Cardona G.R., "Gli amuleti scritti: un excursus comparativo", *La Ricerca Folklorica* 8: La medicina popolare in Italia (1983) 91–97, 92; Skemer, *Binding Words* 13–19.

20 Because *brevi* were sealed, it was often difficult to know their contents. While the term referred to a textual amulet, it might be used to describe a pouch that contained a written text and/or another type of protective device. On the developing definitions of superstition according to the Church: O'Neil M., *Discerning Superstition: Popular Errors and Orthodox Response in Late Sixteenth-Century Italy*, Ph.D. dissertation (Stanford University: 1982) 10–22; On superstitions regarding magnets and religious blessings: O'Neil M., "Magical Healing, Love Magic and the Inquisition in Late Sixteenth-century Modena", in Haliczer S. (ed.), *Inquisition and Society in Early Modern Europe* (London: 1987) 88–114, 102–103.

21 Many modern scholars rely largely on the categorisations of contemporary theologians in their understanding of these *brevi* as 'magical' and 'superstitious'. For example: Montesano M., *"Supra acqua et supra ad vento". "Superstizioni", maleficia e incantamenta nei predicatori francescani osservanti* (*Italia, sec. XV*), Nuovi Studi Storici 46 (Rome: 1999) 80–87.

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apotropaic objects – both sanctioned and unsanctioned – that devotees relied upon for comfort, aid, and divine intercession.[22]

In Sacchetti's novella, a maid in the pregnant woman's house meets a man who convinces her that two hermit friars 'sapeano fare un brieve che, tenendolo la donna addosso, non serebbe sí duro parto, che sanza pena non partorisse'.[23] The woman, desperate to escape the pain of childbirth, sends her young maid with five florins to fetch her this *breve*. However, the man '[…] là fece una cedola scritta, e piegatala, la legò tra piú zendadi, e cucilla in diverse maniere', forging the *breve* himself and keeping the money, rather than commissioning holy friars for their spiritual aid.[24] Finally, the man fabricates a story about the great effort required to acquire the *breve* and instructs the maid to tell the woman not to read it or unseal it to preserve the efficacy of the text. The pregnant woman keeps this promise for years after successfully giving birth. She even shares the object with her pregnant friends as it acquires the reputation of a legendary miracle-working amulet in Siena. However, the woman's curiosity eventually overwhelms her so 'se ne andò un dí con una compagna che sapea legere in una camera dinanzi alla tavola di Nostra Donna, e con grandissima reverenza cominciorono a scucire il detto brieve; e trovata la scrittura in carta sottilissima di cavretto, lessono di detto brieve', which contained a nonsensical poem about a bad chicken, wine and bread.[25]

In Sacchetti's story the woman is fooled by blindly trusting the alleged holy friars and the unknown textual contents of the *breve*. Only after breaking the seal, and with the help of the image of the Madonna (a more mainstream

22 For discussions of scholars' efforts to move away from dichotomies of religion vs. magic/superstition, see Davis N.Z., "Some Tasks and Themes in the Study of Popular Religion", in Trinkaus C. – Oberman H.A. (eds.), *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion* (Leiden: 1974) 306–336, 307; Reinburg V., *French Books of Hours: Making an Archive of Prayer, c. 1400–1600* (Cambridge: 2012) 134; and Decker J.R., "'Practical Devotion': Apotropaism and the Protection of the Soul", in Brusati C. – Enenkel K.A.E. – Melion W.S. (eds.), *The Authority of the Word. Reflecting on Image and Text in Northern Europe, 1400–1700*, Intersections 20 (Leiden – Boston: 2012) 357–383, 360–361.

23 'Knew how to make a *brieve*, that if the woman wore it on her body, it would not be a difficult birth and that she would give birth without pain': Sacchetti, *Il Trecentonovelle* 666.

24 He 'made her a written card, and folded it, then sealed it in a pouch of thin cloth and sewed it in many different ways': Sacchetti, *Il Trecentonovelle* 667. Also see Cardini, "Il 'breve'" 69.

25 'She went with a literate friend into a room, in the presence of an image of Our Lady, and with the greatest reverence they began to remove the stitches from the sealed *brieve*; having found the writing on the thinnest and most delicate goat-skin parchment, they read this *brieve*'. The poem read: '*Gallina gallinaccia, /Un orciuolo di vino e una cofaccia, /Per la mia gola caccia, /S'ella il può fare, si 'l faccia, / E se non sì, si giaccia*': Sacchetti, *Il Trecentonovelle* 667–668.

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means of intercession) and her literate friend, she discovers the meaningless poem inside the *breve*. While Sacchetti's criticism of the practice as a learned man is evident, his parody reflects his desire to distinguish himself from the uneducated masses, particularly uneducated women, and from the commonly-held belief in the power of the *breve*. Like the *Legenda et oratione di Santa Margherita vergine* [Fig. 10.1], which touted its ability to serve as the 'meglior medico' during difficult labour, the woman's confidence in the charlatan's alleged connection to 'holy friars' in Sacchetti's story reflects the willingness of early modern Italians to entrust their health to popular healers rather than traditional cures offered by trained professionals.[26]

Religious figures, such as the fifteenth-century preacher Bernardino of Siena, denounced the use of *brevi* explaining that their secretive nature made them superstitious and malicious, saying: 'Ingiustizia è chi à brevi; segni d'ingiustizia è chi dice: "Non aprire quello breve, che perderà la virtù se tu l'apri". Quando persona ti dice che tu no' l'apra, nol tenere, e aprelo, e mira a questi segni'.[27] Despite criticism of these *brevi* expressed by contemporary theologians and satirical writers like Sacchetti, it is evident that many people consumed these objects in great quantities. While *brevi* seem to have been ubiquitous in late medieval and early modern Italy, the number of known extant examples is low.[28]

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26 On people's reliance on popular medicine (including charlatans and female healers) over traditional medicine (university-trained doctors): Gambaccini P., *Mountebanks and Medicasters: A History of Italian Charlatans* (Jefferson, NC – London: 2004) 83–97; Gentilcore D., *Healers and Healing in Early Modern Italy* (Manchester – New York: 1998) 21–25; Gentilcore D., *Medical Charlatanism in Early Modern Italy* (Oxford: 2006) 261–264.

27 'It is wrong for one to have *brevi*; those who say: "Don't open that *breve*, because it will lose its virtue if you open it" show signs of wrongdoing. When a person tells you that you cannot open it, don't keep it, and open it, and pay attention to these signs': Bernardino of Siena, "Questa è la predica contra e maliardi e incantatori", *Le prediche volgari: Predicazione del 1425 in Siena*, ed. C. Cannarozzi, 5 vols. (Pistoia: 1958) vol. 2, 61–62.

28 Though these objects are difficult to uncover in archival and library catalogues since they are gathered into miscellaneous collections and family papers, they can occasionally be found attached to Inquisition records. Many examples have been found in Modenese records of the Sant'Uffizio: O'Neil M., "Discerning Superstition"; O'Neil M., "Magical Healing, Love Magic and the Inquisition" 88–114; O'Neil M., "*Sacerdote ovvero strione*: Ecclesiastical and Superstitious Remedies in Sixteenth-century Italy", in Kaplan S.L. (ed.), *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (Berlin: 1984) 53–83; Fantini M.P., "La circolazione clandestina dell'Orazione di Santa Marta: un episodio modenese" in Zarri G. (ed.), *Donna, disciplina, creanza cristiana dal XV al XVII secolo: studi e testi a stampa* (Rome: 1996) 45–65; Roveri L., "Scritture magiche. Brevi, lettere di scongiuro, libri di *secreti* nei processi inquisitoriali emiliano-romagnoli del Cinquecento e Seicento", *Chronica Mundi* 1 (2011) 2–32. The author's thesis, *Material Prayers: The Use of Text in Early Modern Italian Domestic Devotions*, Ph.D. dissertation (University of Cambridge: 2017), analyses other examples found in libraries, archives, museums, and Inquisition records.

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FIGURE 10.2 "Lettera di rivelazione di Maria Ori [Letter of Revelation of Maria Ori]" found in the crypt of the Chiesa di San Paolo Apostolo, late sixteenth century. Ink on paper, seal wax, and woodcut encased in copper and glass. Roccapelago di Pievepelago, Museo delle Mummie di Roccapelago.
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Both the ephemerality of materials used and the fate of the object after the owner's demise may explain low survival rates. It is possible that many of these amuletic texts were buried with their owners: examples have been found in the limited number of burial sites from this era that have been excavated in Italy.

During a routine pre-restoration analysis begun in 2008 in the Chiesa della Conversione di San Paolo Apostolo, which overlooks the small village of Roccapelago di Pievepelago in the mountainous Apennine region between Bologna and Modena, a team of archaeologists discovered a cache of about 280 bodies in various states of natural mummification.[29] Unearthed along with the hoard of mummified remains in the long-forgotten crypt beneath the church floor was a worn sheet of paper covered in a handwritten prayer [Fig. 10.2].

29 Traversari M. – Milani V., "Quadri paleopatologici nelle fonti documentarie: il caso di Roccapelago e i suoi registri dei morti", *Pagani e cristiani: forme e attestazioni di religiosità del monto antica in Emilia* 11 (Florence: 2012) 171–178, 171; Gruppioni G., et al., "Gli scavi della Chiesa di San Paolo di Roccapelago nell'Appennino modenese. La cripta con i corpi mummificati naturalmente", *Pagani e cristiani: forme e attestazioni di religiosità del monto antica in Emilia* 10 (Florence: 2011) 219–245, 219.

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FIGURE 10.3 Reverse of Fig. 10.2, "Lettera di rivelazione di Maria Ori [Letter of Revelation of Maria Ori]"
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Now fragile and yellowed with age, this sheet of paper, referred to as a '*Lettera di rivelazione* (Letter of Revelation)' or a '*Lettera di componenda* (Letter of Agreement)' formed part of a devotional and protective ensemble, which may be considered a *breve*. The *Lettera* itself contains many prayers, including the 'Rivelazione (Revelation)' that Christ proclaimed to Saints Elizabeth, Bridget, and Matilda, a copy of which was allegedly discovered in the Holy Sepulchre [Fig. 10.3 *verso*].[30]

Folded four times into a small rectangle, the prayer sheet was sealed along with an image [Fig. 10.4]. The image, though now worn, is a woodcut depicting the Virgin Mary. To protect the paper devotional image, it was placed on a sheet of copper and ensconced behind a pane of glass. The image was subsequently attached to the folded *Lettera* with *cera lacca* (seal wax), remnants of

30 Versions survive from across medieval and early modern Europe: Labate D., "Documenti cartacei tra le mummie della cripta cimiteriale della chiesa di S. Paolo di Roccapelago-Pievepelago (MO)", *Quaderni Estensi* 4 (2012) <http://www.quaderniestensi.beniculturali.it/qe4/23_QE4_contributi_labate_labellarte.pdf> (accessed 15 June 2016) 259–265, 264–265.

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FIGURE 10.4 Detail of Fig. 10.2, Woodcut image of the Madonna and Child on a copper backing with a glass cover
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which survive.[31] The image offered its own form of security to both the owner and the prayer, shielding the *Lettera* sealed beneath from the more damaging elements. The act of sealing the sacred image to the *Lettera* served more than practical purposes; in the medieval and early modern world, the seal on a document represented truth and authenticity.[32] Attaching an image of the Mother of God to the prayer could offer verification and legitimacy of the object's sanctity in the mind of the owner.

The small size of the folded prayer sheet (measuring about 2.5 × 5 cm when folded) found in the crypt and the attached devotional image suggests that these objects were worn by one of the deceased, probably in a small pouch hung around the neck.[33] While the *breve*'s pouch for this *Lettera* does not survive, examples of similar devotional devices were found still attached to other mummified

31 Labellarte M.A., "Il restauro della lettera rivelazione di Maria Ori", *Quaderni Estensi* 4 (2012) <http://www.quaderniestensi.beniculturali.it/qe4/23_QE4_contributi_labate_labellarte.pdf > (accessed 22 May 2014) 266–68, 266.

32 Bedos-Rezak B.M., "In Search of a Semiotic Paradigm: The Matter of Sealing in Medieval Thought and Praxis (1050–1400)", in Adams N. – Cherry J. – Robinson J. (eds.), *Good Impressions: Image and Authority in Medieval Seals* (London: 2008) 1–7, 1.

33 The *Lettera* is written on a sheet of paper that appears to be about half a folio in size.

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FIGURE 10.5 *Breve* found in the crypt of the Chiesa di San Paolo Apostolo, late sixteenth-early seventeenth century. Pressed paper image and devotional medallion in a cloth pouch. Roccapelago di Pievepelago, Museo delle Mummie di Roccapelago.
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remains in Roccapelago [Fig. 10.5]. One plain cloth *breve* pouch, probably made of linen, contained a small, simple religious medallion and a piece of paper, and was suspended from the wearer's neck by a cord of the same textile.[34]

The *Lettera* cannot be specifically linked to any one corpse, but it offers clues to the life and identity of its wearer. The text ends with the words 'Maria Orii Rocca Pelago' – possibly the name of its owner – as well as a selection of prayers to protect her throughout her life.[35] Unfortunately, no evidence of Maria Orii (Ori) has been found in the limited surviving archival documents.[36]

34 Labate, "Documenti cartacei" 262–263.

35 While names of owners appear in the same manner on similar prayers, this may be a simple invocation to the Virgin Mary, with the prayer ending 'Maria, ori' an abbreviated version of 'Maria, ora pro nobis' or 'Mary, pray for us'. However, records indicate that a family by the name of Ori was living in the town of Pievepelago (of which Roccapelago is a hamlet) in the seventeenth century; in 1670, Bartolomeo Ori and Giovanni Stefano Ori, both from Pievepelago, were recorded in the records of the Inquisition in Modena: b. 161, ff. 11, 1670 in Prodi P. – Spaggiari A. – Trenti G. (eds.), *I processi del tribunale dell'inquisizione di Modena: inventario generale analitico: 1489–1874* (Modena: 2003) 158.

36 During a conversation with anthropologist Mirko Traversari on 19/6/2015, it was noted that a preliminary search of the town's archives by scholars working on the excavation did not locate anyone named Maria Ori in the death records. For published results of this archival research: Traversari M. – Milani V., "Quadri paleopatologici nelle fonti documentarie" 171–178.

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Although little is known about Maria Ori, this text offers up clues to her daily concerns. Carried with her to the grave, this precious but unassuming spiritual aide would also have accompanied Maria through her everyday life and provided protection and spiritual support at key moments in her life cycle.

Instructions embedded in the prayer direct the wearer to use it during childbirth. The rubric indicates: 'Portandola adosso la donna gravida partoriva', emphasizing that the potency of the prayer can be exerted through interaction with the material text – the pregnant woman only needs to wear it on her body during labour, like the prayer of Saint Margaret.[37] Further, the image of the Madonna attached to the prayer would have lent protection to pregnant women, who were encouraged to pray to the Mother of God.

The rubric to the prayer extends protection to Maria's home, explaining: 'senza pericolo nella casa dove sarà questa/Rivelazione non vi sarà illusione di cose cattive'.[38] Did this *lettera* serve its purpose for Maria so well that she decided to carry it with her into the afterlife, or did she die, possibly during childbirth, to be buried with all the garments she wore at the time? The presence of such a document in a scientifically excavated archaeological context provides authentication for practices associated with objects and texts that lack a provenance. The Roccapelago *Lettera* testifies to the continuing value of such objects in women's daily life, lasting well beyond the time of Sacchetti's story.

Through the medium of print, this type of material prayer became available to more members of society, since a literate acquaintance was no longer required to procure a *breve*. An early extant example of a printed protective prayer known as the *Misura di Christo* was also folded like the Roccapelago *lettera* to protect its contents and to facilitate wearing in a pouch [Fig. 10.6].[39] Printed in red ink, the *Misura di Christo* employs the popular devotional practice of meditating upon the Measure of Christ on the Cross, a representation of which is depicted in the lower right-hand corner.[40] The *Misura* also contains a specific verse for the protection of pregnant women, advising: 'una do[n]na ch[e] non potisse partorire metezela adosso con devotio[n]e dice[n]do uno pater

37 'Wearing this on her body the pregnant woman will give birth': "Lettera di rivelazione di Maria Ori [Letter of Revelation of Maria Ori]", Roccapelago di Pievepelago, Museo delle Mummie di Roccapelago.

38 'Carrying this on the body, the pregnant woman will give birth without harm, in the house where this *rivelazione?* is kept, there will not be worry of evil things': Ibid.

39 Skemer, *Binding Words* 229–230; Bühler C.F., "An Orazione della misura di Cristo", *La Bibliofilia* 39 (1938) 430–433.

40 Meditating upon the Measure of Christ on the Cross could also earn indulgences: Bynum C.W., *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: 2011) 94–96.

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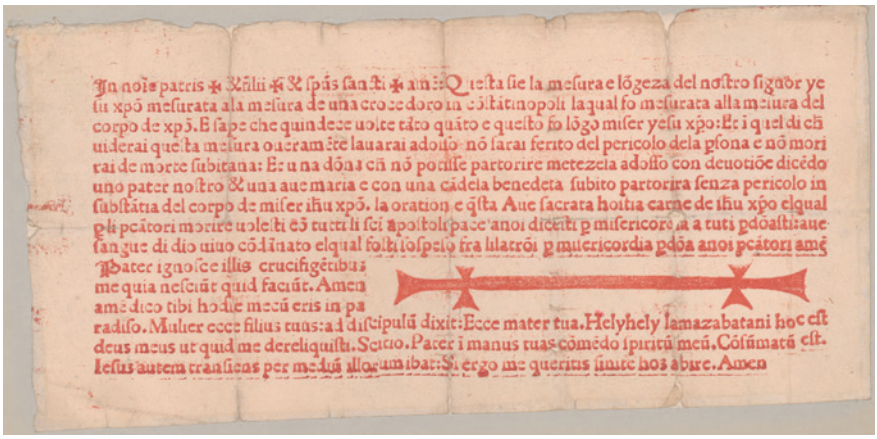


FIGURE 10.6 "Orazione della misura di Cristo [Prayer of the Measure of Christ]", Italy, unsigned: before 1500. Red ink on paper, 10.5 × 22 cm. New York, The Morgan Library and Museum, Checklist: ChL 1360, PML 16529.
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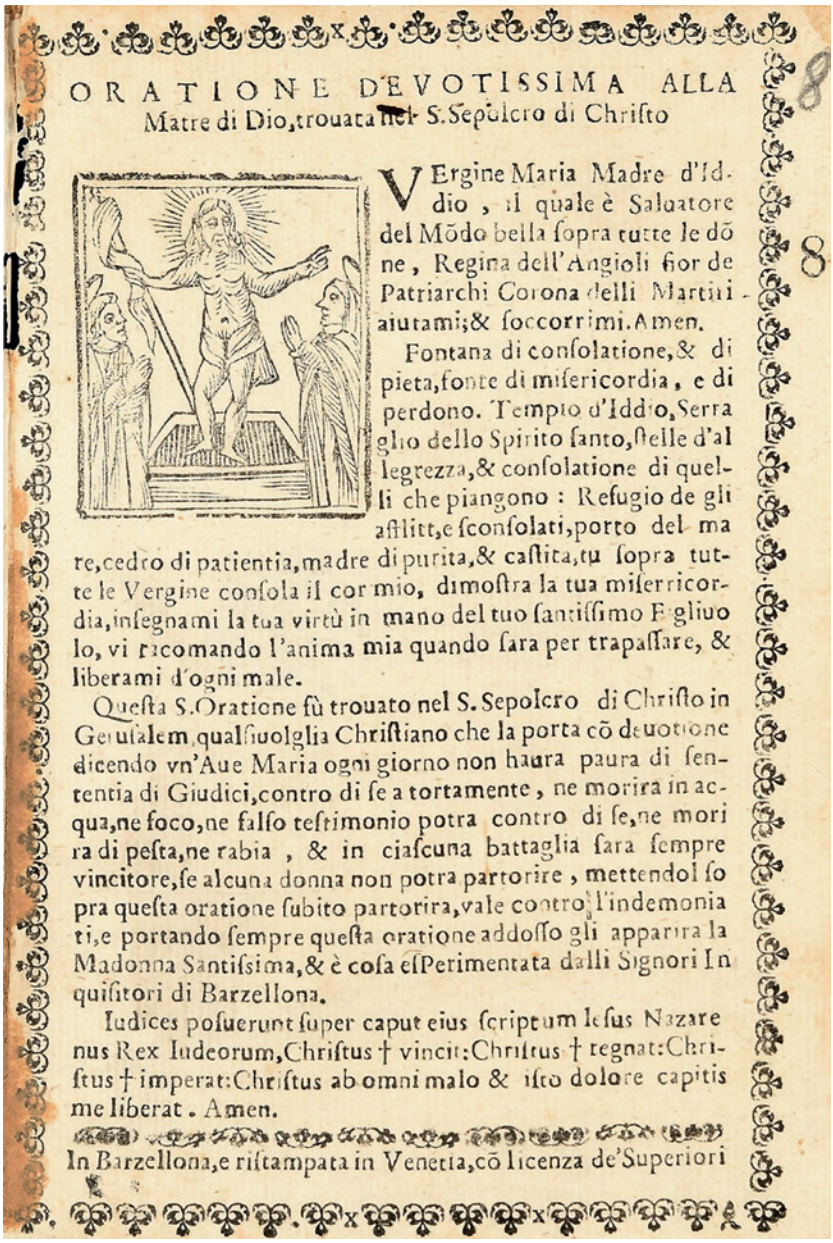
nostro & una ave maria e con una ca[n]dela benedeta subito partorira senza pericolo in substa[n]tia del corpo de miser ihu xpo'.[41] The physical presence of the printed prayer and the blessed candle would operate in concert with the recited Pater Noster and Ave Maria to aid the woman safely through childbirth.

Various printed prayers offered this same protective quality, which was enacted when the woman placed it on her flesh. Although viewed with suspicion by the Tridentine Church, prayers such as these continued to be printed throughout the early modern period. The frontispiece of another prayer sheet, called the *Oratione devotissima alla matre di Dio trovata nel S. Sepolcro di Christo*, alleges that it was first printed in Barcelona and then translated into Italian and reprinted in Venice [Fig. 10.7].[42] This prayer also offers aid to women who are struggling to give birth explaining: 'Se alcuna donna non potrà

41 'A woman that is struggling to give birth should wear it with devotion, say a Pater Noster and an Ave Maria with a blessed candle nearby, and she will quickly give birth without danger in the presence of the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ': "Orazione della misura di Cristo [Prayer of the Measure of Christ]" (Italy, unsigned: before 1500), New York, The Morgan Library and Museum, Checklist: ChL 1360, PML 16529.

42 "Oratione devotissima alla matre di Dio trovata nel S. Sepolcro di Christo [Most Devout Prayer to the Mother of God found in the Holy Sepulchre of Christ]" (In Barzellona, e ristampata in Venetia, co[n] licenza de' Superiori), Rome, Biblioteca Alessandrina, Miscellanea XIV D 27 8; Faini M., "Heterodox Devotion in the Italian Renaissance Home", in Corry M. – Howard D. – Laven M. (eds.), *Madonnas and Miracles: The Holy Home in Renaissance Italy*, exh. cat., The Fitzwilliam Museum (London: 2017) 166–169, 166.

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ORATIONE DEVOTISSIMA ALLA
Matre di Dio, trouata nel S. Sepolcro di Christo

VErgine Maria Madre d'Iddio, il quale è Saluatore del Mõdo bella sopra tutte le dõne, Regina dell'Angioli fior de Patriarchi Corona delli Martiri aiutami; & soccorrimi. Amen.

Fontana di consolatione, & di pieta, fonte di misericordia, e di perdono. Tempio d'Iddio, Serraglio dello Spirito santo, stelle d'allegrezza, & consolatione di quelli che piangono: Refugio de gli afflitti, e sconsolati, porto del mare, cedro di patientia, madre di purita, & castita, tu sopra tutte le Vergine consola il cor mio, dimostra la tua misericordia, insegnami la tua virtù in mano del tuo santissimo Figliuolo, vi racomando l'anima mia quando sara per trapassare, & liberami d'ogni male.

Questa S. Oratione fù trouato nel S. Sepolcro di Christo in Gerusalem, qualsiuolglia Christiano che la porta cõ deuotione dicendo vn'Aue Maria ogni giorno non haura paura di sententia di Giudici, contro di se a tortamente, ne morira in acqua, ne foco, ne falso testimonio potra contro di se, ne morira di pesta, ne rabia, & in ciascuna battaglia sara sempre vincitore, se alcuna donna non potra partorire, mettendol sopra questa oratione subito partorira, vale contro l'indemoniati, e portando sempre questa oratione addosso gli apparira la Madonna Santissima, & è cosa esPerimentata dalli Signori Inquisitori di Barzellona.

Iudices posuerunt super caput eius scriptum Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudeorum, Christus † vincit: Christus † regnat: Christus † imperat: Christus ab omni malo & isto dolore capitis me liberat. Amen.

In Barzellona, e ristampata in Venetia, cõ licenza de' Superiori

FIGURE 10.7 "Oratione devotissima alla matre di Dio trovata nel S. Sepolcro di Christo [Most Devout Prayer to the Mother of God found in the Holy Sepulchre of Christ]" (In Barzellona, e ristampata in Venetia, co[n] licenza de' Superiori). Ink on Paper, 175 × 120 mm. Rome, Biblioteca Alessandrina, Miscellanea XIV D 27 8.

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partorire, mettendol sopra questa oratione subito partorirà'.[43] As with the aforementioned *Misura di Christo* and the Roccapelago *Lettera di Rivelazione*, women are instructed to place the prayer on their bodies to aid them in a speedy labour. The *Oratione devotissima alla matre di Dio* is also a single-sheet prayer and could easily be carried on the body for daily protection or during childbirth. The practice of touching the prayer sheets to the body in an effort to induce labour operated in the same manner as the aforementioned legend of Saint Margaret or illustrated manuscript rolls used as birthing girdles in other parts of Europe.[44] Along the left edge of the *Oratione* reddish-brown stains tantalizingly resemble blood. While the stain could simply be remnants of rust from a metal clasp or glue, the active use of these ephemeral objects in childbirth may explain why few survive.[45]

The text of the *Oratione devotissima alla matre di Dio* is also accompanied by a woodcut image of Christ rising from the grave between the Virgin and a male saint, reiterating the link between image and text in Italian devotional practices. It also raises the question of literacy: was it important to be able to read the text? The image may have served as a marker identifying the text for the owner; reading the *oratione* may not have been as important as its protective presence.[46] These extant *brevi*, in the form of both manuscript and printed prayer sheets, attest to the enduring belief in the power of such aids during pregnancy and childbirth.

2 Every Other Thing

Many women employed 'ogni altra cosa' – other forms of spiritual assistance – in addition to legends of Margaret and *brevi*. Girdles employed by women to aide in conception, pregnancy, and childbirth are one example.[47] Married for

43 'If a woman cannot give birth, this prayer, placed upon her, will immediately set off her labour': English translation: Dawson in Caravale, *Forbidden Prayer* 193.

44 This practice may have also existed in Italy, though examples survive in greater number from England and France: Skemer, *Binding Words* 235–250.

45 Scientific analysis of the substance would be required to prove this theory, perhaps employing analytical methods and technology: Rudy K.M., "Dirty Books: Quantifying Patterns of Use in Medieval Manuscripts Using a Densitometer", *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 2, 1–2 (2010) 1–44.

46 On the apotropaic use of both religious and non-religious words and images on childbirth objects: Musacchio, *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth* 142.

47 Dilling W.J., "Girdles: Their Origin and Development, particularly with Regard to Their Use as Charms in Medicine, Marriage, and Midwifery", *Caledonian Medical Magazine* 9 (1912–1914) 337–357 and 403–425.

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nineteen years and still childless, Margherita Datini, the wife of the famous merchant from Prato, Francesco di Marco, desperately struggled to conceive a child. Margherita felt at fault for their lack of an heir, since Francesco had already fathered three illegitimate children.[48] Nearing the end of her childbearing years, Margherita sought advice from her sister, Francesca. Francesca's husband, Niccolò dell'Amannato Tecchini, relayed the advice in his letter to Francesco in 1395, the two men acting as the literate intermediaries between the sisters.

In the letter, Margherita's sister explained the details of a popular fertility treatment that utilized a girdle with an inscription to invoke the power of God. After instructing Margherita to first place the belt on a virgin boy, she told her: 'dicha prima 3 paternostri et 3 ave marie a onore di Dio et della Santa Trinita o di Santa Caterina et ch[e] elle le lettere che sono scritte nella cintola le si pongha in su '[i]l cho[r]po a carno ignuda'.[49] Margherita was encouraged to reap the benefits of the child's fecundity while also harnessing the power of the Word of God. Placed upon the woman's flesh, the inscribed sacred words would work with the recited prayers to exert their potency. Despite this attribution of power to words, it was only through the mediation of their husbands' correspondence that Margherita and Francesca communicated the trials and tribulations of their lives, including these very private matters. While Margherita was semiliterate at the time of this episode, her sister allegedly lacked any reading comprehension.[50]

Interspersed throughout these letters the men interjected their own opinions about their wives' discussions. Regarding this remedy Francesca's husband wrote: 'Io Niccholo credo che le fareb[b]e più utile e più bene a quello [h]a che'[e]lla la vole adoperare che'[e]lla desse ma[n]ggiare a 3 poveri 3

48 Crabb A., "'If I could write': Margherita Datini and Letter Writing, 1385–1410", *Renaissance Quarterly* 60, 4 (2007) 1170–1206, 1171.

49 Many thanks to Alessia Meneghin for help with the transcription of this letter. 'Say first three Our Fathers and Hail Marys in honour of God and the Holy Trinity and St Catherine; and the letters written on the belt are to be placed on the belly, on the naked flesh […]': Archivio di Stato di Prato (ASP), busta 1103, inserto 14, codice 134071, Carteggio privato, Lettere di vari a Datini, 1103.14, Lettere di Tecchini Niccolò dell'Ammannato a Datini Francesco di Marco, 23 April 1395, Fondo Datini Online (see bibliography for permanent link); English translation: Origo I., *Merchant of Prato: Francesco di Marco Datini* (Harmondsworth: 1979) 161.

50 Margherita's literacy was limited in the late 1380s, but both her reading and writing skills improved over the course of the 1390s and in the early fifteenth century. Francesca's husband indicated that his wife did not know how to write: Crabb, "If I could write'" 1175 and 1188.

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venerdì e non andare dietro a parole che dichono le fem[m]ine'.[51] The men explain that they believe the women's theories to be folly, yet their underlying disapproval of this popular devotional practice perhaps reveals more about the relationship between contemporary belief and medical systems. Seeking the aid of the Virgin and saints or performing pious acts would draw positive attention to the woman and reflect well upon her family, especially her husband. While some have argued that this masculine criticism reflects the divide between 'feminine' popular devotion and the more masculine scholastic Church message regarding the efficacy of good works, does this gendered discussion allow another more nuanced reading?[52] These women, whose literacy was limited, seem to attribute a greater efficacy to words, which they may not have fully understood, seeing in them an inherent power that was enhanced and extracted when accompanied by ritual, prayer, and contact with the flesh. Conversely, the men who can read the words inscribed on the belt view them as less mysterious, and therefore less potent, and consign them to the realm of superstitious 'women's chatter'.

Despite the belittling of birthing girdles that is evident in the Datini example, men also advocated their use. In a Veronese miscellany that resembles *libri di famiglie* and *zibaldoni*, Bartolomeo dal Bovo included instructions for a similar apparatus. Embellished with a large manicule signalling its importance, Bartolomeo dal Bovo offers instructions for a belt inscribed with holy words to aid pregnant women. Specifically the leather belt should bear the inscription from Psalm 1 verse 3, which promotes that this holy person: 'shall be as a tree which is planted beside a water course, which will bring forth its fruit in due season, and its leaf shall not fall, and all that it does shall prosper'.[53] The natural imagery of the Psalm, while not overtly Christian, infers that the upright woman represented by the tree, who draws up the water of her faith through her roots, will give birth successfully to a child who will lead a full life. Like the knowledge Bartolomeo dal Bovo preserves in his family book for posterity, girdles of this type may have been passed down from generation to generation.

51 'But I, Niccolò, think it would be better, in order to obtain what she wished, if [Margherita] fed three beggars on three Fridays, and did not hearken to women's chatter': ASP, Datini CP 1103.14 23 April 1395, English translation: Origo, *Merchant of Prato* 161.

52 Park K. "Medicine and Magic: The Healing Arts", in Brown J. – Davis R. (eds.), *Gender and Society in Renaissance Italy* (London: 1998) 129–149, 130.

53 While the text was written mainly by Bartolomeo dal Bovo, other family members also contributed to this miscellany: Bartolomeo Dal Bovo, Libro di famiglia, Verona, Bib. Civ., ms. 827, fol. 35v; English translation: Grubb J.S., *Provincial Families of the Renaissance: Private and Public Life in the Veneto* (Baltimore: 1996) 36. See also Perantoni P., "Writing a Life: The 'family book' by Bartolomeo Dal Bovo", in Rogge, J. (ed.), *Making Sense as a Cultural Practice: Historical Perspectives* (Bielefeld: 2013) 65–73.

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FIGURE 10.8 "La sacra cintola". Green wool with gold embroidery and two cords as ties. 87 cm (length) in the "Reliquary of the Sacra Cintola della Madonna" (Milan, 1638). Gold, enamel, and rock crystal. Cathedral of Santo Stefano, Chapel of the Sacra Cintola.
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These girdles probably also reminded users of the Virgin's Girdle (*la Sacra Cintola*), a relic preserved near the Datini home in the cathedral church of Santo Stefano in Prato; the added benefits of holy words possibly replaced the efficacy of direct association with the Virgin offered by the relic [Fig. 10.8]. Many expectant parents relied solely upon the intercession of the Virgin Mary, since: 'blessed is the fruit of her womb'. In his translation of the early forth – or fifth-century text, the *De transitu Beatae Mariae Virginis*, Giuliano di Francesco Guizzelmi recounts the story of the Virgin bestowing her girdle upon Saint Thomas at the moment of her Assumption. Guizzelmi explains that the girdle, now preserved in the church of Santo Stefano, had been made by the Virgin: 'with her own hands and which certainly encircled her body and, for nine months, the blessed Jesus when he was in her womb and which she and the blessed Jesus often touched and with which the most holy apostles girt her body when they placed her Majesty in the tomb'.[54]

Devotion to this Church-approved relic was promoted as an acceptable focus for intercession related to pregnancy and motherhood. Since its arrival in Prato in the middle of the twelfth century, it has been displayed to the public on special feast days.[55] A miracle story associated with the Virgin's girdle recounts how the wife of the Marchese of Monferrato, whose baby was presenting as transverse, gave birth successfully as a result of her veneration of

54 Guizzelmi Giuliano di Francesco, *Historia della Cinctola della Vergine Maria*, ed. C. Grassi (Prato: 1990) 163–164 cited in Maniura R., "Persuading the Absent Saint: Image and Performance in Marian Devotion", *Critical Inquiry* 35, 3 (2009) 629–654, 640.

55 Musacchio J.M., *Art, Marriage, & Family in the Florentine Renaissance Palace* (New Haven: 2008) 192. On the history of the Sacra Cintola, also see Grassi C., "La storia del Sacro Cignolo", in Capobianco A. (ed.), *La Sacra Cintola nel Duomo di Prato* (Prato: 1995) 23–39; Mavarelli C.G., "La Sacra Cintola", in *Il Museo di Palazzo Pretorio a Prato* (Florence – Milan: 2015) 103.

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the relic. The Marchesa of Monferrato also wore a replica of the Virgin's girdle; this girdle had absorbed the power of the relic after a Carmelite friar, Giovanni Manzi of Prato, touched it to the Virgin's Girdle in Prato.[56] Both her devotion and the contact relic worked together to facilitate her labour. A birthing girdle listed in the inventory of Franciescho Inghirrami might connote a similar object: '1º nastro di seta bianco chon orelique apicchiato da porre a dosso a donna di parto', the relics attached to this white silk ribbon may have gained their power from an association with the Virgin's *Sacra Cintola* or a saint associated with childbirth, such as Margaret.[57]

An extension of courtship gifts exchanged during the middle ages, girdles (also called belts, or *cinture* in Italian) remained common as love tokens and wedding gifts throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[58] Referencing the famous embroidered girdle of Venus, which bestowed powers of seduction upon its wearer, these girdles were also valued for their ability to attract suitors and to encourage fertility as evidenced by the advice offered to Margherita Datini.[59] While relatively few survive, a luxurious fifteenth-century girdle with enamelled metal buckles embellished with *nielloed* medallions is an elite example [Fig. 10.9].[60] On one semi-circular medallion an inscription invokes the Grace of God: 'Spera in Dio'. These words may have served as a prompt to devotional activity and could have offered the wearer God's protection. Girdles given during betrothal and marriage may have been repurposed for use during pregnancy; new girdles might also be given as gifts to expectant mothers, who often wore leather girdles close to their skin.[61] The Italian words for belt

56 Guizzelmi, *Historia della Cinctola* cited in Maniura, "Persuading the Absent Saint" 644–645.

57 It was listed along with a '1a anpollina di relique (ampula of relics)' and other objects that were stored in a 'schatolino dipinto (painted box)': Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Magistrato dei Pupilli Avanti il Principato, 173, 266 v cited in Musacchio, *Art, Marriage, & Family* 173, note 228.

58 On belts as symbols of courtship, see Krohn D., "55. Belt or Girdle with a Woven Love Poem", in Bayer A. (ed.), Art and Love in Renaissance Italy, exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New Haven – London: 2008) 128–129; Musacchio J.M., "36a. Girdle & 36b. Girdle End with a Profile Couple (front) and a Woman Holding a Pink (back)", in Bayer A. (ed.), Art and Love in Renaissance Italy, exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New Haven – London: 2008) 105–107; Musacchio, *Art, Marriage, & Family* 168–174; Syson L. – Thornton D., *Objects of Virtue: Art in Renaissance Italy* (Los Angeles: 2001), 55–56; Venturelli P., *Gioielli e gioiellieri milanesi: storia, arte moda* (1450–1630) (Milan: 1996) 183–190.

59 Musacchio, *Art, Marriage, & Family* 171–172.

60 Matthews-Grieco S.F., "Marriage and Sexuality", in Ajmar M. – Dennis F. (eds.), *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, exh. cat., The Victoria & Albert Museum (New Haven – London: 2006) 104–119, 108–109.

61 Gilbertson L., "The Vanni Altarpiece and the Relic Cult of Saint Margaret: Considering a Female Audience", in Lamia S. – Valdez del Álamo E. (eds.), *Decorations for the Holy Dead:*

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FIGURE 10.9 Girdle, ca. 1450. Tablet woven lampas with gilded and enamelled metal, nielloed silver, and stamped brass. Victoria & Albert Museum, 4278–1857. Detail of the inscriptions on the two niello roundels, which read 'AMORE. VOL' and 'SPERA. IN DIO'.
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(*cintura*) and pregnancy (*incinta*) shared etymological roots, further reinforcing the associations between these objects and pregnancy.[62] Therefore, as a common clothing item associated with the advent of married life and adulthood, the Virgin's Girdle served as a recognisable and relatable relic to all who believed in its efficacy.

3 Motherhood

Many of the pregnancy aids described above also contained notes for the protection of the home, thus extending their power to all members of the family. Once she had given birth, the mother's attention turned to her child's welfare. Among a host of objects used to protect children were those that were both textual and religious in nature.[63] For example, wealthy children were often clothed in veils embroidered with words such as the Name of Jesus in gold thread during their baptisms.[64] Prayers might be written upon objects the children used. The *Oratione devota di Sancto Cypriano contro alli spiriti maligni, & buona a tenere nella culla delli fanciulli piccoli contro alle fantasme & contro*

Visual Embellishments on Tombs and Shrines of Saints (Turnhout: 2002) 179–190 at 180 and Krohn, "55. Belt or Girdle" 128.

62 Gilbertson, "The Vanni Altarpiece and the Relic Cult" 189 note 21.

63 See also Maya Corry's essay in this volume, 310–341.

64 Musacchio, *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth* 49.

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a tucte le malie not only advises the wearing of the prayer, but also that the booklet itself be placed in children's cradles to protect them from spirits and other evil things.[65]

Children, too, might be given *brevi* to wear. Musacchio has noted that Florentine inventories list childhood *brevi* along with other types of charms, such as the embroidered *breve* pouch that accompanies the coral and tooth worn by the Christ Child in a painting by Lo Scheggia [Fig. 10.10].[66] Families who could afford the services of a wet-nurse sent practical and apotropaic objects along with their new-born child – from linens to charms, which often included bits of coral, *agnus dei*,[67] and brevi, offering them an otherworldly protection as their own parents relinquished control of them for a time.[68] In his account book Antonio Rustichi recorded the items that accompanied his fifteen children to their wet-nurse, such as swaddling cloths, linens, and cribs.[69] The Rustichi children were also sent with the family's set of amulets, comprising: 'una brancha di chorallo chon una ghera d'ariento, uno dente chon deta brancha, uno brieve di scamito nero cho' l'arme chon detta'.[70] The '*breve*' itself was a pouch made from black samite decorated with the Rustichi arms, thus linking the contents' protective qualities to the security of the family name.

65 Many thanks to Marco Faini for finding and sharing the transcription of this prayer. (Florence, Francesco di Giovanni Benvenuto: non *ante* 1516). Rome, Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana.

66 While Musacchio suggests that the object is covered with text, a close examination of a high-resolution image reveals instead that it is a piece of fabric, probably a *breve* pouch, embellished with pearls and embroidery. This type of *Madonna and Child* painting, in the shape known as a *colmo*, was a popular format for images of domestic devotion and perhaps the amulets depicted by lo Scheggia offered further protection to the family who owned the painting: Olson R., "Lost and Partially Found: The Tondo, a Significant Florentine Art Form, in Documents of the Renaissance", *Artibus et Historiae* 14 (1993) 31–65, 35. See also Musacchio J.M., "Lambs, Coral, Teeth, and the Intimate Intersection of Religion and Magic in Renaissance Tuscany", in Cornelison S.J. – Montgomery S.B. (eds.), *Images, Relics and Devotional Practices in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 296 (Tempe, AZ: 2006) 139–156, 154–155.

67 For information about the devotional and protective uses of the *agnus dei* see the essay by Irene Galandra Cooper in this volume, 220–243.

68 Musacchio, *The Art and Ritual of Childbirth* 142–143.

69 Musacchio, *Art, Marriage, & Family* 202.

70 'A branch of coral with a silver ring, a tooth with that branch, a *breve* of black samite with the arms of the family'. According to Musacchio, the records explain that coral and tooth had to be replaced many times. This allows us to infer that presumably the same *breve* was used by all these children. Another *breve* was included in this list and was described as: 'uno brieve di domaschino azurro [a blue damask *breve*]': Musacchio, *Art, Marriage, & Family* 202 & note 54 cites the Carte Strozziane 11,11, 11r; See also Musacchio, *The Art & Ritual of Childbirth* Appendix D.

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FIGURE 10.10 Giovanni di Ser Giovanni (lo Scheggia), "Madonna and Child with Angels", ca. 1450–1480. Tempera on panel. Private Collection [Last Known: Collection H. Kisters, Kreuzlingen, Switzerland]

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Mothers constantly worried for the well-being of their children, and these anxieties continued long after their children outgrew the cradle. Prayers worn throughout childhood might become permanent fixtures throughout a person's life. In January 1554, Giulia Orsini Silva in Ferrara wrote a letter to her son Giuseppe in besieged Siena filled with motherly concern for his spiritual, physical and moral well-being. After ordering Giuseppe to not mix with 'bad company' and to avoid the temptation of gambling, she entreats him: 'Che tu mi facessi questa gratia di portare quelle sancte oratione che io ti missi al collo con bona devotione'.[71] Giulia believes so strongly in the necessity of these 'sancte oratione' that she continues: 'et se quelle fussero andate in sinistro damene aviso che subito te ne manderò un'altra'.[72] Giulia's offer to replace the 'sancte oratione' if they have been compromised suggests that she is worried that these prayers which were probably worn as a *breve* may have been unsealed, thus cancelling their efficacy, or lost. If caught with these objects and questioned by Inquisitors, men often blamed their mothers, who had insisted that they wear them from a young age and instilled in them a belief in their efficacy.[73] The implications of this are twofold: first, that mothers were viewed as pious and their devotional guidance as trustworthy; second, that it was credible that those most apt to encourage the use of such wearable texts were women, and therefore men accused of such practices might be excused if they were following the advice of their mothers. While this chapter has focused upon women's reliance upon the apotropaic, prophylactic and thaumaturgic text, reflecting links between these objects and feminine belief systems, men also relied upon them as the cases of Bartolomeo del Bovo and Giovanni Silva illustrate. Even if men did not always admit their faith in these objects to authorities, they still used them in their daily lives.

At a time when they had little say over who they married, infertility signalled failure, pregnancy was often fatal, and the infant mortality rate soared, women struggled to navigate the perils of their very existence. Some relied

71 'That you could do me this favour to wear the holy prayers that I placed around your neck with great devotion': 25 January 1554, *Giulia Orsini Silva to Giovanni Silva*, Archivio Mediceo del Principato, Vol. 1862, fol. 161. Doc ID: 21008.

72 'And if these have been compromised, send me word and I will quickly send you another': Ibid.

73 Skemer discusses a Morisco man brought before the Spanish Inquisition in 1620 who claimed his mother gave him an Arabic amulet against the evil eye and that he did not understand it since he was illiterate: Skemer, *Binding Words* 144; For another Italian example in which the man attributes the suspect object to his mother, see Irene Galandra Cooper's essay in this volume, 221.

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solely upon religious intercession, others followed the latest medical advice, some believed in the power of 'magical' remedies, and others resorted to some combination of all these in order to face life's potential hazards. Though studies have shed light on the popularity and wide use of the application of holy words to women's bodies during moments of pregnancy and motherhood, particularly in medieval and early modern England and France, little attention has been given to the ubiquity of these practices in early modern Italy.[74] The use of holy words and phrases in the form of girdles, legends of Saint Margaret, prayer sheets and amulets offered women the comfort of spiritual protection in braving their chaotic world.

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74 European: Skemer, *Binding Words*; English; Morse M., "'Thys moche more ys oure Lady Mary longe': Takamiya MS 56 and the English birth girdle tradition", in Horobin S. – Mooney L. (eds.), *Middle English Texts in Transition: A Festschrift Dedicated to Toshiyuki Takamiya on his 70th Birthday* (Woodbridge: 2014) 199–219 and Volf, *A "Medicyne of Wordes"*; French: Aymar A., "Contribution à l'étude du folklore de la Haute-Auvergne. Le sachet accoucheur et ses mystères", *Annales du Midi: revue archéologique, historique et philologique de France méridionale*, 38, 149–150 (1926) 273–347; and Carolus-Barré L., "Un nouveau parchemin amulette".

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CHAPTER 11

Devotional Panels as Sites of Intercultural Exchange

Michele Bacci

The use of painted panels as visual counterparts to an individual's or a family group's practice of prayer admittedly was very common in the modern era, yet it would be misleading to consider such a phenomenon as the outcome of a very recent process and as something typical of Western religious experience. Indeed, painted panels of various forms and diminutive dimensions were used in different Christian traditions and in various periods from Late Antiquity through the Late Middle Ages and, in early modern times, they happened to be perceived as objects that could be easily involved in multifarious devotional practices, regardless of their owner's confessional or denominational identity.

This paper aims at raising and discussing the following questions: to what extent, if any, is the involvement of painted panels in individual prayer indebted to previous usages, rooted in the Byzantine and medieval past? To what extent, and on which grounds, did it come to be that in the Late Middle Ages and early modern era Byzantine or Byzantine-like images were perceived as especially suitable for private devotions, and until when did this perception continue to play a role? Which cultural dynamics gave rise, from the fourteenth century onward, to the selective appropriation of morphological, iconographic, and stylistic features associated with both Byzantine and Italian traditions and to their combination in a number of works meant for private or domestic uses? And finally, would it be correct to think of devotional panels, especially those of mixed stylistic character made in Venice and Venetian – or Latin-ruled countries in the Aegean and the Levantine sea, as privileged sites of intercultural exchange?

1 First Phase: Late Antiquity to Byzantium

It is worth stressing that, as recent studies have pointed out, the use of painted panels in private and domestic religious practices has ancient roots.[1] Contrary

1 The best surveys are Belting H., *Bild und Kult. Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (Munich: 1990) 103–112; Brenk B., *The Apse, the Image and the Icon. An Historical Perspective of the Apse as a Space for Images* (Wiesbaden: 2010) 115–130; Sörries R., *Das*

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to what earlier research had assumed, encaustic painting was used in late Antiquity for the making not only of funerary portraits, but also of images of gods and heroes meant to be worshipped in the house *lararia*: the representation of a third century painter preserved in his tomb found at Cherson, Crimea, shows him working at a number of such images of different shapes, such as clipei and rectangular panels [Fig. 11.1].[2] A number of textual hints corroborate the view that the domestic interior was one of the privileged contexts where Christian image worship was developed: here it will be sufficient to mention the well-known story of the newly converted Lykomedes who, according to the second-century apocryphal Gospel of John, set up a painted image of the Apostle in his bedroom and honoured it with wreaths of flowers and candles.[3] Some third and fourth century authors remark that private houses were replete with images of the new Christian heroes who had undergone martyrdom or lived as ascetics. John Chrysostom, for example, observed that the image of the local martyr Meletios was to be seen almost everywhere in Antioch: namely on seals, rings, fountains, and obviously on the walls of houses.[4]

Meaningfully enough, much of the information we have about such objects comes from texts by churchmen and theologians who wished to manifest their bewilderment at hearing that many people, who claimed to be Christians, were making use of painted portraits of Christ and the most important holy persons and therefore revealed, as the Apostle John reproached Lykomedes, that they were unable to get rid of the pagan habits of their ancestors. And indeed, the practice seems to have become commonplace in the fifth through the seventh centuries, as is witnessed by a number of icons, mostly preserved or found in Egypt, that displayed not only saints, but also deceased bishops and monks.[5] Indeed, praying in front of images set up in a private space was also distinctive of monastic life. Sources also bear witness to the fact that the

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Malibu-Triptychon. Ein Totengedenkbild aus dem Römischen Ägypten und Verwandte Werke der Spätantiken Tafelmalerei (Dettelbach: 2003) 194–197; Matthews Th.F., "Early Icons of the Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine at Sinai", in Nelson R.S. – Collins K.M. (eds.), *Holy Image – Hallowed Ground. Icons from Sinai* (Los Angeles: 2006) 39–55; Mathews Th., *The Dawn of Christian Art in Panel Paintings and Icons* (Los Angeles: 2016).

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3 *Acta Iohannis*, chaps 26–28, ed. E. Junod and D. Kaestli (Turnhout: 1983) 176–181.

4 John Chrysostom, *Homily in Praise of Archbishop Meletios*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiæ cursus completus. Series græca* [henceforth *PG*] (Paris: 1844–1866), vol. L, col. 516.

5 Belting, *Bild und Kult* 107–110; Sörries, *Das Malibu-Triptychon* 194–197; and especially the recent study by Thomas F. Mathews, *The Dawn of Christian Art in Panel Paintings and Icons* (Los Angeles: 2016).

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FIGURE 11.1 *Representation of a Painter*, from a tomb in Cherson, Crimea, 3rd century. Saint Petersburg, The Hermitage Museum
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introduction of icons into the interior of Eastern Christian churches was partly promoted by individuals, regardless of their status as laypeople or members of the clergy, who aimed at manifesting their piety in terms reminiscent of the devotional experience associated with images in domestic contexts. Icons could be used as signs of thanksgiving for those saints who were supposed to have supplicated – or were encouraged to supplicate – the Lord on behalf of an individual. Even if many such works were made especially to record a donor's act of self-dedication, as is the case with icons depicting bowing persons at the feet of their intercessors, it is likely that images originally meant for a domestic setting may have been used as votive offerings.[6]

The involvement of icons in domestic devotion was perceived as a distinctive, and somewhat blameworthy, aspect of Byzantine religious habits. Leo Tuscus, a native of Pisa who in the 1160s and 1170s worked in Constantinople as the Byzantine Emperor's official Latin translator, described the Greek practice of worshipping icons in houses as a most dangerous deviance from the

6 For some early examples preserved on Mount Sinai cf. Weitzmann K., *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai. The Icons*, I (*From the Sixth to the Tenth Century*) (Princeton: 1976) 37–38 no. B. 14 and pl. XVI; 66–67 no. B.39 and pls. XXVI, XCIII; cf. Mathews, "Early Icons" 53–54.

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traditional Christian way of experiencing the sacred as members of the *ecclesia*, the community of believers:

> [...] In their houses they build up small houses (*mansiunculas*), wherein they put the images of saints, and they manifest to them all possible honours by means of lamps, big candles, and incense. In contrast, they leave empty the congregational churches, built by their fathers, and leave them in poverty. They nearly permit the celebration of the Holy Mass in their bedrooms.[7]

Such *mansiunculae* are to be understood as the medieval forerunners of the domestic proskynetaria, or small tabernacles, used to house icons throughout Orthodox countries. It is difficult to say what such structures looked like and whether or not it would be misleading to think of them as something like the Russian *krasnij ugol*, familiar in its usual setting in the corners of living rooms and bedrooms. Some extant objects, such as the diminutive ceramic iconostasis from the tenth century now in the Archaeological Museum at Preslav (Bulgaria), indicate that they could be shaped in such a way as to intentionally remind viewers of pieces of furniture typical of contemporary church interiors [Fig. 11.2].[8] In the twelfth century, laypeople experienced the Mass in front of



FIGURE 11.2 *Ceramic Iconostasis*, 10th century. Preslav (Bulgaria), Archaeological Museum
PHOTOGRAPH BY THE AUTHOR

7 Leo Tuscus, *De haeresibus et praevaricationibus Graecorum*, ed. J.-P. Migne, *PG* CXL, coll. 544–550, esp. 547.

8 The basic study is Totev T., *The Ceramic Icon in Medieval Bulgaria* (Sofia: 1999) 86–89.

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the *templon*: a marble, wooden, or even metal barrier separating the crowd gathered in the nave from the space reserved for the altar and the officiating clergy. Increasingly frequently, such barriers were used as support for icons, and believers became accustomed to gazing at them during the most solemn moments of the Mass.[9] By looking at icons set within a miniaturized *templon*, viewers were able to imaginatively re-enact their experience of the holy liturgy in a space and time other than those of the liturgical rite.

2 Second Phase: Byzantium to Italy

In this respect, Leo Tuscus was not totally wrong in assuming that there was a risk of transforming icon devotion in the home into a surrogate of the Mass. Yet, it is striking that this condemnation of Byzantine domestic piety came from the native of an Italian town – Pisa – which stood out for its early and strong interest in making use of religious painted panels as visual supports for individual prayer. The imitation of icons became widespread very early in the Tuscan port, which had strong connections with both Byzantium and the Eastern Mediterranean countries, including the Crusader-ruled Syro-Palestinian coast.[10] Painted images of the Virgin Mary purposely made in the Greek way, that is by reproducing some of their basic morphological, iconographic, and stylistic features, were produced in Pisa from the twelfth century, if the dating proposed for the panel formerly preserved in Santa Chiara and now in the National Museum of San Matteo proves to be correct [Fig. 11.3].[11] What is more important, some contemporary texts hint at the imitation not only of forms, but also of some Byzantine devotional practices involving icons, particularly their privileged setting in private, rather than public contexts: for

9 Best survey in Gerstel Sh.E.J (ed.), *Thresholds of the Sacred. Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspectives on Religious Screens, East and West* (Washington D.C.: 2006).

10 Bacci M., "Pisa bizantina. Alle origini del culto delle icone in Toscana", in Calderoni Masetti A.R. – Dufour Bozzo C. – Wolf G. (eds.), *Intorno al Sacro Volto. Genova, Bisanzio e il Mediterraneo* (*secoli XI–XIV*) (Venice: 2007) 63–78.

11 Garrison E.B., *Italian Romanesque Panel Painting: An Illustrated Index* (Florence 1949), no. 110; Garrison E.B., *Early Italian Painting: Selected Studies* (London: 1984), I, 259–261; Caleca A., "La pittura medievale in Toscana", in Bertelli C. (ed.), *La pittura in Italia: l'Altomedioevo* (Milan: 1994) 163–179, esp. 170; Boskovits M., *The Origins of Florentine Painting, 1100–1270* (Florence: 1993) 25 fn. 20; Bacci M., "Toscane, Byzance et Levant: pour une histoire dynamique des rapports artistiques méditerranéens au XIIe et XIIIe siècles", in Caillet J.-P. – Joubert F. (eds.), *Orient et Occident méditerranéens au XIIIe siècle. Les programmes picturaux* (Paris: 2012) 235–256, esp. 240–241.

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FIGURE 11.3 *Madonna di Santa Chiara,* painted panel, Pisa, late 12th century. Pisa, National Museum of San Matteo
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example, the thirteenth-century life of Saint Bona, a local lay woman, reports that the monks of San Michele degli Scalzi were accustomed to pray and meditate in front of the icons kept in their cells.[12]

The icon-like images painted in Pisa are mainly rectangular-shaped panels of modest size depicting the Virgin Mary. Some of them have a border in relief, either simply gilded or decorated with saintly figures, as in their Eastern models. Certain panels have arched tops which indicate that they were originally part of triptychs. These probably looked much like analogous objects which are known to have circulated widely not only in mainland Byzantium, but also in the Eastern Mediterranean, as a number of comparanda preserved in Saint Catherine's monastery on Mount Sinai seems to indicate.[13] One such is the much worshipped *Madonna di sotto gli organi*, a work universally thought to date from around 1200, yet variously described as a Greek or a local Tuscan work [Fig. 11.4].[14] Scholarly embarrassment about this panel is itself an indicator of Pisa's deep familiarity with Byzantine icons: whoever painted it, he had a first-hand knowledge of iconographic details alien to Western tradition, such as the diaphanous tunic to be seen on Christ's blessing arm, the accurate rendering of the Child's and his Mother's garments, or the distinctively unnatural proportions of the bodies. The 'Byzantine-ness' of the work is emphasised by the open book bearing a Greek inscription from the Gospel of John (8:12), a detail that is undoubtedly more usual as an attribute of Christ in monumental representations as Pantokrator than of the Child in icons of the Virgin Mary – even if some thirteenth-century parallels from Cyprus are also known. The absence of the standard Greek abbreviations for Mary and Christ should not be regarded as an argument against Byzantine authorship, given that the

12 *Life of Saint Bona*, ed. G. Zaccagnini, *La tradizione agiografica di santa Bona da Pisa* (Pisa: 2004) 138.

13 Vokotopoulos P., "Funzioni e tipologia delle icone", in Velmans T. (ed.), *Il viaggio dell'icona dalle origini alla caduta di Bisanzio* (Milan: 2002) 109–150, esp. 115–119.

14 Garrison E.B., "Post-War Discoveries: Early Italian Painting, III: The *Madonna di sotto gli organi*", *Burlington Magazine* 89 (1947) 274–279; Bacci M., "Due tavole della Vergine nella Toscana occidentale del primo Duecento", *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa* ser. IV, 2 (1997) 36–53; Bacci, "Pisa bizantina" 72; Pace V., "Modelli da Oriente nella pittura duecentesca su tavola in Italia centrale", *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 44 (2000) 19–41; Pace V., "Between East and West", in Vassilaki M., *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art* (Milan-Athens: 2000) 425–432; Bacci, "Toscane, Byzance et Levant" 242; Weyl Carr A., "Thirteenth-Century Cyprus: Questions of Style", in Caillet – Joubert, *Orient et Occident méditerranéens* 65–86, esp. 72–74; Folda J., *Byzantine Art and Italian Panel Painting. The Virgin and Child* Hodegetria *and the Art of Chrysography* (Cambridge: 2015) 136–137, 331–332.

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FIGURE 11.4 *Madonna di sotto gli organi*, icon, ca. 1200. Pisa, Cathedral of Our Lady
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background is known to have been thoroughly repainted by the local artist Giovan Battista Tempesti in 1790.[15]

More interesting is the fact that the destination of the work for a domestic setting, which seems to be implied by the fact it was originally part of a triptych, is corroborated by the legends that were recorded on the occasion of its promotion to a public object of worship in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. Such stories stated that the icon had long since been preserved in a private setting, the castle of Lombrici, before it was looted by the Pisan army during the war with Lucca in 1225.[16] In some way, the association of the work with the practice of domestic devotion was still recognised when its final change of status officially took place.

The imitation of icons was certainly stimulated by the perception that Byzantine religious painting was invested with a special authority, associated with its alleged apostolic roots (stemming from archetypal portraits made by Saint Luke and transmitted to the following generations by a chain of uninterrupted replicas). The Evangelist's celebrated works, preserved in Constantinople and Rome, were supposed to convey the exact physiognomic features of Christ and the Virgin Mary and were therefore regarded as historical documents of their appearances, complementing the Holy Scriptures. Luke's Greek identity was also perceived to bear on his skills as artist: painting was definitely described as the Byzantine technique and artistic medium *par excellence*.[17] In this respect, the religious worthiness of a painted panel, especially of the Virgin Mary, could sometimes be successfully enhanced by a generic icon-like appearance, such as the representation of a half-length figure, the golden background, or the use of Greek abbreviations, or by the appropriation and reproduction of a more distinctively Greek style – as is made evident by attempts to imitate Byzantine modelling and highlighting devices (for example in Giunta Pisano's works).[18] Over time certain distinctive features came to be accurately imitated, yet excessively multiplied, as is the case with chrysography, which was often used not so much to highlight parts of the holy

15 Bacci, "Due tavole" 38; cf. the misunderstanding in Folda, *Byzantine Art* 137.

16 As first witnessed in 1528 by Bianco Bianchi, ed. R. Antonelli, *Bianco Bianchi cronista del '500* (Lucca: 1995) 93.

17 Bacci M., "L'effige sacra e il suo spettatore", in Castelnuovo E. – Sergi G. (eds.), *Arti e storia nel Medioevo. Volume terzo. Del vedere: pubblici, forme e funzioni* (Turin: 2004) 199–252, esp. 238–246.

18 Bacci, "Toscane, Byzance et Levant" 243–245.

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person's garments, but almost to cover them indistinctly with a wide net of golden filaments.[19]

Yet, in many cases, style – or at least those elements of form that formalistic art history has traditionally perceived as a set of distinctive marks of a specific artistic tradition – did not really matter: forms of both Byzantine and Western origins were often freely selected, combined, and transformed to shape images meant to be efficacious on devotional, rather than mimetic grounds. The connection with Byzantium was especially evident in those compositional and iconographic types that were strongly rooted in the Eastern Christian tradition of icon-painting, such as the Virgin Mary, some apostles or specifically Oriental saints such as Egyptian hermits and desert fathers. Despite the traditional emphasis placed by art history since Vasari on the Byzantine-oriented nature of thirteenth-century Italian painting – the so-called 'maniera greca' – the extent to which the widespread perception of painted panels as icon-like objects implied the appropriation of specifically Greek forms is hard to evaluate. An often quoted passage of a sermon by the Dominican friar Giordano da Rivalto in 1305 bears witness to the authority attributed to Byzantine pictorial tradition, yet it also reveals that the preacher's concept of those 'worship-worthy icons having come in antiquity from Greece' was rather confused. He hints at the pictorial scheme of the *Adoration of the Magi* as distinct from that of the *Nativity* and lays emphasis on the Magi's royal status as authoritatively indicated by their representation as kings wearing crowns: he was clearly unable (or unconcerned) to identify such features as alien to Byzantine tradition and typical of Western imagery.[20]

Indeed, it was not before the mid-fifteenth century that the perception of Byzantine style as radically distinct from a Western one was clearly stated in a number of sources. In Cennini's famous characterisation of Giotto's innovative forms as a translation from Greek into Latin the term 'Greek' was used to hint at earlier Tuscan paintings, i.e. at a pictorial tradition which, in Giovanni Boccaccio's words, was considered as a sort of popular or even vulgar art, meant 'rather to tickle the eyes of the ignorant, than to gratify the intellect of

19 Polzer J., "Concerning Chrysography in Dugento Tuscan Painting and the Origin of the Two Washington Madonnas", *Arte Medievale* ser. IV, 2 (2012) 205–216; Folda, *Byzantine Art*.

20 Giordano da Rivalto, *Sermons Held on the Courtyard of Santa Maria Novella*, ed. E. Narducci, *Prediche inedite del b. Giordano da Rivalto dell'Ordine de' Predicatori* (Bologna: 1867) 170–171. Cf. Cutler A., "La 'questione bizantina' nella pittura italiana: una visione alternativa della 'maniera greca'", in Bertelli C., *La pittura in Italia. L'Altomedioevo* (Milan: 1994) 335–354; Belting, *Bild und Kult* 370; Cannon J., *Religious Poverty, Visual Riches. Art in the Dominican Churches of Central Italy in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (New Haven-London: 2013) 63–64.

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the wise people'.[21] Thirteenth-century 'maniera greca' panels, with an icon-like appearance and understood as rather basic supports for devotional practice, were contrasted with a new set of forms said to be more fit for more sensitive and cultivated people. Most likely – as art history has normally assumed, even if it is not clearly stated – this was on account of their capacity to imitate nature efficaciously and make visible human emotions. One of the earliest texts where a *stricto sensu* Byzantine icon is set against a Western painting is the priest Andrea Ingenerio's booklet about a miracle worked by Saint Theodosia in Venice in 1440. It tells the story of a Venetian lady suffering from a very serious illness who asked one of her acquaintances to bring her an icon of Saint Theodosia from Constantinople. Her husband, disappointed by the awkward appearance of the image and its expensive price, decided to reject it and have another, better painting made by a Venetian artist. This work looked much more appealing to him, but it proved to be completely unable to work any healing. As the lady's health deteriorated, the man finally resolved to buy the icon for double the original price, and she was finally cured.[22]

This story indicates that by this point icons and Venetian paintings were perceived as mutually exclusive categories of works, operating in distinct ways: if Western works looked more appealing on aesthetic grounds, Byzantine icons were still considered particularly efficacious for private devotional practices. Not surprisingly, *alla greca* icons became widespread in this period not only in Venice – where domestic interiors were replete with *ancone* and *anconette* – but also in many more Western European regions, from Spain through to Flanders.[23] The success of icons as devotional objects destined for homes was largely responsible for the proliferation and economic success of the specialised ateliers in Candia, where most of such objects were produced for export.[24] A German pilgrim who visited Crete in 1480 was excited to see that

21 Cennini Cennino, *Il libro dell'arte*, ed. F. Frezzato (Vicenza: 2004) 63; Boccaccio Giovanni, *Decameron*, ed. V. Branca (Turin: 1992) 738. On Boccaccio's use of Giotto as a metaphor for poets and *literati* see most recently Eisner M., *Boccaccio and the Invention of Italian Literature. Dante, Petrarch, Cavalcanti, and the Authority of the Vernacular* (Cambridge: 2013) 109–110; in general on the passage and its interpretation cf. Schwarz M.V. – Theis P., *Giottus Pictor* (Vienna: 2004–2008) vol. I, 70–76.

22 Ingenerio Andrea, *Legenda miracolorum Beatae Virginis et Martyris Theodosiae*, ed. F. Corner, *Ecclesiae Venetae antiquis monumentis nunc etiam primum editis illustratae ac in decades distributae* (Venice, typis Jo. Baptistae Pasquali: 1749) vol. 2, 330–337.

23 Crouzet-Pavan É., *"Sopra le acque salse". Espaces, pouvoir et société à Venise à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Rome: 1992) 650.

24 Chatzidaki N., *Da Candia a Venezia. Icone greche in Italia XV–XVI secolo* (Palaio Psychiko: 1993); Cormack R., *Painting the Soul: Icons, Death Masks and Shrouds* (London: 1997) 167–217; Lymberopoulou A., "Audiences and Markets for Cretan Icons",

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the images one could buy in the workshops of Candia conformed to the most sacred form established by the Evangelist Luke.[25] Icons were also common in Venetian houses on the island, as it is indicated by the odd story told by the Swiss pilgrim Peter Villinger in the 1560s: according to this author, when the Latin clergy of Candia became aware that two men beyond suspicion, namely a doctor and a school teacher, were secretly propagating Calvinistic doctrines, the Bishop gave orders that an icon of the Virgin and Child was to be set on display in all private dwellings, so that there may be no doubt as to the Catholic orthodoxy of their owners.[26]

It is worth stressing that a more definitely Byzantine style was especially associated with Marian images. Icons of Our Lady were often perceived as sites of miraculous agency and, indeed, many of them underwent a shift of status, from domestic to public, after they were officially recognized as miracle-working objects. Many of the Madonnas worshipped in Italian churches since the early modern era are known to have been originally preserved in domestic settings, a well-known example being the *Our Lady of Perpetual Help – de Perpetuo Succursu* – preserved today in the Roman church of Sant'Alfonso all'Esquilino [Fig. 11.5]. The image is a Cretan icon, displaying the Virgin and Child according to the type of the *Panagia tou Pathous* as worked out by Andreas Ritzos and his workshop in the second half of the fifteenth century. It was said to have been stolen from a Cretan church by a merchant who set it up in his bedroom in Rome. In several dreams, Mary herself appeared and declared herself disappointed that this most honourable image was being kept in an unseemly place. Mary even threatened the painting's owners with death if they refused to transfer the icon to a church; three people lost their lives before one of them finally resolved to do so, albeit reluctantly:

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in Woods K.W. – Richardson C.M. – Lymberopoulou A. (eds.), *Viewing Renaissance Art* (New Haven-London: 2007) 170–206; Vassilaki M., *The Painter Angelos and Icon-Painting in Venetian Crete* (Farnham: 2009); Vassilaki M. (ed.), Χειρ Αγγέλου: Ένας ζωγράφος εικόνων στη βενετοκρατούμενη Κρήτη (Farnham: 2010); Drandaki A., "Between Byzantium and Venice: Icon Painting in Venetian Crete in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries", in Drandaki A. (ed.), *The Origins of El Greco: Icon Painting in Venetian Crete* (New York: 2009) 11–18; Newall D., "Candia and Post-Byzantine Icons in Late Fifteenth-Century Europe", in Lymberopoulou A. – Duits R. (eds.), *Byzantine Art and Renaissance Europe* (Farnham: 2013) 101–134.

25 Fabri Felix, *Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egypti peregrinationem*, ed. K.D. Hassler (Stuttgart: 1843–1849) vol. III, 289.

26 Peter Villinger, *Die Pilgerfartt zuo dem Heÿligen Grab vnserrss Herren vnnd Heÿlannds vnnd Sälligmachers Jesu Christi*, ed. J. Schmid, *Luzerner und innerschweizer Pilgerreisen zum Heiligen Grab in Jerusalem vom 15. bis 17. Jahrhundert* (Luzern: 1957) 257–325, esp. 321.

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FIGURE 11.5 Andreas Ritzos, *Mater de Perpetuo Succursu*, ca. 1450, repainted in 1866. Rome, Sant'Alfonso all'Esquilino
PHOTO: AFTER DE JONGHE M., *ROMA SANTUARIO MARIANO*, ROME 1969, FIG. 109

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> I am not an infidel but a Christian', said the wife of the second owner, a Roman lady, 'and besides, we are not the only ones who keep a picture like this one in their house: in fact, no Christian is of so evil a life as not to have a picture of this kind in his house.[27]

3 Third Phase: Shared Images of Mixed Character

A recent study has emphasised that small panels intended for domestic settings were often characterised by a relatively free combination of iconographic motifs. Their basic aim was to satisfy their owners' cultic orientations: saints, for example, were selected according to individual criteria, such as their involvement in the family's practice of prayer and their specific association with a member of the household. Even if the aim was to provide their owners with diminutive, portable altarpieces, their compositional program could look much less coherent in its multifarious combination of half – and full-length figures with narrative cycles and isolated episodes.[28] Iconic images in the central position of a triptych could be substituted for single scenes, for example, and a number of both diptychs and horizontal panels of rectangular shape, mostly produced in Venice, displayed only narrative cycles (as is best shown by an early 14th century panel sold at Christie's in 1995 and an analogous, contemporary painting in Berlin).[29] The personalisation of religious imagery could here go so far as to transform the traditional juxtaposition of holy persons into a visual dialogue, which, in its aim to suit the donor's specific devotional needs, gave shape to often idiosyncratic compositional and thematic solutions.[30]

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27 Quotation after the Latin historical tablet that hung within the church until 1798, as translated by Seidel C.A., *The Story of Perpetual Help* (New York: 1936) 17. On the Madonna cf. Henze C., *Mater de perpetuo succursu: prodigiosae iconis Marialis ita nuncupatae monographia* (Rome: 1926).

28 Schmidt V., *Painted Piety. Panel Paintings for Personal Devotion in Tuscany 1250–1400* (Florence: 2005) 169–204.

29 *Important and Fine Old Master Pictures*, sale catalogue, Christie's, London, 8 December 1995, 104–105; Meschede P., *Bilderzählungen in der Kölnischen Malerei des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts. Eine Untersuchung zum Bildtypus und zur Funktion* (Paderborn: 1994) 103–108; Seiler P., "Duccio's *Maestà*: The Function of the Scenes from the Life of Christ on the Reverse of the Altarpiece: A New Hypothesis", in Schmidt V.M. (ed.), *Italian Panel Paintings of the Duecento and Trecento* (New Haven-London: 2002) 251–277. On the topic see my forthcoming book Βένετο-βυζαντινές αλληλεπιδράσεις στη ζωγραφική εικόνων, *1280–1450* (*Veneto-Byzantine Interactions in Icon Painting, 1280–1450*), to be published in the Μνήμη Μανόλη Χατζηδάκη series of the Academy of Athens.

30 Schmidt, *Painted Piety* 107–140.

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This self-assured, sometimes even shameless approach to traditional iconography was not infrequently complemented by a rather free combination of forms and styles of different origins. A number of objects which can be regarded as works of Greek artists painting for Latin donors in Venice indicate that devotional panels could easily include elements associated with both Byzantine and Western tradition: a painted panel from ca. 1370 now in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam [Fig. 11.6], for example, indicates its association with Italy by its gabled shape, which was common for the small devotional triptychs produced in several Italian towns, and the two-registered representation of a *Crucifixion* combined with a *Virgin and Child*, which visually hinted at Christ's sacrifice on the cross as the achievement of the Son of God's Incarnation and invited viewers to meditate on this event as the true way to redemption from sin. Thought for a long time to be Venetian, this work indicates its association with a distinctively Palaiologan style – as is best revealed by the modelling technique, the figures' bodily proportions, and chromatic palette – and seems therefore to imply a Byzantine author. Yet, the Virgin Mary is clad with a maphorion decorated with French lilies and wears a white veil, whose right edge terminates in a long strip thrown over Mary's shoulder – all such details point to the artist's acquaintance with formulas rooted in fourteenth-century Italian painting.[31]

This is just one of several cases in which the repertory of forms of Byzantine painting is associated with Italianate features in a single work. It bears witness to the perception of such forms as not mutually exclusive, but at the same time it would be misleading to describe it as 'hybrid': different solutions may indeed coexist in the same object, but they are normally used in a definitely selective way.[32] Indeed, the dynamics by which a specific motif originally associated with other people's artistic traditions comes to be variously appropriated, reused, modified, reshaped, and invested with new meanings may be connected with a multiplicity of factors. These include the authoritativeness attributed to some images, the communicative efficacy attributed to some forms, their being more or less familiar to other groups and their adaptability to different visual contexts.

Cretan imagery enables us to meditate on such dynamics, even if they are far from being clear-cut. At least from the fifteenth century but probably also earlier, the pictorial workshops of Candia specialised in the production of works

31 Bacci M., "Some Thoughts on Greco-Venetian Artistic Interactions in the Fourteenth and Early-Fifteenth Centuries", in Eastmond A. – James L. (eds.), *Wonderful Things: Byzantium Through Its Art* (Farnham: 2013) 203–227, esp. 220.

32 Further discussion in Bacci M., "Veneto-Byzantine 'Hybrids': Towards a Reassessment", *Studies in Iconography* 35 (2014) 73–106.

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FIGURE 11.6 Byzantine painter, *Crucifixion and the Virgin with Child*, painted panel, ca. 1370. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum
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made according to either Byzantine or Italian conventions, and meant for either a Venetian or Greek audience. Documentary evidence makes clear that morphologically different pictorial objects, such as altarpieces and large-scale icons, could be produced in the same ateliers and meant for a use in a Latin – or Byzantine-rite church, and that, accordingly, they could display forms associated with distinctively Western or Eastern pictorial traditions.[33] In contrast, in the case of small paintings intended to be used in a domestic setting to suit a small group's or an individual's devotional needs, the displayed imagery usually offers no clear clues as to the religious affiliation of the beholders they were originally meant for. In many cases, there was no stylistic or iconographic divide to prevent painters and their donors from combining schemes of different origins in the same work. In general terms, it can be remarked that a number of works produced on Crete and other Levantine territories during the late 14th and 15th centuries increasingly displayed narrative themes inspired by Italian models, especially Passion scenes rendered in such a way as to lay special emphasis on the more dramatic aspects of Christ's death on the Cross. It can be assumed that the introduction of such solutions was meant to suit a trans-confessional interest in fostering the viewer's empathy for and meditational involvement in the Son of God's sacrifice.[34]

In contrast, painters and their donors tended to privilege Byzantine conventions when they gave shape to images of universal saints, consecrated by a centuries-old visual tradition and associated with distinctively "iconic" formulas. Nevertheless, there were some exceptions to this rule. A very small triptych from ca. 1460 now in the National Gallery of Prague [Fig. 11.7] is a case in point, as it reveals the use of distinctive styles to characterise the saints.[35] Saint

33 The clearest evidence is provided by a 1499 document first published by Cattapan M., "Nuovi elenchi e documenti dei pittori in Creta dal 1300 al 1500", *Thesaurismata* 9 (1972) 202–235, esp. 211–212, where mention is made of a large number of images *in forma alla greca* and *in forma alla latina* to be painted in the same workshop of Candia. In scholarship, the two expressions are usually interpreted as hinting at a stylistic, Byzantine *vs* Italian, divide, according to the interpretation first proposed by Chatzidakis, M., "Les débuts de l'école crétoise et la question de l'école dite italogrecque", in Μνημόσυνον Σοφίας Αντωνιάδη (Venice: 1974) 169–211 [republished in idem, *Études sur la peinture postbyzantine* (London: 1976), essay n. IV]. For critical approaches to this interpretation cf. Gratziou O., "*A la latina*. Ζωγράφοι εικόνων προσανατολισμένοι δυτικά", Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας 33 (2012) 357–368.

34 Bacci, "Veneto-Byzantine 'Hybrids'" 86.

35 Hlavácková H., "An Unknown Italo-Cretan Triptych from the Former Figdor Collection, now Held in the National Gallery in Prague", *Byzantinoslavica* 56 (1993) 713–719; Bacci M., "The Holy Name of Jesus in Venetian-Ruled Crete', *Convivium* 1 (2014) 190–205, esp. 194; Ritzerfeld U., "In the Name of Jesus. The 'HIS'-Panel from Andreas Ritzos and the Christian Kabbalah in Renaissance Crete", *Journal of Transcultural Medieval Studies* 2 (2015) 245–273, esp. 247–249.

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FIGURE 11.7 Cretan painter, *Virgin and Child with Sts Anthony the Great, John the Baptist, Jerome, and Bernardine of Siena*, painted triptych, ca. 1460. Prague, National Gallery
© NATIONAL GALLERY, PRAGUE

Anthony the Great, on the left wing, is by far the most 'Greek' in character: as an Eastern saint, having a long iconographic tradition in Byzantine art, he is represented in his standard monastic habit, with black *koukoulion* and a brown mantle. Accordingly, he wears a long bifurcate beard and is the only figure to be represented in frontal pose. The Greek text inscribed on the white scroll he holds in his hands adds to his characterisation as an oriental saint.

The other figures display features revealing the deliberate appropriation of Italian tradition. The images of Saint Jerome, clad as a cardinal and holding a church model, and Saint Bernardino of Siena holding a staff with the Holy Name of Jesus within a sun disk are in keeping with contemporary Italian iconography. Even if their faces reveal recourse to conventions rooted in Byzantine tradition, their garments, with their elegantly curling folds, hint at Late Gothic forms widely employed in the works of Paolo and Lorenzo Veneziano and their followers.[36] In this respect, the Prague triptych is perfectly in keeping with contemporary praxis in the ateliers of Candia, where Western saints were frequently depicted in a westernising style. Not surprisingly, Jerome's face is almost identical with that depicted in a mid-fifteenth century Cretan icon now

36 For some comparanda, cf. Flores d'Arcais F. – Gentili G. (eds.), *Il Trecento adriatico. Paolo Veneziano e la pittura tra Oriente e Occidente* (Milan: 2002) 146–147, 156–157, 228; Pedrocco F., *Paolo Veneziano* (Milan: 2003) 170–171, 174–175; Guarnieri C., *Lorenzo Veneziano* (Milan: 2006) 113, 168, 176, 201, 212.

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in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.[37] In turn, the Virgin Mary is shown seated on a green throne which perfectly compares with the type used by the painter Angelos in an icon now in the Zakynthos Museum.[38]

In many respects, the use of Italianate forms was linked to specific iconographies which were associated with Italian models. This is particularly true of those saints who were not worshipped in the Orthodox tradition and even more so of newly canonised members of the Franciscan order, as in the case of Saint Bernardino. In order to represent such figures, Greek artists could not rely on their traditional repertory of forms and it is logical that they turned to Italian artworks as sources of inspiration. But there is obviously more to this: a strong iconographic tradition shaped the representation of the Mother of God in Byzantium; yet nevertheless occasionally Cretan painters working on new images of Mary borrowed suggestions from Italian art.

The Prague triptych insists on Mary's role as Queen of Heaven by representing her wearing a Gothic crown and an elegant, mantle-like, green silk-lined maphorion. The Virgin's maternal nature is emphasised by the bent pose of her head, leaning toward her Son, yet glancing directly at the viewer. The Italianate flavour seems to be introduced as a visual strategy to stress the Mother's intimate relationship with both her Child and the beholder. Equally Italianate is the attempt at involving the figures in a mutual dialogue. The saints engaging in mute communication with the Virgin are also those represented according to Western stylistic and iconographic patterns. Unlike the frontally displayed, 'Byzantine' Anthony, John the Baptist turns towards Mary and Christ and interacts with them, so creating a visual pendant to the two interceding saints on the right wing. Mirroring them, he is provided with a Gothicising posture, elegantly traced folds, and a gently curling scroll, whose sinuous silhouette stands at odds with the much more regular parchment held by Saint Anthony. All of the figures are represented standing on a flowery meadow, which is reminiscent of Late Gothic imagery.

The use of distinctive visual aspects, associated with either Byzantine and Western traditions, in a single work can be attributed to the need to satisfy

37 Kotoula D., "Εικόνα με τους αγίους Αυγουστίνο, Ιερώνυμο και Βενέδικτο", in Vassilaki ed., Χειρ Αγγέλου 100–101; Kotoula D., "The Icon of Saints Augustine, Jerome and Benedict in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge: Theme and Function", in Vassilaki M. (ed.), *Studies on the Painter Angelos, His Age and Cretan Painting* (Athens: 2017) [Μουσείο Μπενάκη 13–14 (2013–2014)] 129–143.

38 Acheimastou-Potamianou M., "Ζωγράφος Άγγελος. Χριστός ένθρονος", in Vassilaki ed., Χειρ Αγγέλου 196–197.

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specific devotional needs. In this work, the icon-like image of Anthony, made in the Greek way, is offered to the viewer's prayers as an object of contemplation, for he does not interact at all with nearby figures. The other Italianate saints renounce their structural fixity with the aim of staging an efficacious supplication on behalf of the soul of the viewer. The desire to see one's intercessors actively engaging in the promotion of one's spiritual health transcended the confessional divide and could be easily appropriated by Orthodox believers. This fact, much more than any aesthetic appreciation of Italian arts, paved the way for the selective appropriation of Westernising devices in panels meant for devotional and domestic use.

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PART 4

Prayer and Meditation



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CHAPTER 12

Creating Domestic Sacred Space: Religious Reading in Late Medieval and Early Modern Italy

Sabrina Corbellini

> Ogni volta che io parlo, o odo parlare sopra materie che non sieno molto materiali finito tal parlare & raccozomi con meco, parmi la detta materia meglio intendere che quando la practicava. Partita che tu fusti, ne' ragionamento che facemo sopra il leggere & ritornandomi il detto ragionamento per la memoria, mi parve comprehendere che quante volte sopra ciò n'abbiamo ragionato già mai nonn'à inteso l'un l'altro & però seguita che ogni volta ne siamo da capo. Io ti lodo il legere nelle cose utili, io nonn'ò saputo dimostrare qual chiamo veramente utile, ne' penso sapere dire, ma pure me ne sforzerò. Dico che l'utile leggere chiamo quello che è cagione di ricogliere la mente dalle cose inutile & farla sospendere nelle cose utili & non dico badare nelle cose utili […] Il vero & necessario acto utile della mente intendo che sia quando si diriza nel conspetto della divina maestà con cognoscimento di sè & infiammamento di desiderio di lui, delle quali due cose mi pare che seguiti, humile & fervente orare, in quella brevità del tempo che la mente nel divino conspetto dirizata.[1]



1 Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, MS Riccardiano 1414, fol. 249r (transcription by Lisa Kaborycha, http://www.lisakaborycha.com/bartolomea-degli-obizzi-alberti). The text is translated by Kaborycha L., *A Corresponding Renaissance. Letters Written by Italian Women, 1375–1650* (Oxford: 2016) 185–188, at 186–187: 'Every time that I speak or hear someone else speak about matters that are not very well defined, I gather myself together and consider the material until it seems that I understand it better than when it was being discussed. After you left, going over in my memory our conversation about reading, I seemed to comprehend that which, no matter how often we discussed it, neither of us had grasped until then, each time going over it from the beginning. I praise you for reading things that are useful; [at the time] I did not know how to explain what I really meant by "useful", nor am I entirely sure that I can tell you [now], though I will try. What I call "useful reading" is that which causes the mind to collect itself, drawing away from useless things, and suspends it among those that are useful. […] The true and necessary act of the mind – that which I mean by "useful" – is when it rises

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So begins a letter by the Florentine noblewoman Bartolomea di Tommaso degli Obizzi (d. 1426), in which she shares her thoughts on religious reading with an unknown female correspondent.[2] According to Bartolomea, during the performance of religious reading ('scripture del vecchio & del nuovo testamento') the mind engages in three different possible actions while focussing on the written text: it can 'sospendere' (suspend), 'badare' (concentrate) or 'exultare' (rejoice).[3] The act of 'suspending' implies that when the reader finds a word that 'la detta mente facesi levare' (raises up the mind), she is supposed to stop the reading process and stand still in silence, in order to not be distracted. Pausing from reading will unleash the salvific power of words, transforming the written words into a 'remedio della purgatione de' vitii' (cure for purging of vice): indeed, 'dirizare la mente a chi adiutare la può' (raising the mind to Him, who has the power to heal it) is the only possible remedy for the 'inferma anima' (infirm soul).[4] The impact of this reading technique, focussing on one single word or expression, is very much preferable to 'concentrating' and 'rejoicing'. By concentrating, the reader is not specifically directing her attention to one specific point but attentively skimming through the text, while the act of rejoicing finds its origin in retrieving 'nel nostro leggere molte cose utili' (many useful things while reading) and letting the soul experience the delight of the discovery. In any case, it is imperative that the emphasis lies on 'piutosto compunctivo che 'l ralegrativo' (compunction rather than self-congratulation) in order to avoid a 'bestiale reputazione & vanita' (bestial reputation and

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up in the presence of Divine Majesty with self-awareness and burning with desire for Him; from these two things it seems to me fervent and humble prayer will follow during that brief time that the mind has addressed itself to the Divine'.

2 The letter is one of fifteen written by Bartolomea to unknown female correspondents (fols. 245r–272r). No autographs of this epistolary exchange have survived, but the letters were copied in 1518 by a nun (fol. 79v: 'Compiuta per me Suora N. del monasterio di Santa Lucia di via di San Gallo compiuta a di 27 di Septembre 1518') at the convent of Santa Lucia in Florence (fol. 273v: 'Questo libro sta nello Armario'). MS Riccardiano 1414 contains, besides the letters by Bartolomea, two treatises (*Regola del governo di cura familiare* and *Trattato delle dieci questioni*), twenty-two letters and five sermons by the Florentine Dominican preacher Giovanni Dominici. The two treatises and the first six letters were directed to Bartolomea, spiritual daughter of the Dominican preacher. See Gagliardi I., "Ruoli e spazi destinati alle donne secondo la predicazione e la trattatistica dei frati osservanti e relativi conflitti nella realtà concreta delle città del tardo medioevo", *Rivista di Storia del Cristianesimo* 7, 2 (2010) 65–83; Paoli M.P., "S. Antonino 'vere pastor et bonus pastor': storia e mito di un modello", in Garfagnini G. – Picone G. (eds.), *Verso Savonarola. Misticismo, profezia, empiti riformistici fra Medioevo ed Età moderna* (Florence: 1999) 83–139; Kaborycha, *A Corresponding Renaissance* 186.

3 Kaborycha, *A Corresponding Renaissance* 187.

4 Ibid., 187.

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vanity).[5] Reading is described as a way to embark on a mystical itinerary and to reach a state of union with the Divine.[6]

The reading guidelines Bartolomea degli Obizzi is sharing with her anonymous female correspondent are strongly influenced by the instructions that she in turn received from her spiritual advisor, the Dominican preacher Giovanni Dominici (1356–1419), who instructed her how to raise her children and how to combine motherhood with a fulfilling spiritual life through treatises, letters and conversations. In fact, after the exile of her husband Antonio degli Alberti (1363–1415) in 1401, she was left alone in Florence with four children to care for and Dominici offered her guidance and support in spiritual and worldly matters, which were very often conflated.[7] Writing, for example, about the education of children in the *Regola del governo di cura familiare*, Dominici suggested that Bartolomea have her children build one or two small altars in the house and make garlands of flowers and greenery with which to crown Jesus or decorate the picture of the Blessed Virgin. They might also light and extinguish candles, incense, clean and prepare the altars by cleaning pieces of wax and dusting off the candlesticks and ringing a little bell at all hours as is done in church.[8]

Dominici encouraged Bartolomea to dedicate herself, next to her parental tasks, to her spiritual groom, for whom she should build

> una dipinta camera di virtù santa, nella quale non entri altri che il celeste sposo, e ciascun altro amore sia di fuori di quello sbandito. Appresso a quella farai uno portico con molte finestrelle, per le quali entrino gli splendori di quella camera, nel quale coabitino tutti gli amori da quegli

5 Ibid., 187–188.

6 Paoli, "S. Antonino 'vere pastor et bonus pastor'" 21. Bartolomea's terminology to describe the act and the performance of reading shows strong resemblances with that used by the fifteenth-century preachers, see Corbellini S., "Instructing the Soul, Feeding the Spirit and Awakening the Passion: Holy Writ and Lay Readers in Late Medieval Europe", in Gordon B. – McLean M. (eds.), *Shaping the Bible in the Reformation. Books, Scholars and Their Readers in the Sixteenth Century* (Leiden – Boston: 2012) 15–39.

7 Giovanni Dominici wrote his *Regola del governo di cura familiare* (1401–1403), the *Libro d'amor di carità* (1402–1404; printed in 1513 with the title *Trattato della Sanctissima charità*), and the *Trattato delle dieci questioni* (1404) for her. Bartolomea shared strong spiritual concerns with her husband: Antonio degli Alberti, a refined man of learning, founded a Brigidine monastery in 1390 on his land at the Paradiso. On the Paradiso convent, see Mirello R., *I manoscritti del Monastero del Paradiso di Firenze* (Florence: 2007).

8 On the this topic, see Morse M.A, "Creating Sacred Space: The Religious Visual Culture of the Renaissance Venetian *casa*", *Renaissance Studies* 21, 2 (2007) 151–184. About the combination of moral and religious teaching in Dominici's treatise, see Gagliardi, "Ruoli e spazi destinati alle donne" 66.

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> splendori non cacciati via […] e dì e note soggiorna […] gustando l'anima dolceza dell'amato.[9]

Interestingly enough, she was able to transform the teachings of her spiritual guide into lessons for a group of spiritual daughters with whom she engaged in oral and written conversations in and from her own domestic space.[10] Daniel Bornstein has asserted that in the letters testifying to the discussions, Bartolomea 'offers guidance on the spiritual life, teaching other devout women with calm assurance'; […] 'refers to the great figures of Christian spirituality, such as Augustine, Jerome, Benedict, Bernard and Paul'; […] and 'moves easily through the technical terminology of contrition and compunction, *substantia* and *potentia*'.[11] This spiritual leadership was of course the result of the exchanges with Dominici, but also of her personal engagement with and active readership of religious texts. In one of the letters to her own disciples, she refers to the communal reading of the vernacular life of Isaac of Stella and to their common reflections on how to translate his example into their own lives as mothers and wives. She mentions how, starting from the reading of the text, she had reflected on her own social position and found similarities with the life of Jesus who had chosen a life free from the temptations of the world while he was still living with his mother.[12]

This conflation of worldly activities and spiritual life and the specific domestic setting of Bartolomea's meditations – strongly linked to reading activities – will form the starting point for a reflection on the relevance and the function of reading in the transformation of domestic spaces into sacred spaces – that is, into spaces where religious activities and exercises are taking place and where religious knowledge is practiced, produced, exchanged

9 'A painted room of holy virtue, in which no one else should enter besides the celestial groom, and every other love should be banned. And you should build a portico with many windows, through which may shine the brilliance of that room and which should live together all the affections that have not been driven out by the brilliance […] and inhabit the room with him night and day […] tasting the sweetness of your beloved'. Cited by Gagliardi, "Ruoli e spazi destinati alle donne" 72.

10 The letter cited at the beginning of this contribution refers to one of these conversations. Bartolomea's reflection is triggered by the meeting with her spiritual daughter ('partita che fusti'; after you left).

11 Bornstein D., "Spiritual Kinship and Domestic Devotions", in Brown J.C. – Davis R.C. (eds.), *Gender and Society in Renaissance Italy* (London – New York: 1998) 173–192, at 189.

12 MS Riccardiano 1414, fols. 245v–248r. See also Paoli M.P., "S. Antonino 'vere pastor et bonus pastor'" 20–21.

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and discussed.[13] In order to take into account the intrinsic dynamics of the transmission of religious knowledge, this contribution will focus on treatises for instructing lay people in the performance of domestic devotional activities, on textual sources illustrating how lay people reacted to these stimuli and on strategies of dissemination and transformation of religious contents.[14]

1 Rules for Spiritual Life and Rules for Marital Life

As the case of Bartolomea clearly shows, the systematic process of the spiritual education of the laity performed by the regular clergy, and in particular by members of the Mendicant orders, has left many textual traces in the form of sermons, letters and treatises.[15] While habitually written for a specific public and delivered to a particular addressee, this material was often widely and rapidly disseminated in manuscripts or printed books, thus reaching a very wide and diverse public and extending its impact and influence well beyond the limited reach of the intended first recipients.[16] Cases in point of this practice are two treatises by the Franciscan preacher Cherubino da Spoleto, the *Regola della vita spirituale* (Rule for a Spiritual Life) and the *Regola della vita matrimoniale* (Rule for Marital Life). Both dedicated to the Florentine layman Iacopo Borgianni, the two treatises were written in the second half of the fifteenth

13 In this contribution I will use the term 'knowledge' in the definition given by Jacob Ch., *Qu'est ce qu'un lieu de savoir? Savoir et savoirs* (Marseille: 2014, http://books.openedition.org/oep/423), at 16: 'knowledge is a field of human experience, individual and collective. More specifically knowledge is the set of the mental, linguistic, technical and social processes, through which a society, the groups and the individuals who are part of it, assign meaning to the world around them and develop approaches to influence and interact with it'. Knowledge is moreover 'a dynamic process, as the result of practices and actions on the mental, linguistic, technical and social level'.

14 The sources discussed in this contribution have been studied in the framework of the research project *Cities of Readers. Religious Literacies in the Long Fifteenth Century* funded by NWO, Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research. The project consists of two PhDs and one postdoc and is co-directed by Bart Ramakers and myself.

15 Scholarly research on this theme is particularly rich and prolific. For a general overview, see Benvenuti A., *'In castro poenitentiae': santità e società femminile nell'Italia medievale* (Rome: 1990); Catto M. – Gagliardi I. – Parrinello R.M. (eds.), *Direzione spirituale tra ortodossia ed eresia. Dalle scuole filosofiche al Novecento* (Brescia: 2002); Boesch Gajano S. (ed.), *Storia della direzione spirituale. L'età medievale* (Brescia: 2010); Zarri G. (ed.), *Storia della direzione spirituale. L'età moderna* (Brescia: 2008).

16 For exemplary studies of the dissemination of sermons and pastoral letters, see Girolamo da Siena, *Epistole*, ed. S. Serventi (Venice: 2004) and Serventi S., "La predicazione fuori dal pulpito: laudi e lettere di direzione spirituale tra XIV e XV secolo", *Bullettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo* 117 (2015) 317–337.

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century (probably before 1 July 1464, according to a date mentioned in a manuscript of the *Regola della vita spirituale*) and enjoyed a significant dissemination in print: at least 41 prints of the *Regola della vita spirituale* between 1477 and 1583, in most cases followed by the *Regola della vita matrimoniale*.[17]

Although the treatises by Cherubino have been described as 'lacking in spiritual refinement',[18] the wide dissemination of the treatises is testimony to the impact and success of his teachings in late medieval and early modern Italy, and to the relevance of his instruction for the reconstruction of the role of reading in the formation of a religious *habitus* for lay readers. In the *Regola della vita spirituale*, Cherubino invites his dedicatee to read his book often and repeatedly to ignite a process of religious development:

> Priegoti figliuol mio benedecto delectate spesse uolte di leggere questo mio libro et dirizza la uita tua come in epso ti s'insegna perche spero se cosi farai in ogni uirtu et perfection uerrai a poco a poco per camino ordinate [...] Transcorrendo la diuina scriptura trouo septe regole utilissime a ciascheduna persona la quale desidera uiuere spiritualmente. La

17 These figures are based on the online version of the ISTC (http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/istc/index.html) and on ICCU Edit 16 (http://edit16.iccu.sbn.it/web_iccu/ihome.htm). The geographical dissemination of the prints is also worth noticing: the texts were printed in Florence (1477; 1482; 1483; 1487; 1490; 1491; 1494; 1495), Naples (1477–1480; 1490), Ferrara (1481; 1487), Modena (1482; 1489), Lucca (1482), Milan (1485; 1569; 1572; 1575), Parma (1487), Bologna (1487–1489), Venice (1490; 1492; 1503; 1505; 1514; 1524; 1534; 1538; 1543; 1550; 1568; 1570; 1579; 1583); Pavia (1495; 1503); Pesaro (1510); and Rome (1542; 1553). See also Jacobson Schutte A., *Printed Italian Vernacular Religious Books 1465–1550: A Finding List* (Geneva: 1983) 132–134. About Cherubino da Spoleto, see Rusconi R., "Cherubino da Spoleto", in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 24 (Rome: 1980) 446–453; McCue Gill A., "'Not as enemies, but as Friends': Sanctioned Sex in Frate Cherubino's *Regola della vita matrimoniale*", *Quaderni d'Italianistica* 30, 1 (2009) 27–44; Gagliardi, "Ruoli e spazi destinati alle donne" 75. On Iacopo Bongianni, see Kent F.W., "Lorenzo di Credi, his Patron Iacopo Bongianni and Savonarola", *The Burlington Magazine* 125 (1983) 538–541; Callahan M. – Cooper D., "Set in Stone: Monumental Altar Frames in Renaissance Florence", in Motture P. – O'Malley M. (eds.), *Re-thinking Renaissance Objects* (Hoboken: 2011) 33–55. The wool merchant Iacopo Bongianni rebuilt the entire convent church of Santa Chiara on the Florentine Via de' Serragli in 1490. He also installed two side altars in the new church, for which he commissioned impressive painted altarpieces by Perugino and Lorenzo di Credi. Gabriella Zarri suggests that the *Regola di vita spirituale* was originally written for a female monastic public and later, in the printed version, dedicated to Iacopo Bongianni, Zarri G., *Libri di spirito. Editoria religiosa in volgare nei secoli XV–XVII* (Turin: 2009) 79. An overview of the manuscript tradition, however, is still lacking, as well as a modern edition of the text. Nevertheless, it is clear that all surviving prints refer to Bongianni as the dedicatee of the treatise.

18 Gagliardi, "Ruoli e Spazi destinati alle donne" 75.

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> prima si dice cogitazione. La seconda affectione. La tertia locuzione. La quarta operazione. La quinta conuersatione. La sexta oratione. La septima mondificatione.[19]

In short chapters, Cherubino illustrates how the reader should undergo a process of transformation to purge himself of the vanity of the world and clear his mind to prepare for the performance of devotional activities. In order to start this process, the importance of the presence of a good spiritual father is paramount: by building a relationship based on mutual trust, discussing successes and failures, and by following his rules and advice, it is possible to resist temptations and vicious appetites.[20] He furthermore explains that in order to expel vicious and negative thoughts, the reader should concentrate on the 'benefici di dio' (godly benefits) or on the life and death of Christ, which should be meditated on at a very slow pace, lingering on every episode and detail, from his first tears to his death on the cross.[21]

Cherubino describes in great detail how the reader should pray. If the reader is literate, he is advised to read the Hours of the Cross, the Hours of Our Lady and the seven penitential psalms, followed by 'paternostri della passione': five paternosters kneeling with folded hands, in memory of Christ's prayer in the Garden of Olives; five paternosters with hands folded behind the back, remembering how Christ was taken to Anna, Caiaphas and Pilatus; five paternosters with folded hands in remembrance of the crown of thorns; five paternosters kneeling with the hands forming a cross on the chest, thinking on how Christ was scourged at the pillar; and five paternosters with hands and arms spreading out to form a cross, in memory of the five wounds that Christ suffered at the Cross.[22] A second set of prayers, the so-called 'corona della vergine

19 Cherubino da Spoleto, *Regola della vita spirituale. Regola della vita matrimoniale* (Firenze, Bartolomeo de' Libri: 1495) (ISTC: ic00446000) fols. a2r–v: 'I beg you my dearest son to enjoy the pleasure to read this book often and to arrange your life as this book teaches you. If you will follow these instructions, you will step by step reach a state of virtue and perfection through a well-arranged path. […] Skimming through the divine Scriptures I find seven rules very useful for everyone who wishes to life a spiritual life. The first is reasoning. The second affection. The third speaking. The fourth action. The fifth conversation. The sixth prayer. The seventh purification'.

20 Cherubino da Spoleto, *Regola della vita spirituale* fol. b3v.

21 Ibid., fol. a6v.

22 Ibid., fol. c2r. The life of Christ is of course the most popular subject for a meditational theme in late medieval and early modern Europe, both in religious and lay circles. The formulaic character of the instructions in Cherubino's treatise show strong similarities with the chapter 'Della consideratione della vita di Cristo' ('On the meditation on the life of Christ') in Simone Fidati de Cassia, *L'Ordine della vita Cristiana*, ed. W. Eckermann O.S.A.

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Maria' (Virgin Mary's crown), requires specific pieces of furniture. The reader is asked to arrange a small prie-dieu in his room and, while praying the Pater Noster at the words 'Sanctificetur nomen tuum', to kneel at his prie-dieu and to finish saying the prayer while kneeling. Then he is asked to stand up and to start reciting the Ave Maria and at the words 'Dominus tecum' to kneel again and to repeat the words three times, before standing up again until he reaches the words 'in mulieribus et benedictus fructus uentris tui Jesus'. He must then kneel once more and finish the prayer in this position.[23]

The addressee is thus instructed, through the reading of the text, how to perform devotional activities in his own domestic space.[24] The focus on reading, however, is even more manifestly formulated in both treatises. The chapter on 'virtuoso parlare' (virtuous speaking) invites the reader to speak as often as possible with a 'persona spirituale' (religious person), because the conversations are necessary for progress in the acquisition of religious knowledge. Cherubino suggests, however, a further form of dialogue: between the reader and 'alcuno libro spirituale' (religious books) in the vernacular:

> Perche dice sancto bernardo: quando noi legiamo alcuno libro spirituale sempre idio parla con noi. Quanto sara adunque ardente et inamorato il nostro cuore parlando con idio. Buoni libri a leggere per una persona non litterata sono questi: Climaco [Climacus, *Scala Paradisi*]: Specchio della Croce [Domenico Cavalca, *Lo Specchio della Croce*]: Il monte dell'orazione [possibly by Cherubino da Spoleto]: Il libro della patientia [Domenico Cavalca, *La medicina del cuore, overo Trattato della patientia*]. Trouate

(Rome: 2006), at 45–48. Simone Fidati recommends in his tract, probably one of the first catechetical works in Italian, a wide array of subjects for meditation and reflection, such as God's benefits, the fragility of humankind, the life of Mary, the lives of Apostles, martyrs, confessors and virgins, angels, the original sin, the afterlife and the struggle against sins and temptations. A similar meditation is described in the *Opera a ben vivere* by Antoninus of Florence. In addition to the description of the meditation on the life of Christ, Antoninus instructs the reader to perform it 'whenever she desire[s] in church or in [her] room, kneel[ing] before a crucifix'. For a complete description, see Flanigan T., "Art, Memory, and the Cultivation of Virtue: The Ethical Function of Images in Antoninus's *Opera a ben vivere*", *Gesta* 53, 2 (2014) 175–195, at 179.

23 Cherubino da Spoleto, *Regola della vita spirituale* fols. c2v–c3r.

24 The *Regola della vita spirituale* also instructs the reader how to behave at church during Mass, but the overall focus of the treatise is on exercises of personal devotion to be performed in the domestic space.

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> adunque alcuno di questi libri et ogni giorno leggete alcuno secondo ui pare et piace.[25]

Cherubino adds to this list in the *Regola della vita matrimoniale*, the 'tractato che fe l'arciuescouo di Firenze sopra i peccati mortali' (the *Trattato sopra i peccati mortali* by Archbishop Antonino of Florence) and the 'quadriga che fece il uenerabile patre frate Nicholao de Osimo del ordine de frati minori' (the *Quadriga Spirituale* by the Franciscan Nicolò da Osimo). In this second reference to domestic reading activities, he includes an indication of the possible communal setting ('alcuno libro spirituale in lingua volgare per leggerlo alla famiglia tua') and the rationale for the selection of the two treatises: they enlighten the reader about 'ciò che e tenuto di fare la persona et ad che e tenuta la persona di guardarsi l'anima' (what a person should be, that is to take care of his soul).[26] Both references to reading activities stress one fundamental point: it is the responsibility of the reader to search for books, to read on a regular basis alone or in a family setting and to engage in a process of religious acculturation, extrapolating moral and religious lessons from the reading material. This topic is particularly emphasised in the *Regola della vita matrimoniale*. The husband is required to instruct his wife on topics that are necessary for the salvation of her soul, as ignorance of the principles of faith can lead to sinfulness. The husband should take care of coaching her in learning the basic prayers (Pater Noster, Ave Maria and Credo), the Commandments, the mortal sins and how to confess.[27]

A further recommended activity for the spiritual education of the family is to listen to sermons, as they disseminate 'comandamenti di dio' (God's commandments) and other important religious instructions. In case not every

25 Cherubino da Spoleto, *Regola della vita spirituale* fol. b5r: 'Moreover enjoy the reading of religious books, because St Bernard says that when we read a religious book God is talking with us. How enflamed and passionate will our heart be while talking with God! Good books to be read by a non-Latinate person are: Climacus, the *Specchio della Croce*, the *Monte dell'Orazione* and the *Libro della Patientia*. Find thus some of these books and read every day some passages as and when you wish'. On the topic of reading as a dialogue between the book and the reader, see Corbellini, "Instructing the Soul, Feeding the Spirit and Awakening the Passion" 30–32.

26 Cherubino da Spoleto, *Regola della vita matrimoniale* fol. f2v–f3r. Cherubino adds that the readers of the *Regola della vita matrimoniale* should also read the *Regola della vita spirituale*, described as a book 'buono da leggere et insegnare ad ogni persona di ogni stato'. All the books cited by Cherubino da Spoleto were widely available in late medieval Italy, both in manuscript and in print. See Jacobson Schutte, *Printed Italian Vernacular Religious Books* 42–49, 127–129, 129–130, 223–224, 279.

27 Cherubino da Spoleto, *Regola della vita matrimoniale* fol. f2v.

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member of the family can be present at the sermon, at least one should participate and then re-narrate and re-enact it at home in order to transmit the necessary knowledge.[28] The time spent listening to the preacher should be considered as a religious exercise, even the fatigue of walking to and from the site of the sermon and the wait are valuable, in particular if the sermon is held by 'persone spirituale di scientie illuminate' (enlightened and learned religious persons).[29] Cherubino asks the father or other family members to share the sermon and its interpretation with their extended family, and thus to take on the role of cultural brokers, becoming intermediaries between the members of religious orders and lay people. Moreover, Cherubino's instructions make particularly clear how public performance and domestic devotion could be conflated: sermons held in a public space and in a sphere of religious instruction are taken into private homes, testifying to a double process of domestication of religious content and sacralisation of domestic space.

2 From Public Performance to Domestic Devotion

The seminal significance of the process of domestication of religious knowledge – the transposition of religious oral and written materials to domestic space – becomes even more evident through the analysis of textual sources in which lay people put the teachings transmitted by preachers and spiritual advisors into practice. Cases in point of this practice are the miscellanies partly copied, but also re-arranged and owned, by the Sienese *lanaiuolo* Marco di Francesco Checchi (Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, I.V.31 and I.VIII.37, both dating from the second half of the fifteenth century).[30] Marco adds several personal notes in his miscellanies, linking the manuscripts to his own family and in particular to his son Francesco, and describing how through the performance of scribal activities he is fulfilling his parental task of providing his offspring with a religious education.[31] Marco's agency and engagement in the construction of his own, but also shared and communal, religious identity becomes clearest in his comments to two sermons by Cherubino, held in the cathedral of Siena during Lent 1477. Marco explains that 'le dette prediche

28 Ibid., fol. f3r.

29 Cherubino da Spoleto, *Regola della vita spirituale* fol. b5r.

30 For a first discussion of the miscellanies by Marco di Francesco, see Corbellini S., "Beyond Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy. A New Approach to Late Medieval Religious Reading", in Corbellini S. (ed.), *Cultures of Religious Reading in the Late Middle Ages: Instructing the Soul, Feeding the Spirit, and Awakening the Passion* (Turnhout: 2013) 33–53, at 39–41.

31 Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, MS I.VIII.37, fol. 160v.

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sono necessarie d'ongni fedele cristiano a uolere essere buono' (the sermons are essential for every believer willing to be a good Christian) and that after having heard the sermons he had fallen in love with the text and had decided to have them copied 'bene intendere e gustare e per la grazia di messer domenedio metterle ad eseguzione' (to understand them better and to taste them and put them into practice with God's help).[32]

Interestingly enough, the two selected sermons touch specifically on this theme: the sharing of acquired religious knowledge within families, and how to re-elaborate the ephemeral act of preaching into a stable and long-standing process of transfer of religious knowledge. Marco is entirely fascinated by the process sketched by Cherubino, which in his view leads to a satisfactory acquisition of religious knowledge. The process consists of seven steps: 'sollecitazione' (willingness to listen to the sermon and to engage in religious activities), 'attentione' (attentiveness during the sermon in order to better understand the explanation of the Scriptures), 'discrezione' (thoughtfulness), 'devotione' (devotion), 'ruminatione' (rumination, i.e. considering the words heard during the sermon again after having memorized the most important passages), 'comunicatione' (communication, i.e. retelling the central message of the sermon to those who did not attend) and finally 'operatione' (action, i.e. applying the lessons explained by the preacher to daily behaviours and deeds). The 'uditore' (listener) has to turn into an 'operatore della parola di dio' (agent in the transmission of God's word).[33] Marco evidently applies this process in his own miscellanies: after having been present at the sermon, he was struck by its contents and usefulness, and actively engages in the wider dissemination of the message in his family network.

The same process is visible in the spiritual diary kept by Margherita Soderini.[34] She briefly describes her life rules and introduces herself in her manuscript as a follower of the Augustinian friar Mariano da Genazzano:

> Queste tre cose bisongnia avere, vo' tu avere lo Spirito santo: la prima, pensa sempre di Dio; l'altra, aopera chose che piacino a Dio; l'altra astenerti de' cinque sentimenti del chorpo. Ad operare in bene e vertuosamente, a chonosciere chi à lo spirito santo, bisongnia questi 3 sengni: el primo si è essere innociente; e bisongnia la penitentia e bisongnia udire volentieri la parola di Dio e parlare volentieri di Dio […] Questo ò ritrato

32 Siena, Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati, MS I.v.31, fol. 126v.

33 Ibid., fols. 117v–124r.

34 Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Magliabechiano XXXV 98. Margherita started writing her diary on 4 April 1484 and continued her note-taking until 4 March 1489.

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> a mia chonsolatione delle prediche di maestro Mariano romano, di quaresima, in Santa Maria del Fiore in Firenze. Se ci fusi manchamento sarebe mio difetto, non arei tenuto bene a mente. Io Margherita figliuola di meser Tomaso Soderini ò scritto questo di mia mano: chi lo legie preghi Idio per me. S'egli è scritto bene è stato dono di dio e lui ringratio; tutto el bene vien da Dio, tutto el male fo mio.[35]

In her diary, Margherita summarizes the sermons of Mariano da Genazzano that she has attended, as well as extracts from personal conversations between her, her daughters and the friar. She remembers, for example, that during their last spiritual conversation, probably in her house, Mariano gave her some basic life instructions: 'ch'io caminasi dirita' (to walk the line), 'ch'io non dipregiasi persona' (to despise no one), 'ch'io non mordesi persona' (not to be aggressive), 'ch' io credesi ogniuno fusi buono' (to see goodness in everybody), 'ch'io avesi charità' (to be charitable).[36]

The reconstruction of Margherita's *reportatio* techniques makes clear that she was writing down Mariano's sermons from memory once she had returned home. The passage 'from ears to hand', however, is not a passive transition: at some point Margherita changes the adjectives to feminine form, instead of using the masculine adjectives that were probably used in the original sermon as a form of 'general calling'. This is likely the result of a process of rumination, in which the words spoken for a general public are not just recalled, but also refashioned into a specific message directed to the individual believer.[37] She is moreover very keen in transforming the words of the preacher into lessons for herself (as is evident from her use of the pronoun *tu*), as part of a discipline

35 Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Magliabechiano XXXV 98, fol. 2v: 'You need to have three things if you want to receive the Holy Ghost: the first, think always of God; practice things that please God; and the other, refrain from the five senses. To act well and have virtuous life in order to know the Holy Ghost, you should follow these three signs: the first is to be pure and innocent; and you should repent; and you should often listen to God's word and willingly speak of God. I have noted this from the sermons of Mariano romano, during Lent in Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, for my consolation. If there is any mistake, it has been my fault as I have not remembered well. I, Margherita daughter of Tomaso Soderini, have written this in my own hand: those reading it should pray for me. If it is well written, it has been a gift from God and I thank him; all good comes from God, all evil from me'. On Margherita's manuscript see Zafarana Z., "Per la storia religiosa di Firenze nel Quattrocento", *Studi medievali* 9, 2 (1968) 1017–1113, at 1019; Oguro S., "From Ears to Hand, from Hand to Heart: Writing and Internalising Preaching in Fifteenth-Century Florence", in Muzzarelli M.G. (ed.), *From Words to Deeds: The Effectiveness of Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout: 2014) 47–64.

36 Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Magliabechiano XXXV 98, fol. 3v.

37 Oguro, "From Ears to Hand" 55.

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that can help her on her ascetic path. Her *reportatio* demonstrates her own method of internalization: by writing down the preacher's words, transforming their addressee into *tu*, and so creating a 'calling' to herself, she practices a discipline of words.'[38] Moreover, the performance of writing, facilitating the process of rumination, is likely followed by the process of reading and re-reading, individually or together with her daughters, which ignites a continuous process of 'rumination' and 'communication'.

Margherita's domestication of Mariano's teachings likewise had a clear impact that went beyond the boundaries of the written pages. She was particularly successful in 'implementing' the preacher's lessons, as is clear from a letter written in December 1492 by Piero Pucci about the betrothal of his brother Roberto with Margherita's daughter:

> La madre tu saj chi è Mona Maria de Soderini donna nella città nostra venerabile et honoranda quanto alcuna altra, si per le bellezze sue, si per la nobiltà del sangue suo si per la prudentia che [per Dio] quando l'ho udita parlare mi ha facto stupire, si per la sanctimonia della vita tua.[39]

Her piety and her attitude in speaking, the qualities that Mariano had asked her to develop, had transformed her into a 'person commanding respect in the city' and had a clear impact on her familial and social network and capital.[40]

3 Agency and Responsibilities

The sources presented in this brief overview demonstrate to what extent the process of formation of a religious *habitus*, but also participation in the dynamics of dissemination of religious knowledge, is not just a matter of possibilities but also – and foremost – a matter of agency and taking responsibility. Reading and discussing religious texts, extrapolating religious and moral teachings, and meditating on the texts are ways of performing religious life in a domestic setting and of engaging in a necessary process of individual and social transformation. Lay people were stimulated through sermons, letters and treatises to

38 Ibid., 56.

39 The text is cited and translated in Rubin P.L., *Images and Identity in Fifteenth-Century Florence* (New Haven: 2007) 238, 301–302: 'You know who the mother is, Mona Maria di Soderini, a venerable woman in our city, who is honored as greatly as any other, as much for her beauty as for the nobility of her blood and for her prudence and manner of speaking as well as for the holiness of her life. I was amazed when I heard her speak'.

40 Rubin, *Images and Identity* 239. See also Gagliardi, "Ruoli e spazi destinati alle donne" 75.

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transform their domestic settings into sacred spaces, in which their religious education had to be refined, cultivated and put into practice in their daily, familial and social life. Reading activities, either performed individually or communally, played a fundamental role in this process: reiterating the messages conveyed through the sermon, inspiring the meditation, offering the possibility of starting a dialogue and teaching how to raise the mind to God.

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CHAPTER 13

Delight in Painted Companions: Shaping the Soul from Birth in Early Modern Italy

Maya Corry

Just over ten years ago, a curious sixteenth-century picture was sold by Christie's in New York for the relatively small sum of 3840 dollars, a little under its lower estimate [Fig. 13.1]. It is not the sort of work that much troubles art historians. We do not know who painted it, and it is not of high quality. The anatomy of the figures is chunky and clumsy, they are unconvincingly superimposed onto the landscape, and the handling of light and shade is crude. A note accompanying the painting's sale stated that 'The present composition is based on *The Virgin of the Rocks* by Leonardo in the Musée du Louvre, Paris. The figure of the Virgin has been replaced here by the Christ Child and another male child has been introduced to the composition'.[1]

Cheap, small-scale religious works on panel such as this were produced in enormous numbers throughout the sixteenth century. The dimensions of this particular picture (42.5 × 35.6 cm) are typical of those made for domestic contexts. For the first time, ordinary homes around Italy were adorned with paintings – commissioned from artists, bought directly from workshops, or purchased from mercantile middle-men. Their primary function was to invoke divine blessings and protection on the home, and provide a focus for the prayers of members of the household. Why then, in this case, has the Madonna been removed from the composition? Faith in her intercessory power and maternal love for mankind meant that she was by far and away the most popular subject for domestic works of art. Yet here she has been erased, and whilst the Christ Child is more or less as he appears in the *Virgin of the Rocks*, the figure of John the Baptist has been transformed into a kneeling toddler in a diaphanous robe, and the saint now appears as the newly introduced standing child. The composition as a whole has been dramatically contracted and, with the addition of the third child and loss of the Virgin and the angel, its meaning transformed.

1 http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/manner-of-leonardo-da-vinci-the-christ-4514030-details.aspx.

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FIGURE 13.1 "The Christ Child with the infant Saint John the Baptist with an unidentified male child", sixteenth century. 42.5 × 35.6 cm, private collection
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Who might have commissioned this painting, which explicitly borrows from the *Virgin of the Rocks* only to reconfigure the relationships of the figures in this strange way, and why? Despite its questionable artistic quality (or perhaps because of it), this odd little painting provides a window into the concerns and beliefs of those lower down the social scale – those who are still rarely the subject of art historical investigation – who could not afford to commission a

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work from an acknowledged master, but were able to muster up the funds for a small painting by a less skilled painter.[2]

Well into the sixteenth century it is commonplace to find echoes of Leonardo's work in cheap Lombard paintings made for domestic contexts.[3] Traditionally, these have been categorised by art historians as 'Leonardesque'. This nomenclature points to some unexamined assumptions about the appeal of such works, and their primary reason for being. It is possible that either the maker or the commissioner of this image knew of and admired Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* altarpiece. But it is equally probable that an explicit link with Leonardo was neither the motivation for the panel's creation (as the changes to the composition suggest), nor the primary way in which its owner would have conceptualised it. Affordable 'Leonardesque' pictures produced for non-elite consumers across Lombardy (often years after Leonardo had resided in the region) just as likely carried overtones of good taste, beauty, urbane sophistication, devotional efficacy or simply a 'Milanese look', than were universally acknowledged to be connected with the Florentine master.

In order to speculate meaningfully about the original significance of this painting, and others like it, it is necessary to move beyond a focus on Leonardo to take account of more personal, familial and domestic concerns – the kinds of beliefs and social norms that made ownership of images like this desirable, and perhaps for some, imperative. It will be argued here that widely held contemporary beliefs relating to childhood on the one hand, and images on the other, harmonised in culturally significant ways. As a result, artworks such as this could be uniquely efficacious weapons in the arsenals of those seeking to raise spiritually pure children in early modern Italy.

1 The First Age

As many of the essays in this volume indicate, neither domestic space nor domestic experience in Renaissance Italy were securely delineated; rather they were shaped by continuous interactions with other spheres: communal, parochial, civic, institutional, devotional, intellectual, and so on. Yet it is also the case that contemporaries characterised certain experiences and activities

2 When in 1515 Bernardo Zenale was required to value the paintings in his family's possession, he rated the small, devotional works as being worth from less than one lira up to six lire. This range is typical, and those at the cheaper end of this scale would have been within the means of anyone with steady employment. On Zenale see Shell J., *Pittori in bottega: Milano nel Rinascimento* (Turin: 1995) 171.

3 Leonardo lived and worked in Milan from 1482 to 1499, and 1506 to 1513.

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as inherently 'domestic' in nature: birth, for instance, and childrearing.[4] The age most closely associated with domesticity was *infanzia*, which was generally thought of as lasting from birth to two or four years, or until speech commenced, according to Matteo Palmieri in his *Della vita civile*.[5] Other than for the indigent and abandoned, the earliest years of life were spent within the home, whether of parents, wet-nurses or kin.[6] Indeed, later ages were defined in contemporary thought by growing distance from the domestic sphere, when children would 'begin to throw off the maternal yoke and to go out among others'.[7]

During this crucial first stage of life attentive and responsible parents had to commence the work of forming their charges into good Catholics.[8] This was a critical endeavour, as commonplace beliefs about the childish body and soul, as well as high rates of infant mortality, affirmed. An individual's character was thought to be formed largely within the first few years of life: if the

4 There is a large literature on childhood and the family in the early modern era. See for instance Cavallo S. – Evangelisti S. (eds.), *A Cultural History of Childhood and Family: The Early Modern Age* (Oxford: 2000) and bibliography. The schema of the ages of man meant that life was thought of as a series of relatively distinct stages. While the realities of life for many children did not adhere to this schema, it did inform social structures and norms in a number of significant ways: apprenticeships, political office, marriage, inheritance and other key transitions were only undertaken at the attainment of a certain age. See Burrow J.A., *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (New York: 1986); Sears E., *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton: 1986).

5 Palmieri Matteo, *Libro della vita civile* (Florence, Filippo Giunta: 1529) 20. The ages of man were generally divided into seven, but for those authors who specified fewer ages infancy was said to last until the age of seven.

6 On those unlucky children who were not raised within the family home see Terpstra N., *Abandoned Children of the Italian Renaissance: Orphan Care in Florence and Bologna* (Baltimore: 2005); Niccoli O., *Il seme della violenza: Putti, fanciulli e mammoli nell'Italia tra Cinque e Seicento* (Rome-Bari: 1995). Even those children who were institutionalised were sometimes put out to foster care in their earliest years. On wet-nursing see Klapisch-Zuber C., "Blood Parents and Milk Parents: Wet Nursing in Florence, 1300–1530", in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, trans. L. Cochrane (Chicago: 1985) 132–164.

7 Dominici Giovanni, *Regola del governo di cura familiare*, ed. D. Salvi (Florence: 1860) 148. For many children apprenticeships or service were formally entered into at the age of 12 or thereabouts (although those belonging to families from the lower orders often commenced work of some kind at an earlier age).

8 Although most advice literature was aimed at parents, other adults could also play significant roles, including kin, godparents, tutors, employers and teachers (those who taught in the Schools of Christian Doctrine were lay volunteers). Advice addressed to parents was equally pertinent to these other adults. On godparents see Alfani G., *Fathers and Godfathers: Spiritual Kinship in Early-Modern Italy* (Aldershot: 2009). On teachers and tutors see Grendler P.F., *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300–1600* (Baltimore: 1989); Black R., *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Tradition and Innovation in Latin Schools from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge: 2001).

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fundamentals of a pious nature were not established at this point then they would never be. Drawing on Seneca, Plutarch and Aristotle, in 1403 the humanist Pier Paolo Vergerio stated in arguably the most influential humanist work on education: 'In youth [...] the foundations for living well are to be laid, and the mind must be trained to virtue while it is young and impressionable, for the mind will preserve throughout life the impressions it takes on now'.[9] Compounding this, some authorities held that children had a natural propensity for sin.[10] The health of the community – in economic, political and even medical terms, as well as religious ones – depended on the piety of its members, so a heavy weight of social expectation fell on adults with children in their care.

How did those who endeavoured to tend to their charges' souls respond? What avenues were open to those who wished to shape the youngest members of the household into pious citizens? Babies and toddlers were not often brought to church, and those who attended one of the Schools of Christian Doctrine that sprang up across Italy throughout the sixteenth century did not begin their education until aged between four and six.[11] Anxious parents could seek help in navigating their responsibilities from a wealth of publications on the household, family and education which all offered advice on childrearing.[12] These texts consistently highlighted the importance of religious instruction

9 Vergerio Pier Paolo, *De ingenuis moribus ac liberalibus studiis liber* (Milan, Filippo da Lavagna: 1474). Translated in Kallendorf C. (ed. and trans.), *Humanist Educational Treatises* (Cambridge, Mass. – London: 2002) 2. Hereafter 'Vergerio'. This work exists in more than 300 manuscripts and was printed in 40 editions.

10 This notion drew on beliefs expressed in Augustine's *Confessions*, book 1, ch. 7. Contemporary interest in childhood morality and awareness that this was not always ideally evident is illustrated by Annibale Carracci's *Two Children Teasing a Cat*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 1994.142, which may illustrate a contemporary aphorism. On children's proclivity for violence and contemporary concern over this see Niccoli, *Il seme della violenza*. The belief that children might be inclined to sin conflicted with another current position: that in their innocence the very young were close to God.

11 The first of these schools was founded in Milan in 1536, and later in the century a significant number of children across Italy attended them. This did not, of course, absolve parents of their responsibilities (most obviously in the years before a child was old enough to attend, and not least because the schools were only open for at most 85 days a year). See Grendler P.F., "The Schools of Christian Doctrine in Sixteenth-Century Italy", *Church History* 53, 3 (1984) 319–331.

12 On this large body of texts, which were aimed at a wide audience, see Frigo D., *Il padre di famiglia: governo della casa e governo civile nella tradizione dell'"economica" tra Cinque e Seicento* (Rome: 1985), and Zarri G. (ed.), *Donna, disciplina, creanza cristiana dal XV al XVII secolo: studi e testi a stampa* (Rome: 1996), and bibliographies.

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within the home.[13] There was consensus amongst early modern authorities that parents ought to teach their children how to kneel, make the sign of the cross, and say the Our Father, the Hail Mary and other key religious passages. Historians have rightly emphasised the significance of devotional literature to education: for those of a certain social level letters and reading were taught via primers containing religious material, and adults were expected to read aloud to children from appropriate spiritual texts.[14] As they grew, boys in particular were encouraged to take on more 'adult' acts, such as charitable giving.[15] However, less attention has been paid to the significance of works of art in shaping the souls of the youngest members of the household.

2 The Impressionable Youth

How did contemporaries conceive of infancy – the first 'age' of man? 'This age is like soft wax, and takes whatever impression is put on it' expounded the Dominican cardinal Giovanni Dominici in his 1403 *Regola del governo di cura familiare*.[16] In asserting that youthful matter was especially malleable

13 There is ample evidence that parents followed such advice, see for instance Haas L., *The Renaissance Man and His Children: Childbirth and Early Childhood in Florence, 1300–1600* (New York: 1998) 137; Chambers D. – Pullan B. (eds.), *Venice: A Documentary History 1450–1630* (Toronto: 2001) 267. In general, mothers were perceived to be responsible for teaching the bodily aspects of devotion, such as how to kneel and the correct posture for prayer. Literate mothers were also expected to teach children their letters, see for example Valier Agostino, *Instituzione d'ogni stato lodevole delle donne cristiane*, ed. F. Lucioli (Cambridge: 2015). However, the ultimate responsibility for overseeing religious education belonged to fathers, who were enjoined to read regularly from appropriate texts to all members of the household, see for example Tommasi Francesco, *Reggimento del padre di famiglia* (Florence, Giorgio Marescotti: 1580); Spoleto Cherubino, *Regola della vita matrimoniale* (Florence, Nicolaus Laurentii: 1477). Over the early modern period there were some shifts in practice, notably the introduction of more thorough religious schooling for children in the wake of the Catholic Reformation (see note 12). However, these basic principles remained unchanged. They were communicated to the laity in treatises (see note 13) but also via preaching, see Delcorno C., "Maestri di preghiera per la pietà personale e di famiglia", *Quaderni di storia religiosa* 8 (2001) 117–146.

14 For historical discussion of such aspects of religious education see Niccoli O., "Bambini in preghiera nell'Italia fra tardo medioevo e età tridentina", *Quaderni di storia religiosa* 8, (2001) 273–299; Evangelisti S., "Faith and Religion", in Cavallo – Evangelisti, *A cultural history of childhood* 153–170.

15 See Chambers – Pullan, *Venice* 267.

16 Dominici, *Regola* 137. Dominici's text was written ca. 1400 to provide advice for the Florentine patrician Bartolommea degli Alberti, who had the care of her four children.

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and receptive to outside influence Dominici was echoing Aristotle, Plato and numerous other authorities. In *De memoria* Aristotle had also employed the metaphor of a seal's imprint in wax to explain how, when they were received into the body with sufficient force, sense impressions (*species*) left imprints of themselves (*phantasmata*) which would cause corporeal and spiritual transformation.

Early modern theologians, physicians, preachers and pedagogues all subscribed to this model.[17] Quoting Virgil, Vergerio explained that it was necessary to commence instruction 'while young minds are malleable, while they are young enough to change'.[18] Similarly, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (later Pope Pius II) asserted in his *De liberorum educatione* of 1450 that 'whatever habits a child's body forms it wants to preserve subsequently'.[19] Humanist pedagogues expected that parents would be sensitive to these aspects of a youth's matter and nature, for it was acknowledged that 'We follow seamlessly as adults the habits we have formed as children, and boys willingly let themselves be shaped by the desires of the parents who have given them birth and brought them up'.[20]

There was general agreement that efforts to shape a child ought to commence from birth. Vergerio declared that it was 'fitting' to consider how to incur virtue and respect for the divine 'from the start of infancy […] from earliest youth'.[21] Piccolomini invoked classical authorities in arguing that the shaping of the body and mind 'should be done together from infancy', beginning 'in the very cradle'.[22] Matteo Palmieri, in his *Della vita civile*, echoed Quintilian's warnings about the earliest exposures of highly malleable babies and toddlers to outside influences.[23] Dominici cautioned that a toddler's 'habits and desires' were established by the age of two to three, and that therefore 'what you want him to be when he is grown accustom him to as a child'.[24] These were not casual suggestions: medical understandings of the childish body made them imperative. The physician Girolamo Mercurio, in a widely read work of 1596, advised that due to an infant's receptiveness to both environmental and physiological factors parents ought to take particular care when choosing a

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Although it was not widely read in the period, it provides valuable evidence of contemporary attitudes to children's spiritual education and home lives.

17 On the Aristotelian cognitive model and its cultural dominance see Clark S., *Vanities of the Eye: Vision in Early Modern European Culture* (Oxford: 2007) 14–20.

18 Vergerio 15.

19 Translated in Kallendorf, *Humanist Educational Treatises* 71. Hereafter 'Piccolomini'.

20 Vergerio 17.

21 Ibid., 14.

22 Piccolomini 83.

23 This treatise was written in 1429 and published in 1528.

24 Dominici, *Regola* 141.

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wet-nurse.[25] The baby, he explained, would imbibe something of the nurse's nature along with her milk, and because infants absorbed knowledge from birth, the woman should be forbidden from speaking to her charge in dialect. These ideas were not new: in his *De re uxoria* of 1416 Francesco Barbaro similarly cautioned that parents should take special care that babies not absorb malign *impressioni* from their wet-nurses.[26] From the moment it came into the world an infant was thought to be under constant assault from the *species* that surrounded, penetrated and ultimately shaped it. Without careful attention, the outcome of these processes could be ominous; parents who ignored this fact did so at risk of their children's souls.

3 Pleasure and the Senses

Other than by following the ubiquitous advice to set a good example and enforce a routine of daily prayer, how could adults mould impressionable children into good Christians? Fundamental to this endeavour was the conviction expressed by the humanist Marsilio Ficino that 'Since youth is inclined to pleasure, it is captivated by pleasure alone; it flees from strict teachers'.[27] Emphasis on the need for a child to enjoy her or his moral instruction appears with remarkable consistency in the writings of fifteenth and sixteenth century theologians, humanists, physicians and natural philosophers. It reveals a deeply rooted, shared understanding of childhood, based on the notion that the humours and physiology of the young inclined them naturally towards sensual pleasure. Cardinal Silvio Antoniano's 1584 treatise *Dell'educazione Cristiana de' figliuoli*, written at the behest of Carlo Borromeo, was one text among many that hammered home the point that children intuitively sought out sensory gratification.[28]

This innate propensity for pleasure meant that anything causing fear, unhappiness or pain was likely to disturb and alienate a child. Drawing on the

25 Mercurio Girolamo, *La commare o riccoglitrice* (Venice, Ciotti: 1596), cap. XXV. Such advice was longstanding and was echoed by other authorities, such as Paolo da Certaldo and Bernardino da Siena. See Ross J.B., "The Middle-Class Child in Urban Italy" in deMause L. (ed.), *The History of Childhood* (New York: 1974) 185–186.

26 Barbaro Francesco, *La elettion della moglie* (Venice, Gabriele Giolito: 1548) 60.

27 Original in Sears J., *Marsilio Ficino's Commentary on Plato's Symposium* (Columbia: 1944) 118. Translated in Ficino Marsilio, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*, trans J. Sears (Dallas: 1985) 173.

28 Antoniano Silvio, *Dell'educazione cristiana dei figliuoli* (Verona, Sebastiano dalle Donne: 1584).

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pedagogical inheritance of classical authorities, Erasmus recommended lenience and kindness over corporeal punishment, and Alberti, Battista Guarino and Piccolomini all cautioned against the negative and counter-productive effects of beating children.[29] The physician Michele Savonarola, with reference to Avicenna, declared that fear would upset a child's humoural balance and endanger his health, and that moral instruction depended on loving encouragement.[30] Vergerio concurred, stating that because the humoural composition of the young led them to 'follow their passions above all', a harsh approach 'saps intellectual energies and quenches the little fires that nature lights in children […] and it is a good idea to give them their head to enjoy freedom and fun'.[31]

Yet it was widely acknowledged that the childish inclination to pleasure could all too easily lead to sin. The suggested remedy for this propensity was not *denial* of the sensual, but active attempts to channel it towards positive behaviours and tastes. Sense impressions that were received with delight, it was believed, would create the firmest imprints in youthful matter. What children enjoyed therefore had a profound effect on them, working to shape their minds, bodies and souls. There was no point trying to subvert or circumnavigate this fact; the spiritual education on the young had to be approached in light of it. Dominici recommended that parents follow the advice found in Saint Jerome's letter to Laeta on the education of her daughter, which advised: 'Offer prizes […] and draw her onwards with little gifts such as children of her age delight in […] You must not scold her if she is slow to learn but must employ praise to excite her mind […] Above all you must take care not to make her lessons distasteful to her'.[32] In line with this advice, Alberti noted that while little girls' domestic spaces ought to be 'dedicated to religion and chastity' they should nonetheless be comfortable and pleasant.[33]

It is within this context – of harnessing a child's inclination towards pleasure – that Dominici's oft-quoted passage on children's play should be

29 Erasmus D., *The Education of a Christian Prince*, ed. L. Jardine (Cambridge: 1997) 8; Alberti Leon Battista, *I libri della famiglia*, eds. R. Romano – A. Tenenti – F. Furlan (Turin: 1994) 81; Piccolomini 70–71; Guarino Battista, *De ordine docendi et studendi* (Ferrara, Andreas Belfortis: 1474), translated in Kallendorf, *Humanist Educational Treatises* 136. Hereafter 'Guarino'. This advice drew on classical precedent, for Quintilian, Plutarch and Aristotle had all recommended lenience when it came to children.

30 Savonarola Michele, *Il trattato ginecologico-pediatrico in volgare: Ad mulieres ferrarienses*, ed. L. Belloni (Milan: 1952) 192–195.

31 Vergerio 16.

32 Browning D. – Bunge M. (eds.), *Children and Childhood in World Religions: Primary Sources and Texts* (New Brunswick – London: 2009) 108.

33 Alberti Leon Battista, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. J. Rykwer – N. Leach – R. Tavernor, (London: 1988) 5:149.

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understood. Linking cognitive and spiritual development with humoural make-up, he advised that at an age when 'hot-bloodedness' prompted little boys to move, run and jump, and 'there is an abundance of humoural energy' parents should put a stop to dancing and play fighting. Instead they should:

> Prudently endeavour to have them [...] play and amuse themselves so that they do not separate from God but unite with Him [...] make a little altar or two in the house [...] You can have three or four different coloured little vestments and he and the other children may be sacristans [...] they can be occupied making garlands of flowers and plants, to crown Jesus with or to adorn the picture of the Virgin Mary, they can light and extinguish little candles and incense, keep clean, sweep, and prepare the altars [...] have a little bell and run to ring it at all hours [...] sing as well as they know how to, play at saying Mass, and be brought to the church sometimes and be shown how the real priests do it, that they may imitate them.[34]

The emphasis here is not just on play-acting, but on creating an environment rich in colour, fragrance, sound, light and sensory stimulation (through dressing-up, lighting incense, ringing bells, and the handling of flowers, wax and candles) that would seduce a hot-blooded, impressionable child into licit activities in which he would take real pleasure. Dominici was not alone in offering such advice. The late fifteenth-century *Decor puellarum*, attributed to Fra Giovanni di Dio da Venezia, likewise suggested that young girls ought to play at little altars. They too could engage in activities that enjoyably stimulated the senses, but that were adapted to be appropriate to their sex: producing 'beautiful' handmade decorations and 'delightfully adorning' an altar with 'beautiful images'.[35] These pastimes fulfilled the requirement that children's religious instruction be based in sensory pleasure and play, rather than dry instruction or admonition.

It is difficult to assess how commonplace such activities might have been in reality. It was reported (surely with an eye to shaping his hagiography) that Girolamo Savonarola had occupied himself with similar games as a child, and evidence from inventories confirms that some Renaissance homes contained child-size altars and their accoutrements.[36] But for the majority of

34 Dominici, *Regola* 145–146.

35 *Decor puellarum* (Venice, Nicolas Jensen: 1471) 44v.

36 Pico della Mirandola Giovanni, *Vita R.P. Hieronimi Savonarola* (Paris, Sumptibus Ludovici Billaine: 1674) 6, cited in Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family and Ritual* 322. Musacchio J.M.,

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parents – who were themselves busily occupied, whose children were expected to help around the house, and who could not afford to purchase an *altarino* for this kind of play – the advice proffered by these churchmen was of limited use. Crucially, nor did it provide much help with the imperative to commence shaping children in a desired form from the moment of birth, before they were old enough for such games. If character was fixed by the time a child began to speak, then alternative approaches were necessary.

4 Art Theory

Far more ubiquitous in Italian Renaissance homes than child-size altars were works of art. According to the dominant Aristotelian model of sensory perception, which privileged sight over the other senses, images accessed the soul with an immediacy that books and words lacked.[37] While it was possible to focus on mental images during prayer, a painted or sculpted work was a far more stable and reliable aid. This was especially true for laypeople, particularly those with unformed, childish minds. These convictions underpinned the arguments of Catholic thinkers when Reformation criticisms prompted them to articulate clear defences of religious artworks. Gian Paolo Lomazzo asserted that paintings had greater spiritual potency than texts because they more effectively penetrated the intellective faculties and impressed themselves into the memory.[38] Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti similarly explained that from contemplation of an image 'such strong impressions may be made on our fantasy […] that those forms leave alterations and striking signs on the bodies of persons' and 'whatever we cogitate while studying images is painted right into the heart'.[39] The potency of this process was attested to by cases such as that of 'a woman accused of adultery on account of having given birth to a dark-skinned infant looking not at all like its father […] [because] she had a similar image in her room', or 'a father who wanted handsome children, so he gave

Art, Marriage, and Family in the Florentine Renaissance Palace (New Haven: 2009) 213–214.

37 For a survey of early modern assertions of the superiority of sight over the other senses see Clark, *Vanities of the Eye* 9–13. This is not to deny the significance of the other senses to devotion, on which see de Boer W. – Gottler C. (eds), *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, Intersections 26 (Leiden – Boston: 2012).

38 Lomazzo Gian Paolo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura* (Milan, Paolo Gottardo Pontio: 1584) 2, 6.

39 Paleotti Gabriele, *Discorso intorno alle immagini sacre e profane* (Bologna, Alessandro Benacci: 1582). Translated in Paleotti Gabriele, *Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images*, trans. W. McCuaig (Los Angeles: 2012) 120; 119.

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his wife a picture of a beautiful, gentle boy so its figure would be imprinted in her imagination'.[40]

Church authorities also emphasised the central role of pleasure in their defences of religious images. Spiritual improvement depended initially on a work's ability to captivate the attention, with Paleotti declaring that the artist's first duty was to 'supply delight' and only then 'to instruct, and to move the emotions of the observer'.[41] He described 'the great sensual pleasure' that derived from contemplation of beauty, and argued that 'while literacy and knowledge of books can be acquired only with great effort, travail and expense, we are taught by images with the utmost sweetness and recreation'. It was precisely this pleasure in viewing that caused a picture to be firmly imprinted into the beholder, for 'with books [...] you may forget with great ease, whereas images sculpt what they teach you into the panels of memory so firmly they remain stamped there for many years'.[42] When it came to religious instruction, then, 'what more expeditious or clear or helpful method could we possibly find than that of sacred images?'.[43]

The same concepts informed advice literature. A 1589 work, Nicolò Vito di Gozze's *Governo della Famiglia*, repeated the familiar assertions that the young were particularly susceptible to the indelible action of sense impressions, and that they were attracted to what pleased them. As a result, good parents had to shield their children from the sight of ugly and immoral things and, by implication, expose them to beautiful and edifying ones.[44] The visual and aesthetic qualities of works of art were thus given special prominence in a discourse that had profound implications for the endeavour to shape the souls of the young. In the chapter titled 'Home training' which opens his text, Dominici states that his first rule for parents was 'to have in the home pictures of saintly children or young virgins, in which your children, *still in swaddling clothes*, can take delight and similarly be enraptured by acts and signs pleasing to childhood' [emphasis mine].[45] Particularly noteworthy in the light of the arguments that have been presented here thus far are his stress on delight, on the nature of the artwork as inherently 'pleasing to childhood' and on its affective power over the youngest members of the household.

40 Ibid., 121.
41 Ibid., 111. On the fundamental importance of pictures providing pleasure see also 87, 109, 235, 278.
42 Ibid., 115.
43 Ibid.
44 Nicolò Vito di Gozze, *Governo della famiglia* (Venice, Aldus M: 1589) 80.
45 Dominici, *Regola* 131.

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5 Habit and Memory

Two further early modern suppositions are worth mentioning briefly before turning to more in-depth consideration of the relationship between children and religious images. The first is that pleasure in something would stimulate the desire to repeat it, thereby forming a habit; the second is that habitual, repeated actions created indelible memories which were central to the formation of character and soul.

Habitual action has a major role in treatises on child rearing. When Dominici cautioned that a toddler's 'habits and desires' were established by the age of two to three, and that if parents had not exercised a positive influence by this stage then it was too late, he did so in a chapter on habit.[46] Repetition was considered fundamental to the formation and retention of memories, and for many early modern authors frequency of action is afforded greater significance than a child's comprehension.[47] In a chapter of his treatise dedicated to the moral education of children the physician Michele Savonarola declared that a parent's single most important task was to develop a child's memory, and recommended that children be brought to church to absorb the services there before they could even talk.[48]

Habits imprinted the soul, as Aristotle and later Aquinas made clear; or, as Dominici put it, 'custom becomes nature'.[49] Parents who followed Guarino's advice in ensuring that their children's spiritual lessons were 'stamp[ed] […] into memory so strongly that they can be expunged only with the greatest difficulty', that they were 'so fixed in their minds that no interval of time, no occupation – however varied or important – can eradicate them' could rest easy in the knowledge that they had fulfilled their duty.[50] Relevant to this endeavour was the fact that the young were naturally inclined to repeat anything they found pleasurable. Habitual, enjoyable, quotidian domestic activities, which could commence from birth, would therefore form deep impressions in naturally malleable infants.

46 Ibid., 141.

47 Carruthers M., *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge – New York: 2008); Yates F.A., *The Art of Memory* (London: 1966); Bolzoni L. – Erlindo V. – Morelli M. (eds.), *Memoria e memorie* (Florence: 1998).

48 Savonarola, *Ad mulieres ferrarienses* 196–200.

49 Dominici, *Regola* 137.

50 Guarino 151, 140. For further statements on the importance of memory to a child's upbringing see also Vergerio 31; and Piccolomini 91, 111.

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6 Images in the Home

A late fifteenth-century miracle story tells of a home in Lombardy which contained an image of the Madonna.[51] In this house lived a *fanciullo* who was 'tanto piccolo', so that when he encountered the picture he saluted it by force of habit, rather than in comprehension of the significance of his actions. Nonetheless, when he fell into a river and was at risk of drowning, the very same Madonna appeared to him and saved him from danger. The tale communicates the extraordinary power of images, which made the divine manifest in people's lives and homes. But it also confirms the central role that works of art could play in inculcating habitual pious behaviour in little children, shaping them into good Catholics before they could even fully comprehend what this entailed.

Long before a child could speak the words of the Our Father, or kneel in prayer, she or he could look at an image. It has been established that in early modern thought the young were both exceptionally receptive to the action of sensory impressions and susceptible to pleasure, and that images were particularly well able to delight and penetrate the soul. The confluence of these ideas meant that a well-formed work of art could charm infants 'still in swaddling clothes', who did not need to comprehend what they saw for it to captivate them, stimulate repeated looking, and (due to the action of sense impressions on the child) shape their souls. These factors informed the advice of contemporaries such as Cardinal Silvio Antoniano, who explicitly stated that children would learn better from images than texts, in part because these pictures imprinted themselves forcefully into youthful memories.[52] As a result, parents were advised to fill the home with religious works of art which, when encountered on a daily basis, were acknowledged to be perfect vehicles for Christian education. Contemporary recognition of this fact, it shall be argued, likely informed the production of images for domestic devotion that were particularly suited to little children.

Evidence from inventories makes clear that youngsters from elite households had devotional artworks in their chambers. In Florence in 1497, the room of the ten year old son of Giovanni di Francesco Tornabuoni was recorded to contain a Madonna and Child painting, a statuette of the Virgin and a small

51 *Miracoli della gloriosa Vergine Maria historiati* (Venice, Agostino Bindoni: 1551) cap. 35. This collection was popular and was printed many times throughout the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

52 Antoniano Silvio, *Dell'educazione cristiana dei figliuoli* (Verona, Sebastiano dalle Donne: 1584).

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tabernacle.[53] An image of the Virgin with Christ and an angel, lit by a candleholder, was in the bedchamber of Guasparre Spinelli's eight-year-old son Tomaxo. The rooms of the ten-year-old son of Lorenzo Tornabuoni contained a gold-framed Madonna, an Annunciation scene and a crucifix. Other inventories reveal Marian artworks in the rooms of wet-nurses.[54] Given that these documents record the possessions of their employers, and in the light of what has been argued thus far, it seems clear that these images were intended as much for the benefit of their charges as for the women themselves. However, passing references in the inventories of elite Florentine households provide only a partial and fleeting glimpse into the domestic visual culture of Italian infants. What of those lower down the social scale? Insight into the tastes and concerns of this section of society can be found not in written records, but in images themselves.

A huge number of small-scale religious works on panel were produced in this period, the majority of which were destined for people's homes. To take Milan as an example, around the year 1500 there were over 100 painters working in a city with a population of around 100,000.[55] A handful of them, whose names are familiar today, were securing commissions for altarpieces, court portraits and paintings of mythological subjects for *palazzi*. But the majority were not. They were primarily occupied with painting the facades of houses, doing decorative work, and producing pictures for domestic devotion. The ratio of artists to inhabitants, as well as the high number of surviving paintings, gives a sense of just how substantial the trade in such works was in the sixteenth-century. By tracing the popularity of particular iconographies, it is possible to speculatively identify those that may have been made with children's souls in mind.

7 Holy Babies

A sheet of drawings by Leonardo, dating to when he was living in Milan in the last decade of the fifteenth century, depicts two toddlers embracing in a rocky landscape [Fig. 13.2]. These chubby figures appear in more or less the same form in a number of paintings that have been attributed to Lombard artists who worked closely alongside Leonardo, such as Marco d'Oggiono [Fig. 13.3].

53 Lydecker J.K., *The Domestic Setting of Arts in Renaissance Florence*, Ph.D. dissertation (John Hopkins University: 1987) 64, n. 84.

54 For all these cases see Musacchio, *Art, Marriage, and Family* 210.

55 A document of 1511 was signed by 89 painters, and omits the names of several artists who are known to have been working in the city around this time. See Shell, *Pittori in bottega* 49–53.

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FIGURE 13.2 Leonardo da Vinci, "The Virgin and Child with a child and a cat, two studies of a child and a cat, and the Christ Child and infant Baptist embracing", ca. 1490–1500. Pen and ink over red chalk with touches of wash on paper, 20.2 × 15.1 cm. Royal Collection, Windsor
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FIGURE 13.3 Marco d'Oggiono (?), "The Infant Christ and Saint John Embracing", ca. 1500–1530. Oil on panel, 64.3 × 48.1 cm. Royal Collection, Windsor
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They also feature in numerous pictures made well into the sixteenth century by those with less proximate links to the Florentine master, such as Bernardino dei Conti, Bernardino Luini and Giampietrino, and others whose names we do not know [Figs. 13.4 and 13.5].

A similar story of the diffusion of a particular iconography can be told of Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* altarpiece. Originally painted for a confraternal chapel of the church of San Francesco Grande in Milan, it depicts the meeting in a rocky landscape of the Christ Child and his young cousin, Saint John the Baptist, accompanied by the Madonna and an angel. The entire composition



FIGURE 13.4 "Holy family with the infant St John", sixteenth century. Oil on panel, 51 × 47 cm. Wellington Collection, Apsley House, London
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FIGURE 13.5 Bernardino Luini, "The Holy Family", first half of the sixteenth century. Oil on panel, 100 × 84 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid
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was copied frequently in works intended for private devotion – more than twenty small-scale copies of the painting are known today.[56] In a substantial number of cases, though, the painting was reconfigured to place greater

56 Such works were usually produced without any documentation, so it is extremely rare to find archival traces of them. Occasionally it exists: in July 1522 Bernardino dei Conti agreed to produce a copy of the *Virgin of the Rocks* for Fra Arcangelo, a Franciscan living in

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FIGURE 13.6 Attributed by Sotheby's to Marco d'Oggiono, "The Christ with the infant St. John the Baptist", early sixteenth century. Oil on panel, 43.8 × 36.2 cm. Private collection
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emphasis on the chubby children. Some works go so far as to isolate the infants and make them the entire focus of the composition [Fig. 13.6]. In others, elements from the Virgin of the Rocks were conflated with the imagery of the

the convent of San Francesco Grande, for the sum of 29 lire and eight soldi (this relatively high amount likely included the materials for the work), see Shell, *Pittori in bottega* 102.

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embracing babies [Fig. 13.7]. In a variety of ways, then, in large numbers these infants made their way into the homes of devotees across Northern Italy.

In many of these paintings, particularly those produced later on in the sixteenth century, any clear stylistic or iconographic relationship with Leonardo's work was more or less effaced [Fig. 13.8]. The enduring popularity of this imagery, isolated from its original contexts and repeated over decades of production, is clear evidence of a particular taste for religious pictures depicting holy babies. The majority of these pictures would have been sold as completed 'off-the-peg' works instead of being made to commission. Artists had to be confident that stock produced in this manner would sell: it often formed the bulk of their output, and, even for those enjoying notable success in their careers, such works were relied upon to supply a steady income in between commissions. What is more, there were other motifs in Leonardo's work that could just as easily have been repeated in this manner, but they were not.[57] What, then, drove the market in these paintings?

This was a period of burgeoning interest in the details of Christ's childhood, no doubt partly stimulated by focus on the spiritual significance of the family and the moral status of children. While the Bible largely passes over the years between Christ's birth and his maturity, a number of popular religious texts were available that imaginatively recounted the Saviour's youth. The *Meditationes vitae Christi*, for instance, included pleasingly relatable details such as the little Christ helping Mary around the house with the chores.[58] When read aloud to children stories like this provided an age-appropriate model of ideal behaviour.

Some of this literature alluded to a meeting between the infant Christ and John the Baptist, said to have occurred in the desert when the Holy Family was returning from their flight to Egypt. The encounter was described in the apocryphal Gospels, but was most widely disseminated in Italy via the early-fourteenth-century *Vita di San Giovanni Battista*.[59] This related the childhood of Saint John, explaining that his deeply spiritual nature was apparent from birth. As a toddler he had retreated to his parents' garden to rejoice in God's

57 The imagery of the ideally beautiful saintly youth is one example. On this iconography see Corry M., "The Alluring Beauty of a Leonardesque Ideal", *Gender & History* 25, 3 (2013) 565–598.

58 The *Meditationes*, which was written in the thirteenth century but attributed by contemporaries to Bonaventure, was one of the most popular religious texts of the day and was printed in numerous editions throughout the period.

59 This text was erroneously attributed to Domenico Cavalca. Another relevant text is Feo Belcari, *La festa di san Giovanni quando fu visitato da christo nel diserto*, produced in the second half of the fifteenth century.

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FIGURE 13.7 Bernardino dei Conti (?), "Madonna and Child with the Infant St John the Baptist", 1496. Oil on panel, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan
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FIGURE 13.8 "Madonna and Child with St. John", ca. 1510. Oil on panel, 22.7 × 18.5 cm. Galleria dell' Accademia Carrara, Bergamo
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creation, preferring meditative solitude to human company. In conformity with the ages of man, once he reached the age of seven he left his home to retreat into the wilderness. The author was careful to emphasise that despite John's extraordinary spiritual status his early years were still bounded by domesticity and respect for his parents' authority: he received religious teaching

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within the home at their behest, and sought their blessing before withdrawing into the desert.[60]

The *Vita* circulated widely in Florence, where it spawned imitators and informed artistic depictions of the child saint.[61] These often had a civic dimension, for the Baptist was the city's patron saint. Clearly in Lombardy and beyond the iconography of the embracing children did not hold such significance. Nor was this civic aspect always the motivation for Florentine explorations of the theme. In 1458, Giuliano Quaratesi stated that he had recounted the story of the childhood meeting of the holy cousins because:

> [...] from such a childish work that satisfies the souls of youths, they may gain such spiritual joy as comes from meditating and entering into the life of Christ and of his mother Our Lady, and if they find pleasure in thinking of the life of the saints in such childish ways, how much more will they think of the life of Christ which is perfection, and turning their minds to these small humble meditations they will learn how to enter and contemplate the great things of the saints and thus will begin to contemplate Christ [...].[62]

In other words, children had to commence their devotions by encountering holy figures in 'childish ways' and via 'childish works' – doing so provided them with pleasure and joy, and lay the groundwork for more mature and adult meditations.

The iconography of the embracing Christ and Baptist perfectly illustrated these concepts. In these paintings the viewer's attention is concentrated on the babies (when other figures are included they direct their gazes at the infants, who are always in the foreground). The children's interaction as they kiss and reach for one another with their chubby arms is active and loving, and in many of these images a playful aspect is emphasised, as the infant cousins gambol around the Virgin's skirts and amuse themselves with symbolically

60 Cavalca Domenico, *Vite di alcuni santi scritte nel buon secolo della lingua Toscana*, ed. D. Manni (Florence, Domenico Maria Manni: 1734) 202. Domenico Cavalca, *Volgarizzamento delle vite de santi padri e di alcuni altri santi scritte nel buon secolo della lingua toscana* (Milan: 1830–1858) vol. 4, 214–320.

61 Lavin M.A., "Giovannino Battista: A Study in Renaissance Religious Symbolism", *The Art Bulletin* 27, 2 (1955) 85–101.

62 Quaratesi Giuliano, Ms. Ricc. 1309, Biblioteca Riccardiana, 1r. Cited and trans. in Kent D., *Cosimo de' Medici and the Florentine Renaissance*, (New Haven: 2000) 97.

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significant flowers, lambs and birds [Fig. 13.9].[63] Love, childishness and playfulness were, of course, qualities that were understood to be particularly attractive and pleasing to the young.

8 Love and Recognition

The encounter between Christ and his cousin allowed these holy infants to express what Quaratesi defined as 'the ultimate love' for one another. This was stimulated by familial ties and the purity of their souls, but also by recognition, for the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ. This is significant, for implicit in Quaratesi's rationale for recounting the story of the meeting was the understanding that recognition would stimulate feelings of love. It was childishness – a likeness to themselves – that furnished the souls of the young with 'spiritual joy' and 'pleasure', just as it had for Christ and his cousin.

Beliefs inherited from the classical world declared that attraction was often based in recognition, that we are naturally inclined to love those in our own likeness.[64] Paintings that confronted children with divine figures in whom they could perceive themselves therefore had a special charge. 'In this first mirror let your children be reflected, as they open their eyes' urged Dominici of devotional images in the home.[65] A picture such as that in the Poldi Pezzoli collection of the baby Jesus (identifiable only by the unobtrusive light of his halo) would certainly have fulfilled this function for any infants in the household in which it was displayed [Fig. 13.10]. Dominici further instructed: 'let the child see himself mirrored in the Holy Baptist, clothed in camel skin, a little child who enters into the desert, plays with the birds, sucks the honeyed flowers, and sleeps on the ground. It will not be amiss if he should see Jesus and

63 See also *The Virgin and Child with the Young St John the Baptist*, The Ashmoleam Museum, inv. A790; Giovan Battista della Cerva Novara, *Madonna col Bambino e San Giovannino*, private collection, sold by Sotheby's Milan 29th May 2007; *Madonna and Child with the Infant Saint John*, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, inv. 4238.

64 This was understood to be in anticipation of the shaping of the body and soul in the image of the familiar beloved. This concept, which depended on adherence to Aristotelian faculty psychology but also on the teachings of Plato and Plotinus, found expression in numerous intellectual discourses of the time. Ficino's *De Amore* explained that 'Likeness generates love', and that lovers 'celebrate those similar to themselves', Ficino, *Commentary* 53. Poetry of the period also explored how an exchange of souls would generate similarity between lovers and thus reinforce their bond, see Bolzoni L., *Il cuore di cristallo. Ragionamenti d'amore, poesia e ritratto nel rinascimento* (Turin: 2010).

65 Dominici, *Regola* 132.

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FIGURE 13.9 Bernardino Luini, "Virgin and Child with the Infant Saint John the Baptist", 1523–1525. Oil on canvas, 86 × 60 cm. Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

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the Baptist, Jesus and the little Evangelist pictured together'.[66] A child at home in Lombardy in the early sixteenth century could gaze at the 'mirror' of *The infant Christ and St John embracing* and see nothing that visibly distinguished him from the depicted figures (they do not have haloes, nor the Baptist an animal-skin robe) [Fig. 13.3].[67] A powerful affinity could thus exist between these painted infants and those who encountered them in their domestic environments from the moment that they 'opened their eyes'.

These ideas were not arcane or esoteric. Pedagogical texts consistently repeated that children learnt best by imitation, and that they were naturally drawn to emulate those who were similar. Vergerio declared that 'Young people should depend on companions … in imitation of whom they may improve themselves'.[68] This 'imitation' was effective because it was something in which the young 'take the greatest pleasure'.[69] Guarino echoed that 'it is well to give the boys some companion […] to kindle in them a spirit of emulation'.[70] The language of mirroring also appeared in contemporary discussions of how to shape the soul. Character flaws were revealed 'when a mirror is put before us', and youths were advised to 'often look at their own image in a mirror' in order to perceive their inner natures.[71] More broadly, the ability to see oneself reflected in a holy figure had deep theological significance. Aquinas argued that spiritual meditation was 'the act of seeing God in oneself', in part because man was made in God's image.[72] For Marsilio Ficino, the soul 'considers itself by contemplating the face of God […] which shines within itself'.[73]

Children, it has been established, were sensory beings. In spiritual terms, of course, this was potentially problematic. Those who were seduced by the material apparatus of the body and its sensations would not achieve salvation in the hereafter. But a different fate might await those who viewed an image of a holy baby from their cradles. What better 'companion' could an infant emulate than Christ himself? The playful and loving interaction depicted between him

66 Ibid., 131.

67 The same was not true of little girls, of course. The evidence of images and inventories suggests that parents were perhaps more willing to invest in the spiritual wellbeing of sons than daughters, or rather that the default position may have been to favour male children, and perceive them as the primary viewers of such works, whilst appreciating that daughters would also benefit from them.

68 Vergerio 11.

69 Ibid., 9.

70 Guarino 136.

71 Vergerio 13, 6.

72 Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: 1921) 1.3.5.

73 Ficino, *Commentary* 90.

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FIGURE 13.10 "The Christ Child", early sixteenth century. Oil on panel, 19.5 × 15.5 cm. Museo Poldi Pezzoli, Milan
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and the Baptist would appeal to a toddler's most fundamental nature, prompting the desire to join them. What greater pleasure was there than this sense of proximity to the divine? Widely read devotional texts affirmed the extraordinary potency of this kind of experience. The *Meditationes Vitae Christi* advised that there was no 'greater sweetness' than to perceive Christ, and to converse

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with him as with a friend. The *Vita Christi* asserted that to imaginatively engage with holy figures resulted in 'greater pleasantness' and 'delight' than anything else.[74] The heights of devotion were attained in this way, as a prayer in *The Imitation of Christ* confirmed: 'deepen your love in me, O Lord that I may learn in my inmost heart how sweet it is to love, to be dissolved, and to plunge myself into your love … Let me love you more than myself, and myself only for you'.[75] These texts were aimed at adult devotees, who had to exercise their minds and imaginations to achieve these pleasures. But a similarly transformative experience was open to infants who, in their unthinking, unformed, sensory awareness, could delight in intimate daily encounters with painted holy babies in their homes.

9 Conclusion

In the curious painting with which I opened this investigation, the Baptist, bearing his identifying cruciform staff, stands before the Saviour, looking down at the little figure that he presents to him [Fig. 13.1]. This infant receives Christ's blessing in a similar manner to the many adults who are depicted in countless donor portraits in Renaissance art. But he cannot have commissioned the work himself. Whoever had this painting made was almost certainly not rich, but they were unquestionably concerned for the soul of this kneeling child. Perhaps the work commemorates the death of a much-loved infant, providing a focus for prayers that would speed the passage of his soul through purgatory. Maybe it is a votive image, made in thanks after the little supplicant survived illness or accident. But a third possibility exists: that this painting was commissioned by the child's parent in order that he might daily see himself interacting with divine figures, and receiving Christ's blessing in an act of ideal devotion.[76] If this were the case, his malleable soul would be indelibly shaped by the pleasure he would take in the picture – in its calm landscape, lovely colours, relatable figures and, above all, in the appealing and spiritually edifying scene that it presented.

74 The *Vita*, written by Ludolph of Saxony in 1374, circulated widely across Europe in manuscript form before being printed. It was translated into Italian in 1570.

75 Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, trans. L. Sherley-Price (London: 1952) 98–99. There was of course a long tradition of similar expressions.

76 These possibilities are not mutually exclusive: an image that commemorated a dead child could still serve as a tool for the moral education of living infants in the household.

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In the climate of reform, exhortations to have religious images in the home increased, and their spiritual value was regularly articulated.[77] Evidence from inventories confirms that children encountered paintings and sculptures of the youthful Christ and Baptist in domestic environments.[78] Of course, only the wealthiest had chambers of their own, and the pictures under consideration here did not only hold meaning for the smallest members of a household. Their multivalence (a quality that must only have made them more marketable) is indicated by the conviction that images of lovely boys would assist in the conception of healthy male children. But their power did not cease once this had been achieved. Prescriptive written sources inform us of the expectations that weighed on adults with children in their care, but not how they responded to them. Works of art played a particular and crucial role in the endeavour to raise good Christians, and analysis of relatively cheap, devotional images that people had in their homes can shed new light on this matter. The numerous paintings of this type that have come down to us today indicate that the discourses outlined here powerfully shaped devotional culture and practice.

To some extent, the conclusions of a study such as this can only be speculative. Laypeople lower down the social scale did not usually record their experiences, hopes and desires in written form, and the motivations for purchasing a religious picture were numerous. What is nonetheless clear is that parents of all social levels in the early modern era loved their infants, feared for their souls, and felt social pressure to tend to them.[79] An ideal response to this imperative was indicated by Dominici, who instructed parents that a little boy should be able to 'delight in the companions which you had painted for him'.[80] It has been suggested here that numerous contemporaries may have heeded

77 See for instance Borromeo Carlo, *Libretto de i ricordi al popolo della citta et diocese di Milano* (Milan, Pacifico Pontio: 1578).

78 In 1498, Marcho d'Ugholino Bonsi had 2 gesso 'heads' in his bedchamber, of Christ and Baptist. There were four children under six living in the house at time. Another household with a painted head of St John the Baptist had six children living in it. See Musacchio, *Art, Marriage, and Family* 208. In the 1470s, Bartolomeo Sassetti's sons' rooms contained an image of the Virgin and Child, and one of the Virgin and Child with St John the Baptist – doubtless representing the cousins as young children. See Musacchio J.M., "The Madonna and Child, A Host of Saints, and Domestic Devotion in Renaissance Florence", in Neher G. – Shepherd R. (eds.), *Revaluing Renaissance Art* (Aldershot: 2000) 154–155.

79 The debate about whether parents in the pre-modern era were emotionally attached to their offspring was sparked by Philippe Ariès in his seminal *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. R. Baldick (New York: 1962). Serious challenges to Ariès have since been presented, see for instance Ozment S.E., *Ancestors: The Loving Family in Old Europe* (Cambridge, MA: 2001), and Haas, *Renaissance Man*.

80 Dominici, *Regola* 187.

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this advice to commission a devotional picture specifically for a child in their care, and that those who could not afford to do so might well have purchased a cheap panel with the same aim in mind. Images, such as those of embracing holy babies discussed here, were uniquely able to stimulate pleasure, love and recognition in infants, thereby shaping their souls and laying the groundwork for good spiritual habits that would last a lifetime.

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CHAPTER 14

Literary and Visual Forms of a Domestic Devotion: The Rosary in Renaissance Italy

Erminia Ardissino

The Rosary is one of the most widely practiced forms of domestic devotion in modern Italy. Literature and cinema document the deep penetration of this form of prayer into the culture and lives of Catholic Italians. The Rosary, however, is not rooted in the ancient past, as some other prayers are; the practice dates to the late fifteenth century, and became widely diffused in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The period of the spread of the Rosary was one of dramatic change in Italy and the rest of Europe, characterised by the development of printing, the increasing prominence of vernacular languages, the discovery of previously unknown places and cultures, the defining of new intellectual professions and political theories of government, the growing prominence of the laity in intellectual and social life, new religious doctrines, and the formation of European confessionalism. In some ways many of these elements, which characterized the early modern era, played a role in the development and spread of the devotional practice under consideration. I would particularly underline the importance of printing, the role of the laity, the Reformation, and open confrontation between different peoples, religions and cultures (with the consequence that many commercial routes and forms of labour and production were altered dramatically), as fundamental elements that contributed to the spread of the Rosary.

In this paper, I will first consider how the popularity of the Rosary in early modern religious practice can be viewed as a response to the needs of the time. Secondly, I will investigate two major aspects of its diffusion in Renaissance Italy: in iconography and poetry. Publications on the Rosary were often accompanied by rich and detailed illustrations, effective meditational aids, which made the books masterpieces of the new art of printing and suitable for numerous uses. In addition, poetry on the Rosary was a genre of popular literature that used literary Italian to represent a form of devotion that employed the vernacular alongside Latin. Rosary verse moreover generated the opportunity for the translation of common Latin prayers into vernacular poetic forms.

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1 On the Development of Rosary Devotion

Repetitive forms of prayer, of which the Rosary is one, existed in medieval monastic practice. The Rosary was first developed by Dominic of Prussia and Adolf of Essen in a monastic setting at the beginning of the fifteenth century. These two Carthusian monks of a charterhouse at Trier, working from the basis of pre-existing devotional exercises, promoted a Marian devotion composed of prayers and narrative meditations on Christ's life.[1] But it was a Dominican, Alanus de Rupe, in the second half of the century, who gave the Rosary the momentum that spread it across Europe, and above all amongst the laity.

Born in French Britanny in 1428, Alanus entered the Dominican order early in life, studied theology in Paris, and from 1459 until his death in 1475 was a professor in various cities, such as Paris, Lille, Douay, Ghent and Rostock. He thus travelled widely in Northern Europe, and besides teaching he also preached, successfully disseminating the practice of the Rosary as he travelled. His main legacies were the definition of the prayer in the form in which it is still used today, and the foundation of Confraternities 'of the Psalter of the Virgin Mary', which were intended to spread the Rosary among the laity. At his death he left only manuscripts, but his works soon benefitted from recent advances in printing. His *Apologeticus, sive tractatus responsorius de Psalterio Beatae Virginis Mariae* had already been printed in Lübeck by around 1480, and was reprinted several times in various other cities in the following decade, spreading his ideas on the Rosary throughout Europe.[2] In 1500 the *Apologeticus* was also published in Bologna, in a miscellany compiled by Stefano of Piopera.[3]

Alanus dedicated his theological works, the *Principium super III Sententiarum* and the *Expositio regulae Sancti Augustini*, to the Rosary, as a form of devotion

1 The role of the Carthusian monks in the invention of the Rosary has been underlined by Winston-Allen A., *Stories of the Rose. The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages* (University Park, PA: 1997) 13–30; see also Duval A., "Rosaire", in De Guibert J. – Viller M. – Cavallera F. (eds.), *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (Paris: 1988) 937–980. On repetitive medieval prayers see Spinelli G., "Alle origini tardomedievali del Rosario. Devozione mariana di Benedettini, Cistercensi e Certosini", in Barile R. (ed.), *Il rosario tra devozione e riflessione, Sacra Doctrina* 54, 4 (2009) 171–183. On the parallels between the Rosary and the Muslim crown see Ambrosio, A.F., "Tra glorificazione e divinazione. Il tesbîh nell'Islam", in Barile, *Il rosario tra devozione e riflessione* 258–274.

2 Lübeck, Printer of Fliscus (Lucas Brandis?): ca. 1480.

3 Stephanus de Piopera, *Quodlibet de veritate fraternitatis Rosarii. Add: Alanus de Rupe, Compendium psalterii Trinitatis. Epilogus psalterii. De Psalterio B.M.V. exempla* (Bologna, Johannes Antonius de Benedictis: 1500).

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to the Virgin Mary.[4] In these works he tried to prove that both the Psalter of the Virgin and the first Confraternity 'of the Psalter of the Virgin Mary' were inspired by St. Dominic. In doing so, he implicitly claims the inventions for his own order, rather than the Carthusians.[5] Alanus portrays St. Dominic as the principal promoter of the Virgin's psalter during his life, within his order, and in his time (anachronistically before the real development of the devotion).

It is evident that the speed with which the Rosary spread was due to the medium of print, which created a 'revolution', including in religious attitudes. Its diffusion was also helped by the new role played by laypeople in religious activities. Religious life in the fifteenth century was becoming less dependent on ecclesiastical decision-making, and the development of confraternities not only offered the laity a means of becoming more active in Church life, but also drove demand for new devotional practices that could be conducted without clerical leadership.

The Rosary met these needs well. In fact, after the first confraternity settled in Douay around 1470, others were soon constituted across Europe, in Cologne in 1475 and in other parts of Germany, as well as in France and Italy. The fact that the confraternities of the Rosary responded to the demands of a more secularised form of religiosity is shown by the suspicion that the Douay Confraternity aroused, with the local bishop requiring Alanus to explain its activity.[6] Moreover, it is noteworthy that the first confraternities spread in areas that had previously engaged with the *devotio moderna* at the time of its decline. Evidently, these confraternities responded to the desire for greater spirituality expressed by the mainly lay followers of Geert Groote and Thomas à Kempis. The Virgin's psalter could be recited by laypeople, the destitute, or the illiterate; it did not require a special place of worship or clergy. It was not intended, however, to remove devotional life from under ecclesiastical control, but rather to offer members of the laity new possibilities for structuring their relationships with God. It combined meditative exercises with repetitive ones in order to satisfy the spiritual needs of a lay congregation. In fact the Rosary,

4 On this French Dominican friar see Meersseman G.G., "Alano de la Rupe e le origini della confraternita del Rosario", in Meersseman G.G. – Pacini G.P., *Ordo fraternitatis. Confraternite e pietà dei laici nel Medioevo* (Rome: 1977) 1044–1070; Quétif Jacques – Echard Jacques, *Scriptores Ordinis Praedicatorum* (Paris, apud Christophorum Ballard et Nicolaum Simart: 1719–1721) I, 849–852; Barile R., *Il rosario, salterio della Vergine* (Bologna: 1990); Roncelli A., "San Domenico e la nascita del Rosario nell'opera di Alano della Rupe", in Barile, *Il Rosario tra devozione e riflessione* 146–170. Alanus' preaching on the Rosary in Douay was transcribed and published under the title: *L'ordonnance de la confraire du psautier de la glorieuse Vierge Marie* (Paris, Michel Le Noir: probably in 1500).

5 These statements are found in chapter 8 of his *Apologeticus*.

6 Roncelli, "San Domenico e la nascita del Rosario" 153–155.

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unlike most private prayers, has particular characteristics that make it suitable for popular practice. Like most prayers, it can be recited individually, but it is mainly designed to be spoken in a group context. Although choral recitation was not recommended in Italy until 1601, the Rosary had always had a communal character, and it even promoted the constitution of *compagnie* or confraternities.[7] Each member of a confraternity of the Rosary was supposed to recite a Rosary every day, in order to benefit from spiritual rewards from the Virgin Mary; failure to do so led to being deprived of these spiritual benefits.

The Rosary has a ritual aspect that individual prayers lack, and it is highly structured. It entails the recitation of 150 *Ave Maria*s, clustered in groups of ten, preceded by a *Pater noster* and the proposition of a 'mystery' upon which to meditate. This number of 150 *Ave Maria*s seems to be designed to correspond to the 150 psalms in the Davidic psalter, which is why the Rosary is also known as the 'Virgin's psalter'. It does not consist only of repetitive prayers, however, but also entails meditations. Indeed, the Rosary created by Dominic of Prussia was a kind of meditation on the life of Christ and Mary. In his *Liber experientiarum* he 'explicitly claimed to be the first to have composed a series of fifty points on the life of Christ that were to be meditated on while reciting the *Ave Maria*s'.[8] It is precisely the inclusion of narratives, in line with the popular model of the *Meditationes Vitae Christi*, that characterises this type of devotion. In the modern Rosary, each decade of *Ave Maria*s is preceded by meditation on one of the fifteen mysteries of salvation, that is to say an event of the incarnation in which the Virgin Mary was involved.

This form of devotion therefore combines ritual and personal meditation, orality and contemplation, repetitiveness and interior reflection, privacy and companionship, and provokes the imagination, bodily actions, wonder and compassion. Importantly, it can be recited at home without any special materials, as a *corona* (or set of rosary beads) is not essential, even if it quickly became a focal object of the devotional practice. As can already be seen in Alanus's *Apologia*, the corona was said to bring the protection of the Virgin to those who carried it, and it became the distinctive emblem of orders devoted to the Virgin Mary, who replaced the *numeralia* or *signacula* they used to count their prayers or *Pater noster*s with the *corona* organised in decades.[9] The sacred

7 On early use of choral recitations, see Rosa M., "Pietà mariana e devozione del rosario nell'Italia del Cinque e Seicento", in Rosa M., *Religione e società nel Mezzogiorno tra Cinque e Seicento* (Bari: 1976) 117–143. As the Rosary is constituted of recitations added to meditations, it can be recited easily by multiple voices.

8 Winston-Allen, *Story of the Rose* 17.

9 Cecchin S.M., "Le corone dei sette gaudi e dei sette dolori: altre forme di preghiera del rosario", in Barile, *Il Rosario tra devozione e riflessione* 184–205: 192.

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nature of the *corona* is clearly shown by the fact that it became a prized object carried by pilgrims, and in many Italian regions it accompanies the corpse on its final pilgrimage after death.

The form of devotional Rosary practice initiated by the Dominicans, which became the most common, was not the only one: there were others, all based on the recitation of the *Ave Maria* and *Pater noster*, but distinguished by the fact that they were focused on different subjects for meditation. The Franciscan order developed its own form of *corona*, based on seven (rather than fifteen) meditations, which corresponded to the seven joys of the Virgin Mary's life. A work entitled *Corona Beatae Mariae Virginis* was even attributed to St. Bonaventure, and this devotion spread in Italy mainly in the mid-sixteenth century.[10] Partly thanks to the work of Perbaltus of Temeswar in his *Stellarium coronae benedictae Virginis Mariae in laudem eius* (1506), and to John of Capestrano, who recommended recitation of the Rosary in a letter to a colleague in Nuremberg, it swiftly became popular in Germany too. It soon spread in Spain as well, thanks to the work of Ignacio of Mendoza, *Los gozos de Nuestra Senora*, and in France, thanks to the *Tractatulus de tribus coronis Virginis Mariae* by Gilbert Nicolas.[11] This *corona*, known as the Franciscan *corona*, had indulgences conferred upon it by Pope Leo X in 1513.

In a similar fashion, the Servite order developed the Rosary of the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin in the seventeenth century, also dedicated to contemplation of the mysteries of Christ's incarnation, but stressing devotion to the *Addolorata*. Arcangelo Ballottino's *Fonte salutifera di Giesù ornata di considerationi, meditationi e soliloquii divoti et affettuosi* (1608) specifically exhorted the lay members of his order (the Servite Third Order) to be attentive to the mysteries of Mary's sorrows. Ballottino's work received approval from Pope Paul V in 1607. Already in the *constitutiones* of this order the recitation of this *corona* was considered an acceptable replacement for the *officium* for the illiterate.[12]

10 The work attributed to St. Bonaventure appears in his *Opera omnia* (Ad Claras Aquas: 1882–1902) VIII, 677–679. See Cecchin, "Le corone dei sette gaudi e dei sette dolori: altre forme di preghiera del rosario". Evidence for the diffusion of the Franciscan crown is from: Marco dal Monte Santa Maria (or da Montegallo), *La corona de la Vergine Maria* (Venice, Bernardinus Benallus: 1494); the first vernacular *Ave Maria* is recorded by the same author in Marco dal Monte Santa Maria, *Tabula de la salute* (Venice, Nicolaus Belaguer: 1496). See *Marco da Montegallo (1425–1496). Il tempo, la vita, le opere. Atti del convegno di studi* (Padua: 1999) 213–227.

11 See Cecchin, "Le corone dei sette gaudi e dei sette dolori: altre forme di preghiera del rosario" 200.

12 The Servite constitutions read: 'Laici vero et nescientes legere quotidie intersint missae, et coronati, ut vulgo dicitur, loco omnium horarum dicant, quo negotia domi forisque

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There was also another form of the Rosary made up of 63 *Ave Maria*s, corresponding to the 63 years of Mary's life, according to one of the many versions of her life. This Rosary was first used in 1373 by Saint Brigitte, but this is the only recorded example of its use.[13] The original Carthusian form, which combines each *Ave Maria* with Marian or Christological attributes, was also still employed.

2 The Diffusion of the Rosary through Iconography

Although this variety of forms could be found when the Rosary was first practiced, the Dominican style of prayer is the one that has survived to the present day, and was the only variety that interested poets and artists. As use of the Rosary first spread in Italy in the fifteenth century, the literary and artistic production that accompanied it was not decisive for its survival, but undoubtedly aided its diffusion.[14] From the beginning, publications on the Rosary came accompanied by lavish xilographic illustrations. The most striking of these can be found in the edition of the *Rosario della gloriosa Vergine Maria* by Alberto da Castello from 1521 [Fig. 14.1], which contains a wealth of illustrations. This clearly shows that the Rosary was not just an oral recitation, but was also a contemplative prayer engaging the imagination, a combination later mirrored by the exercises of Ignatius of Loyola.

Alberto da Castello, born in the middle of the fifteenth century in Venice, joined the Dominican order around 1470 and wrote several devotional, liturgical, historical and canonical texts. In the *Epistola prohemiale* of his *Rosario della gloriosa Vergine Maria* he says that he wrote the meditations and organised the images 'acciò che gli idioti che non sanno legere habbino el modo de contemplare gli divini beneficii et de questa contemplatione ne habbino qualche frutto spirituale'.[15] He states that he writes especially for the 'ignoranti, illetterati, idioti', and that a good Christian must hold the mysteries of the Rosary deep in his heart.

possint exercere commodus'. Quoted from Cecchin, "Le corone dei sette gaudi e dei sette dolori: altre forme di preghiera del rosario" 210.

13 Ibid., 195.

14 Winston-Allen's work is primarily devoted to the Rosary in German culture.

15 Alberto da Castello, *Rosario della gloriosa Vergine Maria* (Venice, Marchio Sessa et Piero di Rauani: 1522) fol. 6r. 'So that even the illiterate have a means to contemplate gifts from the divine and to receive spiritual fruits from such contemplation' (translations are mine). See Fattori D., "Frate Alberto da Castello, un domenicano in tipografia", *La Bibliofilia* 109 (2009) 144–167.

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FIGURE 14.1 Alberto da Castello, *Rosario della gloriosa Vergine Maria* (Venice, s.n.: 1521), frontispiece. By kind permission of the Biblioteca Consorziale di Viterbo

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The first edition has an image for each *Ave Maria* as well as numerous images for each of the few *Pater nosters*, drawing attention to issues of particular note. In total there are more than 150 images, which appear on the back of a leaf (the left side of the book), while the meditation is printed on the facing recto (the right side of the book); the title is shared between two pages [Fig. 14.2 and Fig. 14.3]. Opening the book its subject matter is immediately evident in the title, in the image, and in the instruction for the recitation of the *Ave Maria* or *Pater noster*, the meditation which always begins with 'Contempla qui, anima fedele (or 'fedele e devota') come […]'.[16] The mysteries are grouped into three sections: those of joy, those of passion, and those of glory. At the end there is an *expositio* of the main prayers involved, the *Pater noster* and the *Ave Maria*. The work concludes with a text explaining the miracles of the Rosary (*Miracoli stupendi fatti per virtu del rosario*). The *Rosario della gloriosa Vergine Maria* is a complete guide to Rosary devotion and enjoyed great success, as shown by the approximately forty editions that were printed during the century.



FIGURE 14.2 Alberto da Castello, *Rosario della gloriosa Vergine Maria* (Venice, s.n.: 1521) fols. 78v–79r. By kind permission of the Biblioteca Consorziale di Viterbo

16 'Faithful (and devout) soul, contemplate here how […]'.

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FIGURE 14.3 Alberto da Castello, *Rosario della gloriosa Vergine Maria* (Venice, s.n.: 1521), fols. 162r–163v. By kind permission of the Biblioteca Consorziale di Viterbo

The events of Christ's life are represented in words for those who can read and in images for the illiterate, which also served for visual meditation.[17] Alberto recommends that every believer should teach the Rosary to his children:

> et narrerete quelli alli vostri figlioli, insegnandoli a dire questo santo rosario. E quando sarete nelle case vostre sempre di questi pensareti. Et quando caminerete per el camino et viaggio, overo da uno luoco a laltro et quando anderete a dormire, et quando ve leverete dal dormire et reducetivi a memoria. Et ligareti quelli come un segno nelle man vostre per le filze de li pater nostri e ave marie, et li scrivereti sopra le porte et nelle porte delle case vostre mettando le figure di questo rosario sopra di esse e per le case vostre in continua memoria di essi.[18]

17 See for instance the many examples offered in Ardissino E.– Selmi E. (eds.), *Visibile teologia. Il libro sacro figurato in Italia tra Cinquecento e Seicento* (Rome: 2012).

18 Alberto da Castello, *Rosario della gloriosa Vergine Maria*, fol. 8r. 'You will tell the mysteries to your children, teaching them the holy Rosary. And when you are at home you should

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It is clear from these introductory lines that the Rosary was supposed to play a part in every moment of everyday domestic life, and to involve the whole family. It also shaped the relationship between parents and children, acting as a means for transmitting faith, religious practices, and beliefs. The role of the confraternity of the Rosary is also defined here, a confraternity which is supposed to be open to all: 'potenti e impotenti, nobili e ignobili, ricchi e poveri, huomini e donne' (those powerful and without power, noblemen and people without nobility, the rich and the poor, men and women). Membership is free, as stated in the first rule of the Cologne Confraternity, which is taken as a model here.[19]

The next successful Italian publication on the Rosary does not stress the domestic nature of the devotion as explicitly, although it was also produced by members of the Dominican order. The *Rosario della sacratissima Vergine Maria, raccolto dall'opere del R.P.F. Luigi di Granata*, published in 1573, is in fact a collection of passages taken from the work of the eponymous and well-known Spanish Dominican preacher, overseen by his brother (in the order) Andrea Gianetti of Salò. It was compiled in 1572, immediately after Pope Pius V proclaimed the 7th of October as the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary in celebration of the victory of the Holy League at Lepanto (1571).

In his dedication, addressed to the Master of his order Serafino Cavalli, dated 25 March 1573 (the day of the Annunciation), Andrea Gianetti underlines the popularity of the Rosary:

> Questa devotione di modo propagata e diffusa che non è parte del cristianesimo ove ella non sia, Iddio gratia, giunta, et con incredibile affetto e devotione abbracciata da ogni stato di persone.[20]

Giannetti states that, being unable to write meditations himself, he collected those by Luis de Granada and so made a mosaic of passages dealing with the

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always think of them. And when you are walking and traveling from one place to another, and when you are going to sleep, and when you are getting up, you must remember them. And you will have them as a sign in your hand, attached to the string of the *Pater nosters* and the *Ave Marias*, and you will write them above your doors and on the doors of your houses, putting the image of the Rosary on the doors and on your houses as a perpetual reminder of them'.

19 Alberto da Castello, *Rosario della gloriosa Vergine Maria*, fols. 14r and 19r.

20 Luis de Granada, *Rosario della sacratissima Vergine Maria, raccolto dall'opere del RPF Luigi di Granata* (Venice, Gioanne Varisco et Compagni: 1578). 'This worship has spread everywhere so that there is no place in the Christian world where it has not arrived, thanks to God, and where it has not been accepted with incredible affection and devotion by all kinds of people'.

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fifteen mysteries. After a number of chapters devoted to the earlier development of this form of devotion and to indulgences, the suggestions given for the recitation start by comparing the Rosary to daily food: as the body needs to be restored, so the soul needs spiritual food, such as that provided by the Rosary, which is a summary of Christ's life ('compendio della vita di Cristo').[21] It should be recitated 'nella hora del giorno più commoda e più atta', 'o nella chiesa commune o nella privata stanza' (at the most convenient and suitable hour of the day, in a church or in a private room). The most important aspect of the ritual is the attitude of the devotee: 'cuore humile, devoto, pieno d'amore e di timore, ridotto e raccolto davanti al cospetto di Dio'.[22] This instruction clearly illustrates the potential difficulty of combining meditative and oral prayer, and so suggests starting with oral prayers, in order to stimulate the emotions, and then following with meditation, paying more attention to activity of the spirit:

> Letto in qualche libro, o ridutto e rivocato alla memoria il passo o misterio che 'l devoto ruminar e contemplar vuole nel cuor suo, deve imaginarsi che quel mistero si faccia inanzi a lui stesso, figurandolo così ne la sua imaginazione, poiché per simili cose si fu data da Dio questa potenza.[23]

The full-page illustrations by Adamo Scultori, slightly modified in subsequent editions, were therefore useful in supporting the workings of the imagination. In the 1578 edition they began with a symbolic image of the rose tree in which a crown unifies the five icons of the mysteries. In the center the Virgin Mary displays the Infant Jesus while in the other hand she holds a branch of the rose tree [Fig. 14.4].[24] The images for each decade of the *Ave Maria* are very beautiful, and were intended to help the imagination in the process of meditation. Granada-Gianetti's publication was highly successful, was reprinted several

21 Ibid., 3.

22 Ibid., 50 and 52. 'Humble and devout of heart, full of love and fear, absorbed in God's presence'.

23 Ibid., 50. 'After having read in some book, or recalled to memory the passage or mystery that the devotee should meditate and contemplate in his heart, he should imagine that the scene of that mystery is in front of him, picturing it in his imagination, since this power was given to us by God for similar things'. On this work's use of images see Arancibia P., "La funzione delle immagini nel Rosario della Sacratissima Vergine Maria Madre di Dio nostra signora", in *Visibile teologia. Il libro sacro figurato tra Cinque e Seicento* 179–190.

24 On the iconography of the Virgin of the tree see Gatti Perer M.L., "Per la definizione dell'iconografia della Vergine del Rosario", in Zardin D. (ed.), *Carlo Borromeo e l'opera della 'Grande Riforma'. Cultura, religione, arte del governo nella Milano del pieno Cinquecento* (Milan: 1997) 185–208.

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FIGURE 14.4 Luis de Granada, *Rosario della sacratissima Vergine Maria, raccolto dall'opere del R.P.F. Luigi di Granata* (Venice, Gioanne Varisco et Compagni: 1578) 56. By kind permission of the Biblioteca del Seminario del Polo Teologico Torinese, Turin

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times, and was subsequently enriched by the meditations of other Dominicans (specifically Antonio Ciccarelli and Gerolamo Berovardi) [Fig. 14.5].[25]

There were many subsequent publications on this form of devotion, with some of them aimed explicitly at confraternities and including rules and indulgences. Others were intended to aid deeper consideration of the Rosary generally, with meditations, prayers, and images. Even a new order such as the Jesuits produced several works on the Rosary, starting with Gaspar Loarte's *Instruttione et avertimenti, per meditare i misterii del rosario della Santissima Vergine Madre*, first published in Rome in 1573. Later works included Luca Pinelli's *Libretto d'imagini, e di brevi meditationi sopra i quindici misterii del rosario della sacratissima Vergine Maria per aiuto de' divoti della Madonna santissima*, published in Naples in 1594.[26] Although Loarte's earlier work was not illustrated, in Pinelli's book each mystery has its own illustration.

The illustrations in the *Compendio dell'ordine e della regola del santissimo Rosario della gloriosa vergine* by Niccolò Strata (1588)[27] are much more restrained. The author says that he modified a treatise by Mariano Lo Vecchio da Palermo, *Compendio dell'ordine e della regola del SS rosario della Vergine* (1579), to satisfy the requests of many 'Signori e Signore', and to add images. The combination of fifteen mysteries brings the material together into a united whole. While the events of the life of Christ are considered from a 'realistic' viewpoint, the manner in which the elements are brought together creates a more general perspective, intended to express the richness of the prayer [Fig. 14.6]. The illustration on the cover page reflects this, organizing as it does the fifteen mysteries into a sort of tree or garland, in which the fifteen icons are intertwined and circumscribe an image of the Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus, both supporting a *corona* [Fig. 14.7]. The first set of meditations comes with images (one for each mystery), although the second set is not illustrated, while a number of further illustrations represent people reciting the Rosary.

In the following decades, the emblematic style led to the creation of more abstract and symbolic images, such as the Rosary emblem in Aresi's *Imprese sacre*.[28] The Milanese Paolo Aresi published a sort of encyclopedia for preachers

25 It had been reprinted more than ten times before the end of the century.

26 It was later reprinted in his collected works, from 1600 on, as *Meditationi vtilissime, sopra i quindeci misterij del rosario della sacratissima Vergine Maria*.

27 Turin, Gio. Michele, e figli de' Cauallerij: 1588.

28 The multivolume work by Paolo Aresi *Imprese sacre con triplicati discorsi illustrate & arricchite a' predicatori, à gli studiosi della Scrittura Sacra* was published across a span of years. The first introductory volume came out in Verona in 1615, the second and third volumes in Milan in 1621, the fourth and fifth in Tortona in 1630, the sixth again in Tortona in 1634–5, and the seventh in Tortona in 1640.

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FIGURE 14.5 Luis de Granada, *Rosario della sacratissima Vergine Maria, raccolto dall'opere del R.P.F. Luigi di Granata* (Venice, Gioanne Varisco et Compagni: 1578) 136. By kind permission of the Biblioteca del Seminario del Polo Teologico Torinese, Turin

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FIGURE 14.6 Strata Niccolò, *Compendio dell'ordine e della regola del santissimo Rosario della gloriosa vergine* (Turin, Gio. Michele, & ff. de' Cauallerij: 1588) fols. 78v–79r. By kind permission of the Centro Teologico, Turin

organized around 200 emblems, each followed by three prose expositions giving topics for sermons. The illustrations of books 4–6 were carried out by the famous engraver Giovanni Paolo Bianchi of the Accademia Borromaica, and are masterpieces of the print age. The Rosary is presented as a garden of roses, a richly suggestive choice of imagery [Fig. 14.8]. The geometric composition conveys the idea of order and represents a calm world that seems to be part of a higher project or plan. The garden is more than simply plants and flowers: it is an organized space that implies the existence of a gardener who tends and arranges in a manner suggestive of a universal *dispositio*. It is not by chance that in the poem following the image Nature and Art are mentioned in verses that evoke Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* XVI, 10, for both compete in creating this perfect, enclosed space, which recalls the lost Garden of Eden.[29] The images

29 The octave says: 'Di vaghe giovinette un bel drappello, / che di vari colori habbiano il manto, / sembra giardin, per cui ornar duello / con Natura fa l'Arte, e d'ogni canto /

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FIGURE 14.7 Strata Niccolò, *Compendio dell'ordine e della regola del santissimo Rosario della gloriosa vergine* (Turin, Gio. Michele, & ff. de' Cauallerij: 1588) fols. 77v–78r. By kind permission of the Centro Teologico, Turin

portray the union of harmony and beauty. Even the frieze contributes to the message: it consists of two pots of roses, further reinforcing the significance of the rose and creating an exuberance of symbols, typical of Baroque art. The image also gives an idea of protection. The motto FORTITUDO ET DECOR comes from the Bible: Proverbs 31, 15. The work later explains that the Rosary is a hedge offering both beauty and protection and, as is stated in the last two verses, the Virgin is the guardian and defender of the Church.

In a later publication for preachers Tommaso Bracchi also presents the Rosary as an emblem signifying the salvation of the Church. The motto in *L'impresa della catena del rosario di varie medaglie ornata da Maria* (1643) and

coronato è di fior spinoso e bello, / che spira amor e in un minaccia il pianto. / Ma più vago è il giardin di Santa Chiesa, / e Rosario ha più forte a sua difesa' (Aresi, *Imprese sacre* VI 219).

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FIGURE 14.8 Aresi Paolo, *Imprese sacre con triplicati discorsi illustrate & arricchite a' predicatori, à gli studiosi della Scrittura Sacra VI* (Tortona, Calenzano & Viola: 1634–5) 219. By kind permission of the Biblioteca dei Cappuccini di Torino

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in the *Le due imprese delle due corone de' rosarii* (1633 and 1648), is IN HOC SALUS, and accompanies an image of a *corona* made of medals [Fig. 14.9]. The frontispiece is engraved by Bianchi, who re-used some of the figures created for Aresi's *imprese*. In fact, the images within the medals do not function as narratives, but are instead emblems which represent the fifteen mysteries symbolically. In his introduction the author justifies the use of symbolism, claiming it to be more suitable for divine matters, for they have to be apprehended by the senses but their deepest meaning can only be understood by the intellect.[30]

In addition to these texts about the Rosary, illustrated or not, with or without rules for confraternities and indulgences, we have to consider that preaching played a major role in the spread of this form of devotion among the laity.[31] After the formal institution of the feast of the Virgin of the Rosary, sermons on the topic spread across Italy, sermons which clearly had the objective of inspiring this type of devotional practice among the audience or congregation.

3 The Diffusion of the Rosary through Poetry

Another genre that implicitly commented upon and encouraged the use of the Rosary was narrative poetry. A large amount of Italian verse on the topic was written in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The narrative poem was an entertaining and fashionable genre, popularised by the success of chivalric poems, and was considered a useful means of providing behavioural examples in an engaging manner. Moreover, the Renaissance rediscovery of epic poetry based on Aristotelian rules and Homeric models, and the lesser or greater success of works by Trissino and Tasso, suggested that narrative could transmit the idea of a devotion which would be appropriate for use in the context of contemporary struggles against Protestants and Muslims.[32]

In fact the Rosary had early on been the object of attack by the Reformed Churches. Pietro Paolo Vergerio, the Istrian theologian and bishop who had converted to Lutheranism, published a virulent pamphlet in 1550 entitled *A quelli venerabili padri domenicani che difendono il rosario per cosa buona*,

30 Bracchi Tommaso, *Le due imprese delle due corone de' rosarii* (Brescia, Carlo Biavino: 1648) n.n.

31 On sermons on the topic see Ardissino E., "Il rosario nella predicazione tra Cinque e Seicento", in Barile, *Il Rosario tra devozione e riflessione* 276–297.

32 On the significance and role of epic at the time, see Finucci V. (ed.), *Renaissance Transactions. Ariosto and Tasso* (Durham – London: 1999); Sberlati F., *Il genere e la disputa. La poetica tra Ariosto e Tasso* (Rome: 2001); Jossa S., *La fondazione di un genere. Il poema eroico tra Ariosto e Tasso* (Rome: 2002).

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FIGURE 14.9 Bracchi T. *Le due imprese delle due catene de' rosarii* (Brescia: Antonio Ricciardi, 1633) frontispiece. By kind permission of the Staatliche Bibliothek Regensburg, 999/4Asc.162

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damning the devotion as an example of idolatrous Papist veneration. The Catholic Lorenzo Davidico responded in the same year by publishing a book entitled *Il vittorioso trionfo di Maria Vergine contra i Luterani*, while Gerolamo Muzio took up the issue in his letters (*Lettere vergeriane*, 1551).[33] The Rosary therefore became known as a specifically Catholic devotion, and this perception was later supported by the official introduction of the feast celebrating the victory at Lepanto (Our Lady of the Rosary was even celebrated with the name Our Lady of the Victory). These political and epic connotations probably had an important influence on many of the long epic-like narrative poems or collections of short poems (mainly sonnets) in which poets celebrated and spread this Marian worship, combining devotion, ideological principles and identifying religious characteristics with modern narrative techniques.[34]

The features of the ritual had a decisive impact on these poems: indeed, the poetic narration was adapted to the needs of the prayer, with the poetic episodes constructed on the basis of each mystery. The events stay true to the Biblical narratives on which they are constructed, even as they are enriched with new imagery, including recent literary novelties such as the fight between demonic and angelic creatures, inspired by Tasso's invention in the fourth canto of his *Gerusalemme liberata*.[35]

The most successful of these poems was Capoleone Ghelfucci's *Il rosario della Madonna*, which was first published by Ghelfucci's heir in 1600 (the year of the poet's death) and had been reprinted twelve times by 1622.[36] However, I will concentrate here on two earlier poems: Serafino Razzi's *Rosario della gloriosissima vergine madre di Dio, Maria, avvocata di tutti i peccatori penitenti*, published in 1583, and Giulio Cesare Croce's *Discorsi brevi, et facili sopra tutti i*

33 On the Protestant refusal of the Rosary among other devotions see Caravale G., *Forbidden Prayer. Church Censorship and Devotional Literature in Renaissance Italy*, trans. P. Dawson (Farnham: 2011).

34 On the influence of modern post Reformation Catholicism on the spread of the Rosary see Mitchell N., *The Mystery of the Rosary: Marian Devotion and the Reinvention of Catholicism* (New York: 2009).

35 The battle between angels and demons portrayed by Tasso in the fourth canto of his poem soon became a model of the struggle between Evil and Good, and was therefore imitated in all poems concerned with Christian epic.

36 See Chiesa M., "Il poema sacro secentesco: uno sguardo ai frontespizi", in Arbizzoni G. – Faini M. – Mattioli T. (eds.), *Dopo Tasso. Percorsi del poema eroico. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, Urbino 15–16 giugno 2004* (Rome-Padua: 2005) 285–309. For a more complete overview of poetry on the topic see Rosa M., "I trionfi del Rosario nella letteratura religiosa italiana della Controriforma", in Barile, *Il rosario tra devozione e riflessione* 298–313; for a poem not considered here see: Favaro M., "Un'architettura di versi, prose e immagini. Sul 'Mistico Tempio del Rosario' (1584) di Reginaldo Spadoni", *Aevum* 90–3 (2016) 595–628.

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misterii del santiss. rosario, con altre compositioni spirituali composti ad instanza d'una reuer. monaca del Corpus Domini, published in 1598. These were more popular in nature than Ghelfucci's poem (which seems to be addressed to a literate audience capable of appreciating its creative use of characters, events and stylistic features), and without any pretensions of reaching the same social or literary heights, thus better reflecting the popular nature of the devotion itself. Moreover, they were produced in two cities, Florence and Bologna, which saw a large amount of confraternal activity and had an active religious culture beyond ecclesiastical institutions.

Serafino Razzi was a Florentine Dominican preacher, a biographer and follower of Savonarola and, above all, a musician, who revived *laude* poetry in the second half of the sixteenth century.[37] His poem on the Rosary is dedicated by the author's brother to two Camaldolese nuns, Margherita Guadagni and Faustina Poggi, of the convent of San Giovanni Evangelista in Florence, and is framed as a response to a request from another nun, Cornelia Strozzi, of the convent of San Paolo in Orvieto. The dedication praises these three women as readers who greatly enjoy manuscripts as well as books, which suggests that the work is aimed at a female audience. It is not, however, necessarily addressed to nuns exclusively, because in his letter to the reader the author also indicates that his work is suitable for an audience that enjoys singing: it should please devout girls who respect God ('divote fanciulle e timorate di Dio'), as well as nuns and God's servants ('divote religiose e serve di Dio').[38] Girls and nuns can use his poetry as songs, because they reflect a pure soul and morally upright nature (the author probably intends his poetry to replace love songs). Razzi also underlines the importance of poetic Biblical translations, and enriches his text with Biblical references. His meditations are said to be drawn from Luis de Granada, and are developed through both poetry and prose, but without the use of images.

Each mystery is narrated in a short *canto* of octaves (from a minimum of twelve to a maximum of 32); the verse elaborates on biblical events with description and imaginative additions, which do not conflict with the evangelical narration but instead enrich it in order to suggest imagery to the reader. For example the first mystery, the Annunciation, starts with a domestic scene:

37 Razzi Serafino, *Rosario della gloriosissima vergine madre di Dio* (Florence, Sermartelli: 1583). On Razzi see Piéjus A., *Musique et dévotion à Rome à la fin de la Renaissance. Les Laudes de l'Oratoire* (Turnhout: 2013) 103–117.

38 Razzi, *Rosario della gloriosissima vergine madre di Dio* n.n.

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Scende dall'alto e luminoso tetto
l'angelo Gabriello in forma umana,
e l'umil casa dagli alto ricetto,
in cui dimora la Vergin sovrana.
Il segreto le narra del suo petto,
com'esser dee fra l'uomo e Dio mezzana
Ma prima la saluta in atto pio
come futura madre del suo Dio.[39]

The way the moment is represented underlines its privacy: the story of salvation starts in a humble house, in the secrecy of Mary's heart. A dialogue between the angel and the Virgin Mary follows: it respects its source, the *salutatio angelica* of Luke 1, 28–33, even as it expands on it with additional comments and descriptions. Mary's humility is indicated by her blushing face ('mentre nel bel viso / della Vergin gentil parean due rose / le guance colte allora in paradiso'; while the cheeks of the beautiful face of the kind Virgin resembled two roses plucked in heaven). The second mystery, the visit of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth, is enriched with a description of the trip, including a night spent in a small lodging house to rest ('alcun alberghetto a riposarsi') and Mary's thanks to the host in the morning. The largest expansions concern events in the life of Christ related to the mysteries, but not included in them. Even though Razzi does not use the Apocrypha of the New Testament, he adds information, creates dialogues, and invents minor events which do not conflict with the Vulgate. The author also includes his observations in the form of prosopopoeia, speaking to people or even features of the surrounding area which witnessed the Gospel events, such as a speech directed at the donkey who brought Mary to Bethlehem, and one to the thorns of the passion ('crudeli acerbe e dispietate spine'). Sometimes the author engages the reader by calling her attention to particular events, or by urging her to devotion and reminding her of the principles of the faith. For example, at the first mystery of the sorrow the verse starts with an invitation to the soul to see Jesus in prayer at Gethsemane ('Anima mia, che fai, che pensi o miri? / Lievati presto e vanne ratta all'orto / Getsemani, là dove in gran sospiri / e lacrime vedrai Giesù assorto […]').[40]

39 Ibid., 1. 'The angel Gabriel in human form descends from the bright heights, and the humble house, in which the sovereign Virgin lives, offers him a honorable harbor. He tells her his heart's secret: that she has to mediate between God and human beings. But first he greets her as the mother of God with a pious greeting'.

40 Ibid., 58. 'My soul, what are you doing? What are you thinking? What are you looking at? Get up, quickly, and go swiftly to the Gethsemane garden where you will see Jesus lost in great sorrow and tears […]'.

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Sometimes the context is explained with historical references, for example to the Roman census, or with Biblical references, such as the prefiguration of Christ in Abel, Moses, David or Isaac. Often the expansions consist of Mary's or Christ's thoughts, describing their feelings or introducing even more complex spiritual issues. Razzi's expansions give an interior dimension to the main figures, imagining their reactions to events, their knowledge of hidden meanings behind the surface story, and their explanations of them. For example, in the fourth mystery of joy Mary is represented before the Assumption recalling her life with Christ, a sort of synopsis of what has already been retold. Even theological problems are discussed in the form of a character's thoughts: for instance, in the mystery concerning the night in Gethsemane Christ explains to his three apostles (Peter, James, John) why he suffers, being God. Christ's words respond to a question shared by all believers, who have trouble comprehending Christ's Passion in the context of His divinity. With consideration of the nature of the human body, original sin, death, and the necessity of models for human suffering, Razzi clearly and simply explains the theological aspects of sorrow according to Catholic theology. In the mystery of the Crucifixion, the reader's soul is invited to go to Bethany to tell Mary about Christ's suffering and dying, with the suggested speech retelling the events.[41]

The verses are followed by a prose explanation in order to ensure clear comprehension, possibly because, as stated elsewhere, the work was written at a time when converting Biblical subjects into poetry was viewed with considerable suspicion.[42] These parts are strictly faithful to their Biblical sources: only gospel references are explained, not the poetic or creative additions. Even if the explanations clearly refer to the Italian words used in the poetry, only those concepts derived from the source are clarified. The only exceptions are two explanations on stylistic choices, as I will discuss shortly. The prose explanations include references to a number of theological authorities, such as Augustine, Pseudo-Dionysius, Peter Damian, and Antonino Pierozzi, which are evidence of the author's religious culture. On one occasion he also adds instructions that clearly show how the Rosary is considered a domestic religious activity. In the fifth mystery of the joy, that on the recovery of the child Jesus in the temple of Jerusalem, Razzi adds a long exhortation to fathers, instructing them to keep

41 Ibid., 89: 'Intanto, anima mia, scostati un poco, / da sì fiero spettacolo, et in fretta / vanne piangendo di Betania al loco / a ritrovar Maria vergine eletta. / Inginocchiata a i piedi suoi con roco / parlar, racconta – ancor che intera / tra i sospir sie la voce – in quanti guai / veduto il suo figliuol dolcissimo hai'.

42 On Biblical censorship two books by G. Fragnito are essential: *La Bibbia al rogo. La censura ecclesiastica e i volgarizzamenti della Scrittura (1471–1605)* (Bologna: 1997) and *Proibito capire. La Chiesa e il volgare nella prima età moderna* (Bologna: 2005).

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control of their children, above all during adolescence. He suggests praying with children, going to mass together, encouraging them in charitable acts, questioning them often on religious matters, supervising their reading material, and reading them saints' lives.

Razzi is a skilful poet who follows Petrarch's model. He even uses lines from Petrarch, as clearly seen in the commentary on the expression: 'la vedrai di sol vestita', used in relation to the Virgin Mary in the fiftieth glorious mystery. He writes in the prose commentary: 'Oltre che in questi versi si va imitando quel nostro nobilissimo poeta che disse: *Vergine bella di sol vestita / coronate di stelle, etc.* è da sapere che anco si allude alla bella e misteriosa vision di san Giovanni […]'.[43] In the description of Paradise the verse 'vaghi augelletti, Progne e Filomena' (154), recalls *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* 310. At the end of his work he adds the text of a song three octaves long (*Stanze da cantarsi alla Madonna*), which uses the *incipit* of RVF 366: 'Vergine bella che di sol vestita, / coronata di stelle, al sommo Sole / piacesti sì che per madre gradita / ti elesse ed esser volle egli tua prole' (164), and he goes on to construct a prayer that includes more words from Petrarch's *canzone*.

Tasso's influence is also evident, for example in the appeal to the soul in 'Anima, s'or non piangi, quando mai' (73): this recalls the end of the octave addressed to the crusaders' souls when they arrive at Jerusalem: 'Duro mio cor, ché non ti petri e frangi? / Pianger ben merti ognor, s'ora non piangi' (*Gerusalemme liberata* III, 8). Even more similar to these verses is 'ahi cuore, / ben sei più dur che adamantino sasso / se non ti muovi' (98). It is surprising that in the description of Heaven it is not Dante's, but Ariosto's influence, that is openly acknowledged: 'ci è piaciuto in questo luogo imitare alquanto i versi di quel gran poeta il quale parlando delle bellezze del paradiso terrestre con incredibile dolcezza disse: *Zafir, rubini, oro, topazi e perle* […]', and he goes on to quote all octave 49 of canto 34 of *Orlando furioso*.[44]

Razzi uses common rhetorical devices, such as metaphors, lengthy similes and puns, and even at one point an invocation to the Muses.[45] Sometimes

43 Razzi, *Rosario della gloriosissima vergine madre di Dio* 163 'Besides the fact that these verses imitate our very noble poet who said: *Vergine bella di sol vestita / coronate di stelle, etc.*, it should be known that there is an implicit reference to Saint John's beautiful and mysterious vision'. In the following quotations the page reference is given in parentheses.

44 Ibid., 161. 'It pleased us here to imitate the verses of that great poet who, telling of the beauties of the earthly paradise, said with incredible sweetness *Zafir, rubini, oro, topazi e perle* […]'.

45 One of the longest similes compares the growing sorrow of the passion to a swollen river: 'Qual rapido torrente, che da molte / acque ingrossato cresce a poco a poco, / e quindi poi spargendo le già accolte / innonda d'ogni intorno ciascun loco, / così serpendo con giri e rivolte / danneggia più che non fa in selva foco / talor contempla, o anima fervente,

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the verse includes quotations from other poetry, for example in the mystery of Pentecost one octave is a translation of part of the sequence *Veni Sancte Spiritus* in Italian (136) and often Razzi's verses echo biblical ones: 'Chi di colomba mi darà le penne' (152 – Ps 54, 7 but also RVF 48) or 'Stupite cieli e piangete elementi' (97 – Jer 2, 13).

In a later sermon dedicated to this form of worship, Razzi says that the Rosary enlightens the intellect and inflames the emotions, and argues that it should be widely used, highlighting the many correspondences between the numerology of the Rosary and that of the Bible, and suggesting that the Rosary can be considered spiritual medicine in the way that the rose plant offers medicine for the body.[46]

The second work, which is also dedicated to a nun, is by Giulio Cesare Croce, who is well known for his stories of Bertoldo and Bertoldino but underestimated as a religious writer.[47] He was a blacksmith working in San Giovanni in Persiceto, a village near Bologna, where he used to travel to sell his poetry and stories. His work on the Rosary begins with a brief prohemium on contemplation, a poem (a *sonetto caudato: Salutatione alla Vergine*) of 17 anaphorical verses, all starting with *Ave*, and an octave which is a general consideration of the Rosary:

> Le contemplazioni alte e devote
> qui si descrivon del rosario santo
> acciò chi legge possa in brevi note
> i gran misteri meditare alquanto,
> ché in questo bel giardin coglier si puote
> la rosa, il giglio, il croco e l'amaranto,
> e ogn'alma fida che ne coglie e prende
> felice e lieta sopra il cielo ascende.[48]

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della passione il rapido torrente". Ibid. 68. For a pun, see for example the following line referring to the soldier who kills Jesus: 'avendo alla pietà chiuse le porte / alla stessa pietà vanno a dar morte' (92). For the invocation to the Muse Talia see 140: 'Alta materia e difficil soggetto / ci si porge or seguendo il cantar nostro, / che lingua più faconda e miglior petto, / penna più atta e più purgato inchiostro / ricercherebbe e non scrittor sì inetto / come son io fra quanti abitan chiostro, imperoché cantar deve or Talia, / come fu assunta in ciel la Vergin pia'.

46 Razzi Serafino, *Sermoni predicabili* (Florence, Sermartelli: 1590) 89–101.

47 On Croce see Camporesi P., *Il palazzo e il cantimbanco. Giulio Cesare Croce* (Milan: 1994); on his quaresimale, see Ussia S., *L'aspro sentiero. Poesia quaresimale di Pietro Cresci e Giulio Cesare Croce* (Vercelli: 2003).

48 Croce Giulio Cesare, *Discorsi breui, et facili sopra tutti i misterii del santiss. rosario* (Bologna, Heredi di Gio. Rossi: 1598) 89. 'Devout and lofty contemplations of the holy

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Each mystery is presented with an image facing the verse. The reader is then instructed to recite the *Pater noster* and ten *Ave Marias*, each preceded by a terzina. Every repetitive prayer is therefore associated with a brief poetic meditation, which underlines the role of silent prayer. The incipit is as follows:

> Pater noster
> Dal re del cielo i patriarchi santi
> braman ch'ei mandi in terra il Salvatore,
> qual ponga fine a i lor amari pianti.
> Ave maria
> Sotto varie figure a noi si mostra,
> che Maria sola portarà quel frutto,
> che sia cagion de la salute nostra.
> Ave maria.[49]

Together, the *terzine* reconstruct the history of salvation, with special attention paid to the role of the Virgin Mary, whose life since childhood is narrated. The narration expands on its source, the Gospels, with creative insights. For example in the second mystery of joy, Mary's visit to Elizabeth, the poet adds depth to the relationship between the two cousins with domestic observations: 'Nato Giovanni, ne le sante braccia / Maria l'accoglie e con somma allegrezza / a se lo stringe e caramente il baccia', and later, when Jesus' birth is being considered, a simple reference to the baby's needs gives an idea of the poet's unusual sensitivity: 'Miracolosamente il latte impetra / Maria, e 'l picciol figlio ciba e pasce'.[50] In the fourth mystery the holy family's practical life is again considered with a brief mention to their everyday reality: 'Per dare al picciol figlio gli alimenti / s'affaticano i santi genitori: / o fatiche soavi, o dolci stenti.[51] Like Razzi, Croce presents various events of Christ's life, even those not considered as mysteries. For example, in the last mystery of joy each terzina recounts an episode: the forty days in the desert, the miracle at Cana, the choosing of the apostles,

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Rosary are described here, so that the reader can long meditate on the great mysteries in short passages. In this garden one can pick the rose, the lily, the crocus and the amaranth, and every faithful soul who picks and takes it will ascend to heaven happy and blessed'.

49 Ibid., 101. 'The holy patriarchs ask the King of Heaven to send the Saviour to earth, so that he can end their bitter weepings. *Ave Maria*. By various means we see, that only Mary can carry that fruit, which will be our safety. *Ave Maria*'.

50 Quotations are respectively: ibid., 12 'Once John was born, Mary takes him in her holy arms, and with great joy clasps him to herself and kisses him affectionately'; 15 'Mary begs to have milk miraculously, and she feeds and nourishes her little son'.

51 Ibid., 18. 'The holy parents make every effort to feed their little child. Oh, sweet struggle, oh, sweet effort'.

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the Transfiguration, the washing of Christ's feet by the penitent woman, miraculous healings. Sometimes (as for the first mystery of the sorrow) the narration of the many events of Christ's life takes such prominence that the event of the mystery itself is almost forgotten. The terzine even include the events of the Acts of the Apostles, as they appear in the third mystery of glory, where the miracles of Peter, his imprisonment, and his release by the angel are recounted.

From time to time (approximately every ten terzine) the devout reader's attention is demanded in the second person: 'Contempla il lor amor, anima pia' (13); 'Contempla, anima mia, quanta allegrezza' (15); 'Piangi, anima divota, l'aspre e dure / percosse' (29); 'Anima mia, perché cotante pene / ha da partire il re de gli alti scanni?' (35).[52] The terzine alone provide the commentary on each mystery and there are no prose meditations, only a prose prayer after each group of mysteries. Three compositions follow: a sonnet on the passion, a *canto* of 23 octaves on the contemplation of Christ's sorrows, and a *capitolo* of 19 *terzine* on the cross.

Croce follows the same models as Razzi, but less strictly. Petrarch is clearly recalled in 'per la pietà del suo Fattore i rai' (39, RVF 3), and he cites the same Tasso verses recalled by Razzi in 'Se mai piangesti, o dura anima mia, / or piangi' (32). We find even an echo of Dante (*Purgatorio* 30, 137) in 'perdute genti' (20). Croce is certainly a less ambitious poet than Razzi, but his work enjoyed modest success, being published again in 1612 and around 1620.

It is clear from the prayers situated at the end of each group of mysteries that the devout reader is supposed to be a woman, specifically the dedicatee. The interest of a female audience in this kind of literature is confirmed by a poem by a woman, Francesca Turini Bufalini, *Rime spirituali sopra i misterii del santissimo rosario*, printed in 1595 (reprinted in 1628).[53] It is dedicated to the Pope in a letter in which the poet affirms the dignity of poetry, frequently recalling her own female sphere (such as her clothes and domestic duties), which she then situates within a martial context by mentioning her father, who fought in the French religious wars, and her husband, also involved in naval warfare in the Mediterranean. The work is divided into three parts, one for each kind of mystery, *gaudiosi, dolorosi, gloriosi*, with each group composed

52 Contemplate their love, my soul; Contemplate, my soul, such happiness; Weep, devout soul, for the harsh and brutal blows; My soul, why must the king of the highest ranks suffer so many torments?

53 There is a recent edition edited by Bà Paolo and published in *Letteratura italiana antica* 9 (2010) 145–223. On the author see "Atti della giornata di studio su Francesca Turini Bufalini", in *Letteratura italiana antica* 16 (2015) 579–617, with essays by P. Bà, N. Costa-Zalessow N., and G. Rossi.

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of fifty meditative sonnets (addressed to the soul who is praying, with an invitation to contemplation), and each part introduced by a madrigal.

Another interesting example of the popularity of Rosary poetry is the *Nouo rosario della gloriosissima Vergine Maria*, a collection of poems by Gaspare Ancarano, in which the poet not only describes the mysteries in Italian, but also translates the *Pater noster* into Italian fifteen times, once for each mystery, combining classical and biblical mythology.[54] The translation shows that this form of devotion was considered suitable for the laity and those unfamiliar with Latin, and also that it was thought capable of providing more profound insights into the basic tenets of the Catholic faith.

The use of the vernacular was essential for the spread of the Rosary, because its narratives make up a sort of first catechism for teaching, which began in childhood. The familial nature of this form of worship for Catholics in the early modern age is even shown by the works of St. Teresa of Avila, who recalls in her autobiography that her mother taught her to recite the Rosary when she was still a child.[55]

The many publications on this form of devotion in early modern Italy discussed here constitute an archive of evidence for the diffusion of the Rosary. Its spread was obviously aided by publications on the indulgences granted by popes, and on the rules of confraternities. The devotion was of course also supported by artistic production, painting and the building of chapels, that is, spaces created and decorated particularly for one purpose, which also had a collective function. However, it is the literary and iconographic production which best helps us to understand why the Rosary became a practice so deeply embedded in all levels of Italian society, and why the devotion, which combines meditation with narratives, mainly based on the lives of Mary and Christ, was used to sanctify and characterise the most meaningful moments of private and domestic life.

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55 Teresa of Avila, *The book of Her Life*, in Teresa of Avila, *Collected works*, trans. O. Rodriguez (Washington DC: 1987) 1, 55.

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PART 5

Conflict and Control



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CHAPTER 15

Domestic Prayers and Miracles in Renaissance Italy: The Case of Savonarola and His Cult

Stefano Dall'Aglio

On 26 August 1583 a long and alarming-sounding letter was making its way through Florence, sent by the city's leading prelate, Archbishop Alessandro de' Medici, to its main political authority, the Grand-Duke of Tuscany Francesco I de' Medici. With respect to the cult of Girolamo Savonarola, the Dominican friar who had been hanged and burned at the stake in Florence in 1498, the archbishop observed: 'si fanno delle conventicole per le case' (they hold conventicles in houses).[1] Alessandro de' Medici was referring to the Florentine laypeople who were gathering in private homes to venerate Savonarola. His remark tells us that, nearly one century after Savonarola's death, the cult of the friar was still alive and that it was being practised in private households and not in public.

This essay examines the domestic cult of Savonarola and aims at providing a concise answer to a set of crucial questions: did domestic devotion to Savonarola really exist and if so in what did it consist? Why was it domestic? How reliable are the hagiographic sources that document it? How did political and religious authorities react to it? How did Savonarola's followers manage to preserve it? How does it fit into the larger picture of Counter-Reformation Italy? Answering these questions will also help us to understand why the domestic cult of Savonarola continued throughout the sixteenth century, unlike his public veneration.

To begin with, we need to grasp the nature of Savonarola's domestic cult. In the same letter of 1583, with reference to both lay and religious people, the archbishop gave a detailed description of these conventicles:

> occultamente gli fanno l'offizio come a martire, conservano le sue reliquie come se santo fusse, insino a quello stilo dove fu appiccato, i ferri che lo sostennero, li abiti, i cappucci, le ossa che avanzarono al fuoco, le ceneri, il cilicio; conservano vino benedetto da lui, lo danno agli infermi,

1 Letter of Alessandro de' Medici to Francesco I de' Medici, 26 August 1583, in Guasti C., *L'officio proprio per fra Girolamo Savonarola e i suoi compagni scritto nel secolo XVI* (Prato: 1863) 27.

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> ne contano miracoli; le sue immagini fanno in bronzo, in oro, in cammei, in stampa.[2]

From Alessandro de' Medici's account, it was clear that the collections of miracles ascribed to the friar were an essential component of a religious practice that sought to preserve Savonarola's memory as a saint and a martyr. The most important of these is a text known as the *Trattato dei miracoli* (*Treatise of Miracles*), a collection of miracles that were attributed to Savonarola's intercession. The *Trattato* was not the work of a single author: it was compiled during the course of the sixteenth century by various anonymous writers who wished to contribute to the development of a collective memory of Savonarola as a saint who had miraculous powers. This was a process of memory construction whose obvious hagiographical aim was a part of a larger operation aimed at whitewashing Savonarola's image and turning a figure deemed by religious authorities to be a heretic and schismatic into a saint.[3] Understandably, like many other works on Savonarola penned during the same period, the *Trattato* was never printed: it was part of a clandestine literary production that could be written, circulated and read only in manuscript.[4] Printed books needed a formal permission from the Roman Catholic Church authorities and no *imprimatur* of orthodoxy could be granted to a text that rehabilitated a heretic.

Owing to the unusual way the *Trattato* was produced, every manuscript copy of the work is different from all the others. The richest one of all, the one with the greatest number of miracles, is the MS Italian 13 in the John Rylands Library in Manchester.[5] This is a thick volume, written in vernacular Italian

2 Ibid. They secretly celebrate his office as if he were a martyr, they keep his relics as if he were a saint, including the stake from which he was hanged, the iron shackles that supported him, his clothes, his hoods, his bones which were left over from the fire, his ashes, and his cilice. They keep the wine he had consecrated, they give it to the sick, they collect his miracles, they produce portraits of him in bronze, in gold, in cameos, and in print.

3 On the image of Savonarola as a saint and on the attempts to canonise him during the sixteenth century, see Dall'Aglio S., "'Everyone Worships fra Girolamo as a Saint': Savonarola's Presumed Sanctity in Sixteenth-Century Manuscripts and Prints", in Frazier A. (ed.), *The Saint between Manuscript and Print: Italy 1400–1600* (Toronto: 2015) 331–349.

4 The *Trattato dei miracoli* was printed for the first time in the eighteenth century. The most recent version is in *La vita del Beato Ieronimo Savonarola scritta da un anonimo del sec. XVI e già attribuita a fra Pacifico Burlamacchi*, ed. P. Ginori Conti (Florence: 1937) 199–249. On the *Trattato*, see Benavent J., "El Tratado de milagros de fra Girolamo Savonarola. El códice de Valencia y la tradición manuscrita", *Memorie domenicane* 28 n.s. (1997) 7–146. On miracle narratives in the same context, see Laven M., "Recording Miracles in Renaissance Italy", in Corens L. – Peters K. – Walsham A. (eds.), *The Social History of the Archive: Record-Keeping in Early Modern Europe, Past and Present 230, Suppl.* 11 (2016) 191–212.

5 See Benavent, "El Tratado" 32. On this manuscript, see 58–78.

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in the sixteenth century in a clear hand, though poorly preserved. It contains more than one hundred miracles, the most recent of which dates to 1578. In it, there are many accounts that cannot be found in any other version of the work. Many speak of a devotion to Savonarola that was practised in private households. The stories and people vary, but they all have this in common: in each narrative a miracle occurs after Savonarola (or one of his fellow martyrs) has been invoked and worshipped by some man or woman in dire circumstances.

Such is the story of the sculptor Bartolo da Montelupo, who had been poisoned in Bologna in the house of a Canon of the local Cathedral. He lay bedridden for six months growing thin and weak, at which point he prayed to the late Savonarola who appeared to him. The friar instructed Bartolo to get up and leave the house, which he did; and from that moment he found that he was perfectly cured.[6] Then there is the story of a semi-paralysed Florentine woman named Cassandra Acciaiuoli. After languishing in bed at home for a long time, one day she prayed to the 'three friars' – Savonarola and the two fellow-friars who had been executed with him in 1498. No sooner had she concluded her prayer than she suddenly felt better, her legs came back to life, and she was able to stand up and walk again.[7] These are just two examples of a huge number of miracles performed with Savonarola's intercession for the benefit of private citizens who had prayed and sought help from him in their own homes.

Quite surprisingly, the household might conceal different kinds of objects that could be used, if needed, to obtain a miracle from Savonarola. The wife of Paolo degli Albizzi was healed by a piece of Savonarola's cowl which she conveniently kept in a trunk,[8] while another Florentine woman, very seriously ill, immediately recovered after taking in her hand a portrait of Savonarola she owned.[9] This may imply that the devotion to Savonarola did not only exist in time of need: relics and portraits were often kept in the houses of the Florentines and other people, just as today portraits or devotional objects of official saints may still be found in many Italian households. And the domestic devotion of another sick woman, Fiammetta Martelli, appears to have been even more structured, since her bedroom was organised as a sacred space. Afflicted by an incurable disease of the throat, in 1565 she promptly got better

6 Manchester, John Rylands Library (hereafter JRLM), MS Italian 13, fols. 86r–87r.

7 Ibid., fols. 94v–95r.

8 Ibid., fol. 148r.

9 Ibid., fol. 148v. On portraits of Savonarola, see Sebregondi L., *Iconografia di Girolamo Savonarola 1495–1998* (Florence: 2004). On miraculous images in the Italian Renaissance, see Holmes M., *The Miraculous Image in Renaissance Florence* (New Haven – London: 2013) and Garnett J. – Rosser G., *Spectacular Miracles. Transforming Images in Italy from the Renaissance to the Present* (London: 2013).

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after reading a biography of Savonarola, placing a relic of the friar on her diseased body part, and praying to him at a small altar in her bedroom.[10]

In the case of Carlo Pitti – suffering from a painful illness in his leg in Florence in 1508 – we also have the text of the Latin prayer he recited in his room while holding a fragment of Savonarola's flesh, before recovering and being able to walk again.[11] In the *Trattato*, invoking Savonarola clearly ran counter to more traditional medical methods. In fact, a certain Iacopo Lancillotti positively refused to take his doctor's prescription and preferred to pray to Savonarola, upon which he was immediately healed.[12] And sometimes devotion did not end with the recovery, as in the case of the Ferrarese Pellegrino Depedai. In commemoration of his miraculous healing, every week, on the same day, Depedai lit a candle in front of a portrait of Savonarola he kept at home.[13] It is also interesting that apparently the domestic cult to Savonarola was not confined to Italy: the *Trattato dei miracoli* also tells of a priest healed in his home in Spain while lying in bed, after he had called on Savonarola who promptly appeared to him.[14]

Most of the accounts contained in the *Trattato* tell of people lying in bed with a serious, often terminal illness, invoking Savonarola's help to recover. This image calls to mind countless Italian ex-voto tablets: votive panels that were common in Renaissance Italy and were produced to thank the religious figure responsible for a miracle and preserve and transmit the memory of the event.[15] In these tablets the scene is often centred on the sickbed, which plays a very important role in the creation of a sacred space. Unfortunately, no votive panel is known for Savonarola's miracles, which is not surprising considering that he was an illegal saint whose cult had been forbidden. Ex-votos were made to be displayed at shrines and were much less easy to produce, reproduce, hide, and circulate than a manuscript volume.

Apart from the traditional healing of ill people lying in bed, other kinds of miracles exist in the *Trattato*, including a debtor obtaining a deferral for his payment and even a rotten and fetid wine transformed into an exquisite drink that smelt of violets. Savonarola's miracles thus seemed to extend far beyond the domain of healing, and to encompass a wide range of practical problems that the faithful needed to solve. The more inexplicable the outcome, the more it could be ascribed to supernatural intervention and the more Savonarola's authority was enhanced. The picture drawn by the narratives in the *Trattato*

10 JRLM, MS Italian 13, fols. 198v–199r.
11 Ibid., fols. 147v–148r.
12 Ibid., fol. 148v.
13 Ibid., fol. 88v.
14 Ibid., fols. 89v–90r.
15 See Jacobs F.H., *Votive Panels and Popular Piety in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: 2013).

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is one of a widespread devotion that was not limited to Florence, Tuscany or Italy, practised by both lay people and clerics, men and women, nobles and people of humble rank.

The accounts contained in the *Trattato dei miracoli* and in sources like it, such as biographies and hagiographic narratives written by Savonarola's many followers,[16] raise a question of trustworthiness that cannot be ignored. They certainly tell us much about popular culture and popular narratives, but to what extent can they be regarded as historical sources? What needs to be determined here is the reliability of the first part of the story, not the second: not the account of the supernatural event but of the report that people would invoke Savonarola's help when they were ill in bed or in some other trouble. In other words: did devotion to Savonarola really exist in sixteenth-century Italy or was it the creation of the hagiographers who were seeking to build up the myth of the late friar? I argue that the *Trattato*'s narratives stem from a true historical fact: devotion to Savonarola really existed, was well known inside and outside Florence, and was an integral feature of early modern Tuscan piety. In addition to the *Trattato*, a hagiographical work that was clearly inspired by Savonarolan propaganda, the existence of a Savonarolan cult is attested by other types of sources, such as letters, ordinances, chronicles, writings, liturgical texts, and even relics.

Obviously, it is more difficult to find direct testimonies of private and intimate devotions than of cults openly performed in public places in front of hundreds of people, such as celebrations in churches or processions. This could have led to an underestimation of a phenomenon that was not only confined to the home but was also practised clandestinely. That said, even public documents can provide some useful evidence. Many of them are indirect testimonies, produced by worried religious and civic authorities who wished to suppress the Savonarolan cult, such as Archbishop Alessandro de' Medici's letter cited at the beginning of this essay. The very existence of these concerns is itself a demonstration that the cult existed and was largely practised, or nobody would have felt the need to intervene.

The ordinances against the cult of Savonarola in convents and private homes commenced long before 1583. Indeed, as early as February 1499, less than a year after the friar's execution in May 1498, Francesco Mei, Procurator of the Dominican order, issued an ordinance banning any conversation about Savonarola and his prophecies, the possession of the three friars' relics (bones, hair, fragments of skin, pieces of wood taken from the scaffold) and those of

16 See, for example, Pico della Mirandola Giovanni, *Vita di Hieronimo Savonarola* (*Volgarizzamento anonimo*), ed. R. Castagnola (Florence: 1998) 73–89.

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anybody else who was not canonised by the Church. It also prohibited the exposition of Savonarola's prophecy both in public and private ('in publico vel private').[17] A later offensive, which did not concern only the Dominican order, was launched in 1515. In that year, Giulio de' Medici, vicar of the Florentine archbishop and future pope Clement VII, issued a new ordinance against Savonarolan devotion: anyone who harboured in his house ashes, bones, teeth, portraits, imprints, other relics or writings of the friar must turn them in to the vicar of the archbishop or face punishment.[18] In 1545 the duke of Florence, Cosimo I de' Medici, himself took action and even accused the friars of San Marco of idolatrous veneration of Savonarola, and promoting his worship as a saint.[19]

Contrary to what one might think, after forty years the problem had not gone away. Apparently, friars and lay citizens still had the unseemly habit of evoking Savonarola's miracles, and their cells and households were still cluttered with objects associated with him. In 1585, not long after Alessandro de' Medici's concerned letter to the Grand-Duke, the head of the Dominican order acted again, as his predecessor had done in 1499. The fact that the new ordinance's content is almost the word for word copy of the old one is the best demonstration that the devotion still existed. In much the same way as Francesco Mei had done, Sisto Fabbri, Master General of the order, commanded as follows:

> niuno o niuna habbi ardire di nominare, con frati o monache o secolari, il nome di fra Gerolamo Savonarola, con trattare della sua vita o soi miracoli, o delle cose sue o suoi compagni in qualsivoglia modo, né tenere appresso di sé ritratti, immagini o cose di qualsivoglia sorte […]. Ordinando […] che fra il termine d'un giorno debbano presentare tutte le cose simili.[20]

That the above mentioned objects were being used for the purposes of an illicit devotion and not for the harmless preservation of the friar's memory clearly emerges in another passage of the same ordinance which refers to an

17 Ordinance of Francesco Mei, 3 February 1499, in Gherardi A., *Nuovi documenti e studi intorno a Girolamo Savonarola* (Florence: 1887) 329–330.

18 Parenti P., *Istorie fiorentine*, in Schnitzer J., *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte Savonarolas*, vol. 4 (Leipzig: 1910) 307.

19 Gherardi, *Nuovi documenti* 344.

20 Ordinance of Sisto Fabbri, 5 April 1585, ibid., 351. Nobody must dare to name the name of Girolamo Savonarola when dealing with friars, nuns or lay people, to discuss his life or his miracles, or him and his companions in any way, or keep his portraits, pictures or any kind of object […]. We order […] that all such objects are to be handed over within one day.

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earlier unheeded decree prescribing that only people officially canonised by the Church could be venerated, and not those who had been condemned.[21]

Formal ordinances issued by the authorities are not the only testimonies of the domestic cult of Savonarola. Sometimes convent chronicles mention friars and nuns praying to Savonarola in their own cells.[22] The works written for and against the friar during the sixteenth century also tell us that private homes in and outside Florence were occasionally transformed into sacred spaces to worship Savonarola. Both defenders and opponents agreed that a cult of Savonarola existed. The former saw it as evidence of the spiritual fascination a true prophet exerted over a number of faithful, the latter as proof of the deception he had intentionally perpetrated on his naïve followers. The most interesting testimony is undoubtedly that of the Dominican bishop Ambrogio Catarino Politi, a controversialist who turned against Savonarola after being one of his staunchest supporters.[23] As such, he was in a privileged position to know even the most secret practices of the friar's followers. In his *Discorso contra fra Girolamo Savonarola* (1548), printed exactly fifty years after Savonarola's execution, he painted a vivid picture of the way Savonarola's followers still venerated the late friar:

> non dovrebbono superstitiosamente adorarlo, come molti di loro so certo che facevano et ancor non cessano di fare, et tengono o dipinta o scolpita la imagine sua con lettere che dicono 'Profeta et Martire'. Sono anchora altri che tengono della cenere o altre cose di lui et le venerano come reliquie sante.[24]

As if this were not enough, Catarino also went to the trouble of offering advice to the authorities in order to show them the way to eradicate the cult of Savonarola: 'commandare strettamente che […] niuno havesse ardimento di farli alcuna veneratione, et prohibire tutte le conventicole le quali intendo farsi

21 Ibid., 350.

22 See, for example, Di Agresti D., *Sviluppi della riforma monastica savonaroliana* (Florence: 1980) 181. On the Savonarolan cult in female religious communities in Northern Italy, see Herzig T., *Savonarola's Women. Visions and Reform in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: 2008).

23 On him, see now Caravale G., *Beyond the Inquisition. Ambrogio Catarino Politi and the Origins of the Counter-Reformation*, transl. D. Weinstein (Notre Dame, IN: 2017).

24 Politi Ambrogio Catarino, *Discorso contra la dottrina et le profetie di fra Girolamo Savonarola* (Venice, Gabriele Giolito: 1548) fol. 18r. They should not superstitiously worship him, as I know for sure many of them are wont to do and persist in doing. And they keep his painted or sculpted image with letters that read 'Prophet and Martyr'. There are even others who keep his ashes or some other things of his and venerate them as holy relics.

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da più persone, dove si fanno sacrifici et orationi communi a fra Girolamo'[25] ('strictly to order that nobody should dare to venerate him [Savonarola] in any way, and to forbid all the conventicles which I heard are held, where sacrifices and group prayers to fra Girolamo are made').

Another important source are the Divine Offices composed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for the purpose of praying to Savonarola. At least one of these was certainly composed during the papacy of Clement VIII Aldobrandini (1592–1605), when Savonarola's followers thought that the time had finally come for him to be canonised. These texts were meant to be recited on the anniversary of Savonarola's death (23 May) and inserted into the Roman Breviary. The offices are divided into parts to be prayed at different times of the day, and their structure – including psalms and hymns, antiphons and responsories – follows the traditional Catholic Liturgy of the Hours. The texts contain invocations to 'Beatus Hieronymus' ('Blessed Girolamo') and 'Sanctus Martyr Hieronymus' ('Saint Martyr Girolamo') and a long part is devoted to the description of Savonarola's life from his childhood to his death.[26] We do not know exactly when, where and by whom they were recited orally, but we may suppose that this is the sort of 'office' to which Archbishop Alessandro de' Medici was referring in his letter ('they secretly celebrate an office in his honour as if he were a martyr').

The picture is completed by material sources: alleged relics of Savonarola are currently housed in the Convent of San Marco in Florence, the very place where Savonarola spent all his years in the city: a cowl, a rosary, a wooden fragment of the scaffold, two cilices and a piece of cloth.[27] Obviously there is no way of assessing whether these objects were actually linked with the friar himself. Most were donated to the convent in 1686, almost two centuries after his demise. However, their importance clearly goes well beyond whether they can be reliably attributed.[28] Regardless of the links tracing them back to Savonarola, we know that relics like these existed and were an integral feature of the domestic devotion to Savonarola in households and convent cells.

Having ascertained that domestic devotion to Savonarola existed, the next question that arises is why this devotion was domestic. The most obvious

25 Ibid., fol. 22r.

26 The texts of the offices can be found in Guasti, *L'officio proprio* 35–48 and Gherardi, *Nuovi documenti* 358–364.

27 Rasario G., "Savonarola e le sue 'reliquie' a San Marco", in Scudieri M. – Rasario G. (eds.) *Savonarola e le sue 'reliquie' a San Marco* (Florence: 1998) 52–59.

28 On the significance of relics, see Walsham A., "Introduction: Relics and Remains", *Past & Present* 206, Suppl. 5 (2010) 9–36. On the cult of Savonarola's relics, see Benavent J., "Las reliquias de fra Girolamo Savonarola" *Memorie domenicane* 29 n.s. (1998) 159–177.

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answer is that, being prohibited, the Savonarolan cult could not be practised in public places. With the exception of the years 1527–1530, when a popular, anti-Medici republic was reintroduced in Florence and public celebrations in honour of Savonarola flourished, the cult of the friar was unwelcome not only to the Florentine government but also to religious authorities in and outside the Dominican order.[29] Another possible answer focuses on a more intimate and private side of devotion to Savonarola. We know that in the Savonarolan years the friar promoted theatrical and collective celebrations, not only public processions but spectacles performed in public squares before huge crowds, such as the bonfire of the vanities or the trial by fire. Nevertheless, alongside this sensational and public devotion a different kind of piety developed, one that was characterised by solitude and meditation. After all, Savonarola himself emphasised the primacy of mental over vocal prayer.[30]

Most importantly, Savonarola explicitly encouraged the practice of domestic devotion among late fifteenth-century Florentines. In one of his sermons, delivered in the Florentine cathedral in Lent 1496, the friar set out the programme of a liturgy to be recited in every home each evening and morning by all the members of the family, regardless of gender, age, or social status:

> Voi padri di famiglia ordinate che a ventiquattro ore sabbato sera tutti siate in casa con la vostra famiglia, e poi ve n'andate tutti, uomini, donne, fanciulli, servi e serve in luogo di casa vostra, e quivi ginocchioni direte li sette salmi e le letanie […]. Dipoi a mattutino […] sarà buono che vi raguniate una altra volta in quel medesimo luogo, il messere e la madonna con li figliuoli intorno e li servi e serve, e diciate el mattutino della Madonna.[31]

His words did not go unheeded if we are to believe one of his hagiographers who (with clear exaggeration), observed that the kind of life Florentines led in the privacy of their homes was no different from that of churchmen: 'Nelle

29 On Savonarolan resurgence in the period 1527–30, see Polizzotto L., *The Elect Nation. The Savonarolan Movement in Florence 1494–1530* (Oxford: 1994) 334–382.

30 See Caravale G., *Forbidden Prayer. Church Censorship and Devotional Literature in Renaissance Italy* (Farnham: 2011) 5–12.

31 Savonarola G., *Prediche sopra Amos e Zaccaria*, 3 vols., ed. P. Ghiglieri (Rome: 1971–72) vol. 3, 234–235. You, fathers, must order that at twenty-four hours on Saturday evening everybody should be at home with your family, and then all of you, men, women, children and servants shall go to a place in your house and here on your knees you shall recite the seven psalms and the litanies […]. And then in the morning […] it will be good that you gather again in the same place, the master and the lady with the children around and the servants, and recite matins for the Virgin.

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lor case erano diventati et vivevano come frati et religiosi, et di molte nobili persone, levandosi al mattutino nelle lor case, et di dì, celebravano il divino uffitio'[32] (In their houses [lay people] used to live like friars and clerics, and many noble people, waking up in the morning in their houses, and during the day, used to celebrate the divine office). I argue that after Savonarola's death the domestic devotion he had inspired contributed to nourishing a domestic cult devoted to the man himself. This was the consequence of the political and religious climate – the cult of Savonarola was forbidden – but also of a shift away from shared prayer to solitary devotions, which fits in well with the more intimate side of the Counter Reformation, characterised by private rather than public meditation.

At the end of the sixteenth century another Dominican friar, Serafino Razzi, led the way to the revision of the Counter-Reformation approach to domestic devotion to Savonarola. In 1598 he took the trouble of replying to his fellow-friar Ambrogio Catarino Politi who, as we have seen, had violently attacked Savonarola's devotees. Contrary to what one may think, Razzi made no attempt to deny that many followers were still venerating the friar in their own houses or their own cells. After all, Savonarola had been sentenced as a heretic, and it would hardly be possible to worship him while submitting to the Roman Catholic Church, one of the two authorities that had contributed to his own condemnation. In spite of that, Razzi claimed the right to venerate Savonarola in private:

> Beatum eum esse sacri canones non negant, quemadmodum nec prohibent eorum cineres pie servare, alioqui multo sanctorum corpora deperiissent si ante illorum solemnem canonizationem servata cum honore non fuissent […] At si quis privatim pro sua devotione velit eum colere […] qui mali est?[33]

32 *La vita del beato Ieronimo* 88. See also 95. More generally, on domestic devotion in early modern Florence, see Ciappelli G., *Memory, Family, and Self. Tuscan Family Books and Other European Egodocuments (14th–18th Century)* (Leiden – Boston: 2014) 82–108.

33 Razzi Serafino, *Brevi risposte alle oppugnazioni di frate Ambrogio Politi Catarino contra la dottrina e contra le profezie del padre fra Ieronimo Savonarola*, Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Palatino 906, fols. 1r–43r (fols. 18r and 19v). Sacred canons do not deny he [Savonarola] is Blessed, and likewise they do not prohibit the devout preservation of his ashes. Otherwise, the bodies of many saints would have deteriorated if they had not been respectfully preserved before their solemn canonisation […] After all, what is wrong with somebody wanting to worship him [Savonarola] privately for his own devotion?

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In addition, Razzi wrote in another work: 'Et questa venerazione [...] tenghiamo appresso di noi privatamente et appresso a Dio [...] con speranza ancora che, quando che sia, per ordine della Santa Chiesa cattolica romana [...] egli [Savonarola] habbia da essere canonizato'[34] ('We keep this veneration [...] with us, privately, and with God [...] in the hope that one day, at the order of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, [...] he [Savonarola] will be canonised'). In short, Razzi claimed the right to a domestic devotion to Savonarola in spite of the friar's condemnation, as if private devotion should not only be accepted *de facto* but recognised *de jure*. As if everybody, inside his own household, should be free to pray to and worship whomever he wanted, including a man condemned as a heretic.

If this sounds odd, and in open contradiction with the Counter Reformation's control over the private sphere, it is worth mentioning the decree that the Congregation of the Holy Office issued only three years later, in September 1601. The decree prohibited only public unauthorised prayers, and this meant that the Church surrendered control over the private devotion.[35] A confirmation of this compromise which was implied in the 1601 decree arrived, shortly after, from Giovanni Paolo Mucanzio, secretary of the Sacred Congregation of the Rites, the Catholic Church's body responsible for the liturgical cult and canonisations. When asked about the legitimacy of the cult of a non-canonised person, he answered: 'il culto e venerazione pubblica [...] non si può né deve dare a nessuno senza licenza o autorità della Sede Apostolica [...] ma la privata divozione e venerazione non si può togliere né levare a nessuno'[36] ('public cult and veneration [...] cannot be given to anybody without licence or authorisation of the Apostolic See [...] but private devotion and veneration cannot be denied to anybody'). The same answer was also given by one of the most powerful and authoritative theologians of Counter-Reformation Italy, Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino: 'an liceat colere non canonizatum, rispondeo licere private cultu, non publico [...] Licet invocare non canonizatum [...] at non liceret in publiciis litaniis'[37] ('whether it is permitted to venerate a non-canonised person, I answer that the private cult is permitted, but not the public one [...] It is permitted to invoke a non-canonised person [...] but not in public litanies'). A manual for inquisitors composed a few years later refers to

34 Razzi Serafino, *Defensione della dottrina, delle profezie e della santità del padre fra Girolamo Savonarola*, ibid. fols. 45r–64r (63v–64r).

35 Caravale, *Forbidden Prayer* 181–183. See also 241–243.

36 Benedictus XIV, *Opera in duodecim tomos distribuita* vol. 2 (*De servorum Dei beatificatione et beatorum canonizatione*) (Rome, Nicola e Marco Pagliarini: 1747) 181.

37 Bellarmino Roberto, *Disputationum de controversiis christianae fidei adversus huius temporis haereticos* vol. 2 (Venice, Giovanni Malachino: 1721) 356.

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the 1601 decree and confirms that toleration towards the private sphere had been assimilated in everyday practice. In his *Sacrum tribunal* printed in Rome in 1648, the inquisitor and theologian Francesco Bordoni explained that the faithful were allowed privately to venerate people who had not been officially canonised by the Church: 'Privatim et occulte in propriis necessitatibus invocari et venerare possunt, quia in decreto prohibetur solum cultus publicus'[38] ('They may invoke and worship [them] in their needs in private and secretly, because the decree forbids only public cults').

The insistence on the word 'private' in all the passages above, and my implicitly equating it with the term 'domestic' calls for a semantic clarification. One may think that the private cult refers to the interior dimension of prayer instead of the actual physical space where prayer was conducted, just like Savonarola's distinction between mental and vocal orations. This is not what was meant, as was made quite clear by the theologian Felice Contelori in one of the major treatises of the time on canonisation, the *Tractatus et praxis de canonizatione sanctorum*, published in 1634. According to Contelori, place is the first criterion to distinguish a public from a private cult: a public cult is one held in a public place.[39] A few decades later another work was even more explicit: in private homes people were allowed to venerate the portrait of a non-canonised person, 'quia est cultus privatus'[40] ('because this is a private cult'). There can be no doubt that the 'private' devotion referred to by Mucanzio, Bellarmino and Bordoni was the same thing as the 'domestic' devotion practised in a household, a convent cell, or another private place. And, most importantly, this was the private devotion that Razzi claimed for his Savonarolan spirituality, and that in the same years the Congregation of the Holy Office renounced control over.

This surrender of control over private devotion certainly comes as a surprise, in view of the fact this was an age when the Inquisition strove to intervene in a number of non-religious aspects of domestic everyday life, such as superstition, fasting, swearing and concubinage. But prayer was something different, and this compromise ultimately allowed a dual practice to emerge, creating the conditions in which certain devotions were prohibited in public but permitted in private spaces. Clearly this is a far cry from the ordinance issued

38 Bordoni Francesco, *Sacrum tribunal iudicum in causis sanctae fidei contra haereticos et de haeresi suspectos* (Rome, Heirs of Corbelletti: 1648) 300.

39 Contelori Felice, *Tractatus et praxis de canonizatione sanctorum* (Lyon, Laurent Durand: 1634) 244. Same interpretation in Scacchi Francesco Fortunato, *De cultu et veneratione servorum dei liber primus* (Rome, ex typographia Vitalis Mascardi: 1639) 749, and others.

40 Leander a SS. Sacramento, *Summa novem partium* (Vienna, Endter: 1706) 667.

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by the Procurator of the Dominican order at the end of the fifteenth century, which sought simply to repress devotion to Savonarola 'in publico vel private'.

The cult of Savonarola was certainly part of the processes known as the 'domestication of the holy' and the 'spiritualization of the household' which have ignited recent scholarly discussions, and not only with reference to Italy.[41] After the Counter-Reformation, these processes involved the transfer of holy objects from sacred places into the household and, as a consequence, the sanctification of domestic space.[42] The transfer of cults into private space clearly might allow the faithful to elude the control of Church authorities that oversaw the forms and contents of religious practice. It is not surprising that some centuries earlier the Carolingian Church conducted the process in reverse and transferred relics and the cults surrounding them from households to monasteries in order to bring them under institutional control.[43] In the sixteenth century the household could be a place of dissent, opposition and resistance to the official religion imposed by the state.[44] With specific reference to early modern Italy, John Bossy observed that 'the Counter-Reformation hierarchy seems to have taken it for granted that household religion was a seed-bed of subversion'.[45] Duke Cosimo I and Archbishop Alessandro de' Medici must have thought the same about the domestic devotion to Savonarola in Florentine houses and convents, but events would soon demonstrate that the friar's legacy was no longer dangerous, neither politically nor religiously.[46] As both the Republican and the Protestant threats had been defused, those few who wished to pray before an image of Savonarola could continue to do so, as long as they kept away from prying eyes.

41 See Walsham A., "Holy Families: The Spiritualization of the Early Modern Household Revisited", in Doran J. – Methuen C. – Walsham A. (eds.), *Religion and the Household, Studies in Church History* 50 (2014) 122–160.

42 Fairchilds C., "Marketing the Counter-Reformation: Religious Objects and Consumerism in Early Modern France", in Adams C. – Censer J.R. – Graham L.J. (eds.), *Visions and Revisions in Eighteenth-Century France* (University Park, Penn.: 1997) 31–57 (49).

43 Smith J.M.H., "Material Christianity in the Early Medieval Household", in *Religion and the Household* 23–46.

44 Perry M.E., "Space of Resistance, Site of Betrayal: Morisco Homes in Sixteenth-Century Spain", in Howe N. (ed.), *Home and Homelessness in the Medieval and Renaissance World* (Notre Dame, IN: 2004) 59–90.

45 Bossy J., "The Counter-Reformation and the People of Catholic Europe", *Past & Present* 47 (1970) 51–70.

46 On the transformation of the perception of Savonarola in the second half of the sixteenth century, see Dall'Aglio S., *Savonarola and Savonarolism* (Toronto: 2010) 139–147.

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CHAPTER 16

Private and Public Devotion in Late Renaissance Italy: The Role of Church Censorship

Giorgio Caravale

Despite the differences in their respective traditions, from the thirteenth century onwards, Franciscan and then Dominican spirituality placed the notion of inward prayer at the heart of their religious discourses. Following St Francis, both St Clare and St Anthony located 'the foundation of contemplative life in the spirit of prayer', while St Bonaventure noted that 'perfect prayer' was a fundamental stage in the mystical ascent towards God.[1] In the fourteenth century, the Dominicans – especially Domenico Cavalca – developed Thomas Aquinas' concept of the spirit, understanding mental prayer as the essence of the contemplative practice of mystical asceticism. Later, Catherine of Siena pronounced that humble, continuous, faithful and disinterested prayer was the instrument through which the soul acquires all virtue',[2] asserting the superiority of mental prayer over spoken prayer. The rich medieval tradition of mental prayer survived throughout the fifteenth century in the thought of great spiritual authorities, such as St Antonino and Ludovico Barbo, until the turn of the sixteenth century when it found its most efficacious expression in the thought of Savonarola.[3]

Savonarola's defence of mental prayer not only acknowledges the superiority of mental prayer over spoken prayer, but explicitly criticises devotion that is outwardly expressed.[4] According to Savonarola, and many other critics of the Roman Curia, public devotion encouraged mechanical recitation over profound spiritual reflection. Spoken prayer, and public ceremonies more generally, should instead recover their original functions as stimuli and

1 Heerinckx J., "Les sources de la théologie mystique de S. Antoine de Padoue", *Revue d'ascétique et de mystiques* 13 (1932) 225–256; Heerinckx J., "La mistica di S. Antonio da Padova", *Studi francescani* 5 (1933) 39–60.

2 Caterina da Siena, *Le lettere*, ed. N. Tommaseo, vol. II (Florence: 1860) 416–418.

3 For an introduction to these topics, see Petrocchi M., *Storia della spiritualità italiana*, vol. I: *Il Duecento, il Trecento e il Quattrocento* (Rome: 1978). See also Getto G., *Letteratura religiosa dal Duecento al Novecento* (Florence: 1967) and Getto G., *Letteratura religiosa del Trecento* (Florence: 1967).

4 See Dall'Aglio's essay in this volume, 383.

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intermediary steps in mankind's passage to God. The faithful should abandon simply chanting them more or less unconsciously throughout the course of the day.[5] This requirement was not only expressed by bitter critics of Rome, such as Savonarola, but was also evident in the treatises of important Church clerics, such as Paolo Giustiniani and Pietro Querini.[6]

Like Martin Luther and others who will be considered shortly, these authors used the term 'private' as a synonym of 'mental'. Prayers recited deep in the conscience – the result of an inner dialogue with God – were defined as 'private' in contrast to spoken prayer, which was also often regarded as 'public'. As the decades passed, these two terms ('public' and 'private') acquired a broader and more cogent meaning. Above all, in the ecclesiastical sources under consideration, the term 'private' refers to all acts of worship performed away from an audience of the faithful, therefore including prayers recited silently and internally in a public place, prayers recited aloud in the privacy of the home and prayers used 'privately' by a confraternity or local religious brotherhood. Instead, the designation 'public' encompassed everything shared with an audience of believers – regardless of its size – on official liturgical occasions.

Martin Luther's work on private devotion and mental prayer forms part of such a line of thought and takes up many of the themes proposed by Savonarola. His discussion inevitably changed the terms of debate. In his *An Exposition of the Lord's Prayer for Simple Laymen*, Luther, like Savonarola, is careful not to disapprove of spoken prayer, but feels that trust is excessively placed in prayers that are verbally expressed. For Luther, as for Savonarola, spoken prayer is a necessary tool for preparing the soul for the inner dialogue with God, which he calls 'the meditation of the heart'.[7] However, when Luther moves from a general reflection on the Lord's Prayer to a detailed analysis of its particular sections, the unmistakable finality of his vision of predestination emerges, and thus marks a clear break from the works by Savonarola. In

5 Savonarola expressed these positions most firmly in two works published in 1492: *Trattato in difensione e commendazione dell'orazione mentale* and *Trattato o vero sermone dell'orazione*, both printed in Florence by Miscomini. Modern versions of these works can been found in Savonarola Girolamo, *Operette spirituali*, ed. M. Ferrara, vol. I (Rome: 1976) 157–185 and 189–224 respectively. See also the discussion by Ferrara, 385–407.

6 Mittarelli Johannes Benedictus – Costadoni Anselmus, *Annales Camaldulenses Ordinis Sancti Benedicti quibus plura interseruntur tum ceteras Italico-monasticas res, tum historiam ecclesiasticam remque diplomaticam illus* (Venetiis, Pasquali Giambattista: 1755–1773), tome IX (1773) fols. 612–719. For a recent Italian translation, see: *Lettera al Papa. Paolo Giustiniani e Pietro Quirini a Leone X*, ed. G. Bianchini, introduction by F. Cardini (Modena: 1995).

7 Luther Martin, *An Exposition of the Lord's Prayer for Simple Laymen*, in *Luther's Works*, American Edition, (Saint Louis – Philadelphia: 1955–), vol. 42: *Devotional Writings*, I, ed. M.O. Dietrich (Philadelphia: 1969) 19–81.

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Luther's interpretation, each section is characterised by a constant recalling of the misery of human nature and an unmistakable invitation to submit one's self to the grace of God, in a pattern that encourages self-denigration and the subsequent exaltation of divine power.[8]

The debate on these themes that developed in the Italian peninsula in the following decades inevitably felt the shock of the religious rift resulting from the Lutheran challenge to Rome. Although Luther did not reject all Roman devotional trappings, by retaining, for instance, the usefulness of 'St Bridget's Fifteen Prayers, rosaries, the crown prayers, the Psalter, etc.',[9] he insisted on the supremacy of the Lord's Prayer over all other prayers.[10] The insistence on a single prayer was taken up and, in many respects, taken to the extreme as a sign of the strong anti-Roman militancy of those in the Italian peninsula who chose to follow in Luther's tracks. Many of Luther's Italian followers declared the supremacy of the Lord's Prayer in terms of its exclusivity as the Sunday prayer, as the only legitimate prayer for good Christians.[11] The 1530s witnessed a proliferation of *Espositioni del Pater noster*, commentaries on the Sunday prayer, which also took up the idea of the exclusivity and superiority of the Lord's Prayer over other devotional prayers with varying degrees of explicitness.[12] This represented a potential threat to the devotional system, which was based on the recitation of a high number of prayers, each repeated at specific times of the day as part of a detailed system of sanctioned spiritual practice. Rome could not remain indifferent to this challenge. By 1547, the Lord's Prayer had been clearly identified as a favourite target of repressive action aimed at exposing all the secret codes used by heterodox Italians. 'This heresy begins with the Our Father and ends with the pike and musket', wrote Alvise Lippomano in 1547 to Cardinal Marcello Cervini, the future Pope Marcellus II.[13] The 1559 Pauline

8 Ibid., 35–43.

9 Ibid., 25.

10 Ibid., 21.

11 Caravale G., *Forbidden Prayer: Church, Censorship and Devotional Literature in Renaissance Italy* (Farnham: 2011) 23–24.

12 Savonarola was among the first to write a commentary on the Lord's Prayer, see *Espositione sul Pater noster* (Florence: 1494), translated from a version in a Latin manuscript, which was then published a few years later (*Expositio orationis dominicae* [Florence, Tubini: 1500]). This text can also be found in Savonarola, *Operette spirituali* 225–277. On the text by Savonarola, see also Prosperi A., "Les commentaires du Pater noster entre les XV et XVI siècles", in *Aux origines du catéchisme en France* (Paris: 1989) 87–105, especially 89.

13 Letter from Bologna, 16th November 1547, quoted by Prosperi A., "Preghiere di eretici. Stancaro, Curione e il Pater Noster", in Erbe M. – Fuglister H. – Furrer K. – Staehelin A. – Wecker R. – Windler C. (eds.), *Querdenken. Dissens und Toleranz im Kandel der Geschichte. Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Hans R. Guggisberg* (Mannheim: 1996) 203–221 (216),

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Index, the first official Roman list of prohibited books, took up this suggestion and transformed it into a concrete measure for censorship. Savonarola's works on mental prayer are listed in the index alongside the anonymous *Espositione dell'oratione del Signore in volgare, composta per un padre non nominato*, a vernacular commentary on the prayer composed for an unnamed father.[14] It is possible that Roman inquisitors intended to target a specific work with this ban, one of the many anonymous works that circulated in the Italian peninsula at that time.[15] However, the general nature of the ban suggests that the inquisitors intended to sanction an entire literary genre, which had been hostage to Italian religious dissidence.

The novelty of this type of *Espositioni* was not limited to the insistence on the primacy and exclusivity of the Lord's Prayer. In the 1530s and 1540s, the distinction between spoken prayer and mental prayer, discussed by Savonarola and Luther in a polemical anti-Roman manner, gradually transformed into a distinction between public and private spheres of devotion. This represented an artificial overlap of two distinct sets of ideas, as opposed to a true reflection of the reality. As noted, the habit of mechanical recitation could characterise both private and public life. A woman could 'mumble Our Fathers' indifferently in the middle of a public ceremony as well as when she was busily attending to her household duties. In other words, prayers could be spoken out loud in public places, such as in churches and town squares, as well as in the privacy of

edited by Buschbell G., *Reformation und Inquisition in Italien um die Mitte des XVI Jahrhunderts* (Padeborn: 1910) 289–290.

14 The Index of 1558 prohibited many of Savonarola's sermons and homilies. The ban was tempered by the clause *quamdiu expurgantur* in the Tridentine Index; cf. *Index des livres interdits*, vol. VIII: De Bujanda J.M. (ed.), *Index de Rome 1557, 1559, 1564. Les premiers index romains et l'index du Concile de Trente* (Sherbrooke – Geneva: 1990) 501–505. For the censorship of Savonarola's works, see Fragnito, G., "La censura ecclesiastica e Girolamo Savonarola", *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 35 (1999) 501–529, and Rozzo U., "Savonarola nell'Indice dei libri proibiti", in Fragnito G. – Miegge M. (eds.), *Girolamo Savonarola: da Ferrara all'Europa* (Florence: 2001) 239–268. The anonymous *Espositione* appeared in the Venice Indices as early as 1549 and 1554; see De Bujanda J.M. (ed.), *Index des livres interdits*, vol. III: *Index de Venise, 1549, Venise et Milan, 1554* (Geneva: 1987) respectively 203–224 and 271 and also remained in the unpromulgated 1590 and 1593 Indices; see De Bujanda J.M. *et alii* (eds.), *Index des livres interdits*, vol. IX: *Index de Rome 1590, 1593, 1596* (Geneva: 1994) 433. On the Pauline and Tridentine Indices, see *Index des livres interdits*, vol. VIII, 258–259. The *Dominicae precationis explicatio*, printed Lugduni, by Gryphum and alios was also banned; cf. *Index des livres interdits*, vol. VIII, 484–485, 638, 660. On these themes, see also Rozzo U., "La cultura italiana nelle edizioni lionesi di S. Gryphe (1531–1541)", *La Bibliofilia* 90 (1988) 161–195.

15 Despite the slight difference in the title, it is possible that the text was written by Francesco Stancaro, who is cited in the following note (note 16).

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one's own home. Similarly, although there was a preference for practising mental prayer within the walls of the home, there was nothing to stop the practice inside churches or even on noisy city streets. What contributed to this conceptual, and indeed semantic, overlap was the intensification of religious clashes in the Italian peninsula between those who sought to defend and disseminate Protestant doctrine at all costs and those who sought to prevent every such manifestation of religious dissent with strong repression. The polarisation that resulted from these religious clashes led heterodox Italians to use the public/private dialectic with increasing anti-Roman intent. These heterodox Italians upheld the private sphere as the only possible place in which they could continue exercising genuine personal religious devotion, the only possible answer to the hypocrisy of the external religious conformity that the Roman authorities demanded by force.

The clear preference for personal and private prayer as an interior refuge from outside conformist pressures is evident, for instance, in the reflections of thinkers such as Francesco Stancaro and Simone Porzio. Developing their writing along the lines of Luther's thought, they emphasised that personal and private prayer was undoubtedly the form of devotion most highly esteemed by God. In their view, interior meditation required mental isolation from the hustle and bustle of public life.[16] Only such meditation could guarantee profound detachment from the routine of daily life, and from earthly ties in general, that obstruct direct dialogue with God. Stancaro's and Porzio's 'camera serrata', or locked chamber, was the chamber of the heart, that most hidden part of the soul on which the faithful must meditate to participate in a fruitful conversation with God. It was preferable (although not necessary) to link this secret hidden chamber to a private physical location in which, once the door had been 'closed', one could 'pray secretly to the father'. Identifying a secret place away from prying eyes, it is possible to interpret these lines written at the end of the 1530s as conveying the need to protect one's privacy from the far-reaching gaze of the inquisitorial authorities.

16 The works referred to are: *Espositione utilima sopra il Pater noster, con duoi devotissimi trattati, uno in che modo Dio esaudisce le orationi nostre, l'altro di penitentia* (Venice, s.n.: 1539) attributed to Francesco Stancaro (see below), and Porzio Simone, *Christianae deprecationis interpretatio* (1538), translated and published in Italian in 1551 by Giovanbattista Gelli under the title of *Modo di orare christianamente con la espositione del Pater noster, fatta da M. Simone Portio Napoletano. Tradotto in lingua Fiorentina, da Giovan Batista Gelli* (in Fiorenza, Lorenzo Torrentino: 1551), eventually republished the following year (1552) in Latin in a modified edition; cf. Del Soldato E., *Simone Porzio. Un aristotelico tra natura e grazia* (Rome: 2010) 135–137.

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A few years later, Francesco Stancaro fled to Switzerland where he professed his reformed beliefs freely. In Switzerland, Stancaro then returned to the first Italian version of the *Espositione*, published anonymously in Venice in 1539, and submitted it for publication alongside other texts in Basel in 1547. This time he published the commentary on the Lord's Prayer with greater freedom than in the first Italian version a few years earlier. Stancaro censored specific details about Italian life, which from his exile in Switzerland might have seemed unnecessary and distant, and of little interest to Protestant readers in Switzerland.[17] Simone Porzio, on the other hand, remained in the Italian peninsula seeking to reach a compromise between his Erasmian and Valdesian religious training, his philosophical Hermeticism and the requirements of Tridentine orthodoxy. The new version of his Latin work on the Lord's Prayer published in 1552 is testimony to this effort of reconciliation. It was more than just a series of literary and formal revisions that transformed the *Interpretatio* into the *Enarratio*. To give just one example, the exaltation of the salvific self-sufficiency of faith that characterises the first version is modified in the second version by the statement that one cannot obtain the heavenly riches of the blessed through one's faith alone but also, and above all, through good works.[18] These two different choices, indeed opposing choices I would say, shared, at least at this time, a common Nicodemistic matrix. In these writings, the invitation to pursue a renewed inner piety, to create a mental and physical space in which to cultivate the essence of one's own faith, became a characteristic of Nicodemism, even if the authors never theorised on their religious choices using this term.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, there was an increasingly strong connection between inner piety and mental prayer on the one hand, and heterodox inclinations (thinly veiled by Nicodemistic attitudes) on the other, which influenced the attitude of Roman authorities in devotional matters. Defenders of Catholic orthodoxy developed a certain degree of diffidence, if not open hostility, towards the crypto-Protestant position. Consequently, in the following decades Counter-Reformation religiosity characterised itself by a preference for open displays of piety, performed publicly, often sung, but in all instances practised collectively, within Church walls or in the open spaces

17 Prosperi, "Preghiere di eretici" 50–52.

18 As a precautionary measure, the work was dedicated to Cardinal Alvarez de Toledo, inquisitor and relative of Pedro de Toledo. On this process of rewriting, see Del Soldato, *Simone Porzio* 145–147; Del Soldato E., "La preghiera di un alessandrinista: i Commenti al *Pater* di Simone Porzio", *Rinascimento* 46 (2006) 53–71.

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of popular missions.[19] For Rome, chanting, and the collective performance of prayer more generally, was the preferred method of regulating the spiritual life of worshippers who were not always culturally and doctrinally well-informed. The most famous work of Carlo Borromeo, the leading figure of the Counter-Reformation, is his *Lettera pastorale e istituto dell'orazione comune* (1572). In this work, it is the collective dimension of prayer that the Archbishop of Milan upholds, the dimension that is 'able to ingrain an extraordinary force on one's mind', 'that holy prayer', 'the need of which is common to all'.[20]

However, despite this preference for the collective and communal dimension of devotion, the Counter-Reformation Church was not prepared to renounce individual prayer or the private dimension of devotion more generally. Not only was this because private devotion was rooted in a rich and centuries-old theological tradition, as mentioned at the start of this essay, but some of the most intense manifestations of Catholic devotion were expressed through this channel. Private devotion had a fundamental role in the spiritual life of worshippers. It was therefore regulated as much as possible, but not demonised. Only after the central decades of the sixteenth century, after the height of the anti-Protestant battle and after the eradication of the danger of Protestant heresy in the Italian peninsula, did Rome, in the final decades of the sixteenth century, devote most of its energy to reviving the tradition of interior and private spaces of devotion. Rome did not, of course, stop intervening in areas that risked encouraging practices as dangerous as the Lutheran message. The new danger was perceived to have two diametrically opposed positions: the aristocratic (and clerical) position of mysticism and the popular position of superstitious devotional practice. Within the confinement of convent cells or concealed behind the walls of stately homes, it was not uncommon for inner meditation through prayer to take the form of an intense devotional fervour. Severing earthly ties and collapsing institutional and Church barriers, such intense fervour led to the total abandonment of one's self in mystical union with God and a state of spiritual intoxication often associated with impeccable purity.[21] Conversely, in more modest city or country homes, the intimacy of

19 Prosperi A., *Tribunali della coscienza. Inquisitori, confessori, missionari* (Turin: 1996), esp. part III.

20 'capace di imprimerle una forza straordinaria', 'questa santa orazione' of which 'il bisogno è a tutti comune'. See Di Filippo Bareggi C., "Libri e letture nella Milano di San Carlo Borromeo", in Raponi N. – Turchini A. (eds.), *Stampa, libri e letture a Milano nell'età di Carlo Borromeo* (Milan: 1992) 39–96, esp. 89; Caravale, *Forbidden Prayer* 90.

21 Among the texts in the rich bibliography on this topic, see Novi Chavarria E., *Monache e gentildonne: un labile confine. Poteri politici e identità religiose nei monasteri napoletani: secoli XVI–XVII* (Milan: 2001); Jacobson Schutte A., *Aspiring Saints: Pretense*

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the domestic space could lead to superstitious rituals surrounding objects and words, which attributed magical powers to the repetition of pre-printed formulas or the enactment of specific bodily gestures.[22] Catholic orthodoxy was thus threatened on two fronts: by excessive focus on the inner life and by the excessive misuse of outward signs.

Church censorship and the Roman Inquisition played important roles in the post-Tridentine decades in trying to restrain these opposing devotional excesses. On the one hand, the spiritual fathers, noble ladies and passionate abbesses who trespassed over the fine line separating orthodoxy from heresy with their mystical experiences were put on trial by Rome without hesitation.[23] The work of the Inquisition was accompanied by censorship that controlled all texts that manifested evidence of these experiences. Censorship aimed to erase the margins of human free will, watering down its role in the state of sinlessness resulting from mystical union with God.[24] On the other hand, censors and inquisitors created a series of prohibitions aimed at identifying and isolating sources of devotional superstition. For instance, these attacked the use of rubrics, formulas composed of a few words that preceded or concluded a prayer and informed the worshipper of the most effective way to recite the text. Or they listed titles of superstitious prayers that should be banned from the prescribed repertoire of a devout Catholic.[25]

Over the course of the following decades, this dual process of control and repression, aimed at both high and low, became increasingly difficult to implement. The first reason for this was that these censorial measures had been

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of Holiness, Inquisition, and Gender in the Republic of Venice, 1618–1750 (Baltimore, Md.: 2001); Sluhovsky M., *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, & Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: 2007).

22 Recent scholarship has however demonstrated that this dichotomy is more complicated than it was supposed. On the 'elusive and slippery term' of superstition, especially explored from the point of view of 'theologically educated people', see now the important work by Cameron E., *Enchanted Europe: Superstition, Reason, and Religion 1250–1750* (Oxford: 2010). A good selection of relevant essays on this theme has been recently collected by Parish H. (ed.), *Superstition and Magic in Early Modern Europe. A Reader* (London – New Delhi – New York – Sidney: 2015). See also essays by Irene Galandra Cooper, 220–243, and Katie Tycz in this volume, 244–271.

23 See Modica M., *Infetta dottrina: inquisizione e quietismo nel Seicento* (Rome: 2009).

24 Malena A., *L'eresia dei perfetti. Inquisizione romana ed esperienze mistiche nel Seicento italiano* (Rome: 2003).

25 On this act of censorship, see Caravale, *Forbidden Prayer* 191–223; and also Fragnito G., *Proibito capire. La Chiesa e il volgare nella prima età moderna* (Bologna: 2005); Fantini M.P., "Saggio per un catalogo bibliografico dai processi dell'Inquisizione: orazioni, scongiuri, libri di segreti (Modena 1571–1608)", *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento* 25 (1999) 587–668.

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conceived as part of a wider project of liturgical standardisation that soon proved problematic. It was unrealistic to think that the Church could control every private devotional space, every single local cult, every expression of piety practised by each individual or by each religious community, whether loosely or clearly defined (fraternities, companies, or other). The second reason for this difficulty of implementation was that the Church authorities who should have been rooting out hidden heterodox devotional manifestations were themselves deeply absorbed in both mystical culture and magic-superstitious culture.[26] From the late sixteenth to the early seventeenth century, Rome moved increasingly openly towards the legitimisation of two channels of devotional expression. Establishing the boundaries of two devotional spheres, one private and one public, Rome made the same distinction that had been made in the mid-sixteenth century under the auspices of Nicodemian dissimulation. With its formal sanctioning, official status was given to the distinction, bringing it to some extent out into the open.

Among the most important passages of this Church policy was the decree on litanies issued by Pope Clement VIII in September 1601. Faced with the uncontrolled proliferation of new prayers, often containing 'inept, dangerous and erroneous' statements, the decree prohibited all litanies that were not contained in breviaries, missals, Roman pontificals and rituals that had already been approved by Rome. Anyone who dared *publish* new prayers or recite them *publicly* would incur the penalties established by the bishop and the inquisitor. By emphasising, as did the text of the decree, that public dissemination of prayers (through publication or even oral transmission) was the position that was most feared and would be most severely punished, the Roman authorities tacitly admitted the existence of a double regime, one which was clearly more tolerant of the private use of these same prayers.[27] The editor responsible for the preparation of the first draft of the decree also tolerated existing collections of prayers for private use upon examination by ordinary bishops or by inquisitors. However, the proposal was not accepted in the final printed version of the decree.[28]

26 The work that remains fundamental on this issue is Thomas K., *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (New York: 1997 [first ed. London: 1971]). See also the points made by Burke P., *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: 1978); and more recently Bouza F., *Corre manuscripto. Una historia cultural del Siglo de Oro* (Madrid: 2001).

27 Caravale, *Forbidden Prayer* 181–182.

28 Ibid., 183.

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During these years, a similar debate took place a few hundred metres away from the seat of the Roman Inquisition between the members of a young Congregation of the Blessed called by the Pope to discuss and to approve devotions bestowed on those who had died in the odour of sanctity but who had not yet been canonised by Rome. Some argued that, in the name of custom and the preservation of local devotional traditions, all expressions of piety should be permitted. Others considered this position to be a capitulation by the Church authority. The compromise reached within the young Congregation, thanks especially to the mediation of two authoritative cardinals, Baronio and Bellarmino, was to authorise people to carry out, in private, devotional acts that were prohibited in public. In other words, people were allowed to worship men and women who had not yet been officially canonised by the Church in private, while it was forbidden in public.[29] The aim of the compromise was to safeguard personal or communal devotional practices (in the sense of community of faith) rooted in worshippers' emotions, so long as these practices did not elicit public scandal. However, behind these measures, which drew a sharp distinction between private and public spheres of devotion, lay more than a fear of public scandal. Surviving documents that have emerged from the archives of the Roman Inquisition offer interesting insights into the cultural and mental attitude with which Clement VIII promoted these measures. In his discussion of the problem of applying excessively strict censorial measures, the pontiff sought to reach a compromise between the harshness of current legislation and the obvious difficulties in its implementation. In particular, Roman censorial authorities were faced with the task of identifying and correcting all the forbidden books listed on the Index with the clause *donec expurgatur*, that is all those volumes that were prohibited until the authorities completed the work of 'cleaning' and correction. Clement VIII suggested that the Congregation of the Index ask readers and sellers of suspect books to submit a full note of the titles held, leaving the Congregation the discretion of granting reading permission after having thoroughly verified the personal qualities of the applicant.[30]

But the pontiff's proposal was not limited to this. Clement VIII also proposed that readers should be allowed to keep forbidden books near their

29 See Gotor M., *I beati del papa. Santità, Inquisizione e obbedienza in età moderna* (Florence: 2002), and more recently Noyes R.S., "On the Fringes of Center: Disputed Hagiographic Imagery and the Crisis Over the *Beati moderni* in Rome ca. 1600", *Renaissance Quarterly* 64 (2011) 800–846. See also Dall'Aglio's essay in this volume, 386.

30 Reference is made to the proposal made in 1594 by Clemente VIII in his *Animadversiones*; on this point, see Frajese V., *Nascita dell'indice. La censura ecclesiastica dal Rinascimento alla Controriforma* (Brescia: 2006) 155–156.

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person without reading them until the *Index expurgatorius* was published.[31] This aimed to resolve the practical problems that the Roman policies of censorship faced at the end of the century. The Roman censorship machine was under serious strain due to economic problems and a lack of adequate staff.[32] It was very difficult to prepare the material for the correction of individual volumes, and impossible to arrange for the preparation of newly corrected versions of thousands of copies of volumes awaiting their attention. It was thus better to leave the task of identifying individual volumes to readers and printers, and to oversee the correction of these same volumes as and when the censors provided detailed guidance. Ultimately, only the first of these two proposals was approved by the Congregation of the Index immediately.[33]

Regardless of the immediate success or not of his policies, Clement VIII was to outline the direction that the censorial apparatus would take in the following decades. He declared worshippers responsible for their own devotional space. Between the moment of acquiring an offending volume and the moment of reading the text, the Pope identified a grey area in which worshippers and their consciences were the sole judges. Beneath these propositions lay a form of censorship based on a dual level of control (exterior/interior or public/private). This transformed the reading of correctable books into an issue of personal conscience and internal judgement, in relation to which the inquisitorial authorities needed to take a step back.[34] The pontiff's second proposal was only adopted into censorship practices a few years later when readers were invited, more or less formally, to personally correct the amendable forbidden

31 Reference is made to the *Indicis librorum expurgandorum in studiosorum gratiam confecti Tomus primus. In quo quinqinginta auctorum libri prae coeteris desiderati emendatur per Fr. Jo. Mariam Brasichellen. Sacri Palatii Apostolici Magistrum in unum corpus redactus et publicae commoditati aeditus* (Rome, ex Typographia R. Cam. Apost.: 1607). On the turbulent fortunes of this *Index Expurgatorius*, of which only fifty copies were printed in 1607 before being immediately suspended, see Fragnito G., "Aspetti e problemi della censura espurgatoria", in *L'Inquisizione e gli storici. Un cantiere aperto*, Atti del Convegno dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rome, 24–25 giugno 1999 (Rome: 2000) 161–178; Fragnito G., "«In questo vasto mare de libri prohibiti et sospesi tra tanti scogli di varietà et controversie»: la censura ecclesiastica tra la fine del Cinquecento e i primi del Seicento", in Stango C. (ed.), *Censura ecclesiastica e cultura politica in Italia tra Cinquecento e Seicento* (Florence: 2001) 1–35; now also in Fragnito G., *Cinquecento italiano. Religione, cultura e potere dal Rinascimento alla Controriforma* (Bologna: 2011) 325–364; Rebellato E., "Il miraggio dell'espurgazione. L'indice di Guanzelli del 1607", *Società e storia* 31 (2008) 715–742.

32 Godman P., *The Saint as Censor: Robert Bellarmine between Index and Inquisition* (Leiden – Boston: 2000).

33 Frajese V., "La politica dell'indice dal tridentino al clementino (1571–1596)", *Archivio italiano di storia della pietà* 11 (1998) 269–356, esp. 328; Frajese, *Nascita dell'indice* 156.

34 Caravale, *Forbidden Prayer* 186.

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books in their possession on the basis of the censorial instructions issued by Rome (except, of course, for books that were prohibited *omnino*). Anyone in possession of an amendable volume on the index (a volume condemned with the Latin formula *donec expurgatur*) should identify the names and places to be deleted – following instructions given by the Roman censors. They should personally attend to this censorship by striking the texts through with a line of ink or the stroke of a pen. Readers and printers therefore had to regulate themselves, learning to recognise (and apply) the limit beyond which their personal reading was dangerous and, therefore, punishable by the inquisitorial authorities.[35] The absence of official Roman corrections relating to many of the books on the indices condemned with the words *donec corrigantur* made this practice much more difficult to achieve than had originally been imagined by Church leaders. In the *Index Expurgatorius* of 1607, the index that should have contained all the corrections approved by Rome to date, we find information relating to only fifty works, of a total of over three hundred amendable volumes.[36] The attentiveness of some local censors and inquisitors could compensate for this weak system only a little.

The distinction between public and private devotional spheres, created in the mid-sixteenth century under the auspices of Nicodemism and understood as a way to evade increasing Church repression, was thus endorsed by Rome at the end of the century. The success of this appropriation is related to the particular manner in which Rome applied the distinction. On one hand, Rome allowed the existence of a private devotional sphere. But, on the other hand, Rome did not appreciate the idea that this private sphere be filled with ideas diverging from its own religious teaching, and thus strove to fill it with practices and doctrines true to Catholic orthodoxy and the Counter-Reformation project. Although the worst of the anti-Protestant struggle was over, the conditions that had led to the emergence of the distinction half a century earlier had not vanished. On the contrary, a dialectic between the pressure of external rules and the sphere of individual conscience had instead developed. As a consequence of the Protestant challenge and the repressive Roman response of the mid-sixteenth century, this tension fundamentally shaped Italian approaches to religious control. Once Rome had defeated the menace posed by Protestant doctrines circulating in the Italian peninsula, it introduced an ambitious project of religious and cultural discipline to control diverse areas of

35 For an introduction to this topic, see Savelli R., *Censori e giuristi: storie di libri, di idee e di costumi* (*secoli XVI–XVII*) (Milan: 2011); Cavarzere M., *La prassi della censura dell'Italia del Seicento: tra repressione e mediazione* (Rome: 2011).

36 See above, note 31.

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human knowledge and action. A project of this nature inevitably expanded the scope of this dialectical opposition. It is no coincidence that the decades bridging the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are often referred to as the age of dissimulation *par excellence*, the age when the individual felt the pressing need to learn and master external appearances whilst concealing the inner space of the conscience from outer gaze in fields of politics and faith as well as morality.[37] The increased pressure and external constraints that limited each individual went hand in hand with the construction of a private, physical and mental space, distinct from the public space, in which the individual could cultivate his or her own individual conscience. It was a process that could develop further and more fully in a society in which the dialectic between public and private spheres evolved from an association with specific situations in individual cases to a permanent structural element common to the whole culture.[38]

This cultural process is exemplified by libertine culture. Libertinism, a movement that has been called the anti-clericalism of the Counter-Reformation, took a valuable lesson from these external conditions.[39] Libertinism was thus able to seize and conquer the sphere of the private conscience, a conscience that was inner, independent, secular and closed in on itself. One of the defining traits of seventeenth-century Italian libertine culture is the distance between the freedom of language, in terms of form and content, in private conversations from the (relative) moderation of language found in printed works. In other words, the freedom that was granted to libertine culture was filtered through the imposition (and acceptance) of the division between orality and writing, and between (collective) private and public spheres. What could be lawfully shared between people in the intimacy of a salon, could not be lawfully disclosed to the public in the press.[40]

At the end of the sixteenth century and start of the seventeenth, the ambiguity (and audacity) of the challenge thrown from Rome was to exploit the dialectic between external pressures and the inner space of conscience – that Rome had contributed decisively to forming – in order to construct a religious

37 Finally on this theme, see Snyder J.R., *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe* (Berkeley: 2009).

38 This movement consists of the semantic shifting between Nicodemism and dissimulation, starting from the mid-sixteenth century onwards.

39 For the definition used in the text cf. Spini G., *Ricerca dei libertini: la teoria dell'impostura delle religioni nel Seicento italiano* (Florence: 1983; 1 ed. 1950) 13.

40 On these aspects of libertine culture, see Pintard R., *Le libertinage érudit dans la première moitié du XVII^e siècle* (Paris: 1943) 209–270, and above all Cavaillé J.-P., *Dis/simulations: Jules-César Vanini, François La Mothe Le Vayer, Gabriel Naudé, Louis Machon et Torquato Accetto: religion, morale et politique au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: 2002).

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and conformist individual conscience which opposed the autonomous and secular libertine conscience. It was to construct a kind of superego that was more royalist than the king, to construct a private individual conscience in which external conditions were observed better than they could be in the public sphere. The increasing role of confession in the post-Tridentine decades moved in this same direction. Even though the confessional was devised in the second half of the sixteenth century (in Borromean Milan) as an instrument of social discipline and control, a sort of open space where the behaviour of the penitent and the priest could be controlled from the outside, it did not alter the fact that the sacrament of confession was valued as a place of intimacy where secrets could be revealed and hidden outside the reach of the law (seen as an 'external forum') and a place that would allow the existence of legitimate secrets of the heart and mind ('internal forum').[41] By closely binding confession and the work of the Inquisition, or rather denying absolution to those who had not confessed their sins of heresy to an inquisitor, Rome transformed the conscience into a silent echo chamber of its own external rules and regulations.[42] Even the widespread spontaneous appearances of worshippers before a judge of faith, which was strongly encouraged by ecclesiastical ranks during the seventeenth century as a form of self-denunciation of deviant behaviour, sought to make worshippers internalize the formal (public) prohibitions imposed on them by censorial and inquisitorial authorities.[43]

Rome thus tried to exploit one of the most typical features of the Counter-Reformation to its own advantage, a feature that it had contributed to creating: the division between private and public spheres that is implicit in every act of dissimulation. The result was inevitably ambivalent. In one way, worshippers' internalisation of prohibitions was key to the success of the cultural project of the Counter-Reformation. An example of this process is the *caute lege*, a clause first introduced in the 1606 Index issued by Brisighella, the Master of the Sacred

41 de Boer W., *The Conquest of the Soul: Confession, Discipline, and Public Order in Counter-Reformation Milan* (Leiden – Boston: 2001); Rittgers R.K., *The Reformation of the Keys: Confession, Conscience, and Authority in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge, Ma. – London: 2004).

42 On the topic of confession, see Tentler T.N., *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton, N.J.: 1977); Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza*; Rusconi R., *L'ordine dei peccati: la confessione tra Medioevo ed età moderna* (Bologna: 2002); Lavenia V., *L'infamia e il perdono: tributi, pene e confessione nella teologia morale della prima età moderna* (Bologna: 2004).

43 On spontaneous appearances before a judge of faith, see the useful remarks in Kermol E., *La rete di Vulcano. Inquisizione, libri proibiti e libertini nel Friuli del Seicento* (Trieste: 1990); and Visintin D., *L'attività dell'inquisitore fra Giulio Missini in Friuli, 1645–1653: l'efficienza della normalità* (Trieste: 2008).

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Palace, and subsequently adopted by many Spanish indices, which invited the Catholic reader to read certain volumes 'with caution'. This was an important step in assigning individual and collective responsibility to the reader, moving towards the internalisation of censorship measures by the reader, which was the longest-lasting and most productive result of inquisitorial action. The more or less explicitly set objectives of censorship – which were largely achieved – involved introducing doubt and scrupulousness as constant elements into daily relationships with books and transforming the reader into an accomplice and an informant.[44] In other ways, however, the formalisation of a double regime allowed worshippers and the clergy to practise a double standard, in terms of their devotional practices. However, the freedom and protection that the private sphere afforded was not always interpreted with the rigor and sense of personal responsibility that Baronio and Bellarmino had demanded in private in the early seventeenth century with their strict control of devotional forms.[45] There were those, even among ecclesiastical ranks, who took advantage of these spaces of freedom to carve out areas of deeply discordant behaviour away from the rigid external rules made public by Rome. In some cases, Rome could not intervene, in many others Rome did not want to intervene. There are many examples of the ambiguous stance taken by the ecclesiastical authorities towards libertines, who were guaranteed a certain level of impunity by their influential protectors on condition that they made a clear distinction between the public aspect of published works and the private realm of conversations between associates. In Rome, for example, a warm welcome was given to a group of 'déniasés d'Italie' led by Gabriel Naudé, a member of the Barberini family and librarian to Cardinal Guido da Bagni and Jean-Jacques Bouchard. In Venice, the Academy of the Unknowns (Accademia degli Incogniti) were protected by patrons and a network of relations that guaranteed them impunity and a peaceful life as long as they kept their discussions in an esoteric sphere and showed formal deference towards the precepts of the Church.[46]

Fundamentally, Rome knew that this double standard was necessary in order to consolidate the Catholic Church as an institution and for the success

44 See Peña M., *Escribir y prohibir. Inquisición y censura en los Siglos de Oro* (Madrid: 2015) 214–225; Fragnito G., "La colpa di leggere nella prima età moderna", in Dall'Olio G. – Malena A. – Scaramella P. (eds.), *Per Adriano Prosperi*, vol. I: *La fede degli italiani* (Pisa: 2011) 171–182; Fragnito G., "Le letture sospette: prospettiva di ricerca sui controlli ecclesiastici", in Vega M.J. – Nakládalová I. (eds.), *Lectura y culpa en el siglo XVI. Reading and Guilt in the 16th Century* (Bellaterra, Barcelona: 2012) 19–44.

45 Cf. Caravale, *Forbidden Prayer* 245–249.

46 Pintard, *Le libertinage érudit* 209–270; Cavarzere, *La prassi della censura* 224; Infelise M., *I padroni del libro. Il controllo sulla stampa in età moderna* (Rome – Bari: 2014) 141.

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of its attempts at control. For some, the double standard was a necessary price to pay. For others, it was a difficult element to eliminate in the extremely ambitious Counter-Reformation project: it was impossible to guarantee the total pervasiveness of its measures of control. For all, it was considered a price that could be quietly tolerated. One of the ways in which the censorship authorities institutionalised a mechanism of dispensation from rules otherwise presented as inflexible was the system of *licentiae legendi* ('reading permits'), devised to favour some individuals by exempting them from the need to observe bans on reading prohibited works.[47]

Such ambiguity did not escape the attention of the most perceptive external observers. In the early years of the seventeenth century, an English bishop put into sharp focus the separation between theory and practice, indeed, between appearance and reality, which characterised Italian religious life. In his *Relation* on the 'state of religion', the English bishop Edwin Sandys, who was stationed in the Italian peninsula, criticised the incurable rift between the Catholic doctrine taught in the 'schools' and the religious practices of worshippers. 'This religion', he wrote, 'seemeth notwithstanding at this day, not so corrupt in the very doctrine and in Their Schooles […] as it is in the Practise thereof, and in the usage among Themselves'.[48] The outer, public and formal face of the Church only corresponded partially with the private religion practised by the clergy and worshippers. Sandys' testimony was picked up two decades later by the famous Venetian jurist, Paolo Sarpi, who used it to fuel relentless anti-Roman controversy. In 1625, he translated and completed Sandys' *Relation* noting, among other things, the double standard implicit in many religious practices, first of all, in prayer: 'schools do not teach that prayer is pleasing to God only with the devotion of the heart; in practice, both public and private prayers are recited by voice only, and people think that they have satisfied their debt in

47 On this system and the controversies that surrounded its implementation, see Frajese V., "Le licenze di lettura tra vescovi e inquisitori. Aspetti della politica dell'Indice dopo il 1596", *Società e storia* 86 (1999) 767–818; Baldini U., "Il pubblico della scienza nei permessi di lettura dei libri proibiti delle Congregazioni del Sant'Uffizio e dell'Indice: verso una tipologia professionale e disciplinare", in Stango C. (ed.), *Censura ecclesiastica e cultura* 171–201.

48 *A Relation of the state of religion: and with what Hopes and Policies it hath beene framed, and is maintained in the severall states of these western parts of the world* (London, Printed for Simon Waterson dwelling in Paules Churchyard at the signe of the Crowne: 1605) fol. A3v. On this work, see Cozzi G., "Sir Edwin Sandys e la *Relazione dello Stato della Religione*", *Rivista Storica italiana* 79 (1967) 1095–1121, and more recently, Prosperi A., "Lo stato della religione tra l'Italia e il mondo: variazioni cinquecentesche sul tema", *Studi storici* 56 (2015) 29–48.

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this way'.[49] He theorised that private devotion should remain separate in register and in intensity from public devotion, which should be practised with the heart and not lips. In practice, however, private devotion strongly resembled public devotion, which was mechanically recited out loud without any inner engagement.[50] Of course, Sandy and Sarpi were biased observers, roused by a profound dissent from Rome and what Rome represented in terms of religious doctrine and earthly power. However, their observations were on target. The distance between school and practice, between appearance and reality, between public and private, was a feature of Counter-Reformation society and, fundamentally, we might suggest, of every system of power. Each of their own accord, the libertines on one hand, and the champions of orthodoxy on the other, tried to exploit this distance to their own advantage. Although following very different paths, both marked an important step in the arduous journey towards modernity.

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49 *Relazione dello stato della Religione, e con quali dissegni et arti ella è stata fabricata e maneggiata in diversi stati di queste occidentali parti del mondo*, in Sarpi P., *Lettere a Gallicani e Protestanti, Relazione dello Stato della Religione, Trattato delle materie beneficiarie*, eds. G. and L. Cozzi (Turin: 1978) 51–88 (56); Caravale, *Forbidden Prayer* 239.

50 On this topic, see the significant works by Beccaria G., Sicuterat. *Il latino di chi non lo sa: Bibbia e liturgia nell'italiano e nei dialetti* (Milan: 1999), and Waquet F., *Latin, or, The Empire of the Sign: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (London; New York: 2001).

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CHAPTER 17

Contested Devotions: Space, Identities and Religious Dissent in the Apothecary's Home

Joanna Kostylo

The wave of religious reform that swept Italy in the first half of the sixteenth century challenged Catholic institutions, dogmas, ceremonies and everyday religious life in an unprecedented way. Mingled with the influence of Erasmus and northern Protestantism, it mobilised people regardless of class, gender or educational status to express their religious needs and to interpret the meaning of the sacred for themselves, wishing to 'live according to their own brains',[1] to 'pray quietly at home' with no need for 'decorated altars and sounding bells of the material churches,' as some of them declared.[2]

Well before the events of the Reformation, the laity turned their homes into a refuge from the devotional formalism of the institutional Church. While often inspired by civic cults and other forms of communal piety, the laity actively and creatively interpreted their relation to the divine in the domestic sphere.[3] But as confessional lines hardened in the wake of the Council of Trent (1545–1563), a concern for inward-looking spirituality, domesticity, solitude and isolation often turned into necessity. Thus when in 1575 the Venetian apothecary Silvestro Gemma shut the door of his pharmacy to isolate himself from the sound of the litanies and drama of the Corpus Christi procession, which

1 Archivio di Stato di Venezia (Hereafter ASV), *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 18, Dossier Gherlandi, 14 October 1561, fol. 15: 'perché vogliano viver secondo il lor cervello'.

2 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 40, Dossier Nicolò Guidozzo, 11 February 1576, fol. 14r: 'sia meglio dir l'oratione in casa quietamente che in chiesa, per il tumulto delle persone'; b. 37, Dossier Ioannes Baptista Michael (1573) fol. 32r: 'tanto il far oration in casa et in altro loco, come andar in chiesa: et che l'andare ad essi tempi e chiese et ivi basar altari, ornarli, sonar campane, et altre cose che si fan in esse chiese materiali' non era 'necessario per la salute'. Cf. Seidel Menchi S., *Erasmo in Italia: 1520–1580* (Turin: 1987) 104.

3 Vauchez A., *The Laity in the Middle Ages: Religious Belief and Devotional Practices*, ed. and intro. D. Bornstein, trans. M.J. Schneider (South Bend, IN: 1993); Kieckhefer R., "Major Currents in Late Medieval Devotion", in McGinn B. – Meyerhoff J. (eds.), *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation* (New York, 1987) 75–108. For Italy specifically see, for example, Bornstein D., "Spiritual Kinship and Domestic Devotions", in Brown J.C. – Davis R.C. (eds.), *Gender and Society in Renaissance Italy* (New York: 1998) 173–192.

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offended his Protestant ears and eyes, his religious experience was distinctively different from those who leaned over the windows to watch the flamboyant pageantry of civic processions, or lit fashionable *cesendelli* to illuminate the images of Virgin Mary which adorned their homes.

What did it mean, then, for the non-Catholic members of the community to experience their faith at home? While they were no longer able, nor willing, to look to 'material churches' for spiritual support and fulfilment, could they hinge their new religiosity on the existing rituals and patterns of domestic piety? And to what extent were their religious identities formed and informed by the everyday realities of family life and the material needs of the household, or performed in response to the religious and cultural pressures of the Church, which did not hesitate to dictate divine precepts in matters such as diet, health regimen and sexuality?

In this essay, I propose to explore these questions and sensibilities through various facets of domestic life, focusing on a particular kind of Renaissance household: the homes of Venetian apothecaries, where medical, domestic and devotional spheres converged. This in turn allows me to explore a broader set of considerations not usually considered in accounts of domestic piety, namely domestic health regimens, sexuality, dietary prescriptions, attendance to the sick, as well as communal reading of the Bible, music playing and other forms of organised sociability like participation in public processions. To document these various aspects I use Inquisition sources, which are naturally problematic, not least because they often denote the absence rather than presence of religious observance and expose irreverent behaviour and acts of iconoclasm. Yet this in itself provides a valuable insight into Catholic and non-Catholic assumptions about the right or wrong use of devotional texts, images and objects or other forms of expression, while the scrupulous investigations of the Inquisitors allow us to enter the private lives and spaces of ordinary people and discover what it meant for them to be a 'good Christian' or to live 'like a beast' in one's home.

1 Those Who Live at Home or Apotheca

In sixteenth-century Italy, apothecaries were expected to be on call at night and keep their *botteghe* open on Sundays and public feasts to ensure that essentials such as medications, wax torches for funerals and civic processions and other necessities were readily available. This meant that apothecaries usually lived above their workshops, running households in which the boundaries

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between occupational and domestic space were blurred.[4] Hence, apothecaries were often defined as those 'who live at home or in the drugstore' ('vive in casa o nell'Apotheca'), as the family of the *aromatarius* Zuan Donato of Vicenza was described.[5] The composite household of Silvestro Gemma, the owner of the pharmacy at the sign of the Two Doves (*li do Colombi, le Colombine*), which was operational in Venice from ca. 1550 until 1650 is another case in point.[6]

This was a medium-sized Venetian house situated in Rio Terrà della Maddalena near the church of San Marcuola, and consisting of the ground floor workshop and retail outlet lining the street, and the two-storey multi-family unit above. The parents Silvestro and Elena Gemma lived there with their four children: young Lucietta and her sister, and two adult sons Gian Battista and Marcantonio, who brought their wives Aurora and Marietta into the paternal home.[7] As was the case in many artisanal shops, the Gemmas had a small labour force of apprentices (*garzoni*), Piero of Milan and Zuan and Martino of Treviso, living on the premises. They all lived together and helped

4 On the illegal trade and production of drugs at night see, ASV, Provveditori alla Sanità, Capitolari, b. 6, nr 20, 20 November 1310, published in Monticolo G., *I capitolari delle arti veneziane sottoposte alla Giustizia e poi alla Giustizia Vecchia, dalle origini al 1330* (Rome: 1896). For night duties and opening times of Venetian pharmacies as distinct from other shops, see Welch E., *Shopping in the Renaissance. Consumer Cultures in Italy, 1400–1600* (London and New Haven: 2005) 112; Welch E., "Space and spectacle in the Renaissance Pharmacy", *Medicina e storia* 15 (2008) 127–158 (135). For parallel cases of bakers and other artisans who lived above their shops see Palumbo Fossati I., *Dentro le case. Abitare a Venezia nel Cinquecento* (Venice: 1984); and Cavallo S., "The Artisan's Casa", in Ajmar-Wollheim M. – Dennis F. (eds.), *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, exh. cat. (London: 2006) 352–355. On the fluidity of domestic boundaries see the fundamental work of Cohen E.S. – Cohen T.V., "Open and Shut: The Social Meanings of the Cinquecento Roman House", *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 9/1 (Fall – Winter 2001–2002) 61–84.

5 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 6, Dossier 'Il Colombina.'

6 Silvestro Gemma and his heirs continued to run their shop well into the next century, and his grandson Giovanni Francesco Gemma is still recorded at *li do Colombi* in 1621 (see infra). A note dated 1650: *Delle Insegne di Botteghe nelle quali già si soleva esercitare la professione di specier Medicinale, et hora sono serrate* (Venice, Museo Civico Correr, Mariegola A., c. 279), which enlists *li do Colombi* as no longer active, provides *terminus ante quem* for the closure of this pharmacy. Cf. Dian G., *Cenni storici sulla farmacia veneta*, 7 vols. (Venice: 1900–1908) vol. 5 (1905) 36.

7 On this family see, ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 20, Dossier 'Zuanbattista Gemma'; b. 37, Dossier 'Gemma, Giò Battista; b. 80, Dossier 'Per Domo Marco, Gemma Aurora'. See also, Martin J.J., *Venice's Hidden Enemies* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: 1993) 140–141; Ambrosini F., *Storie di patrizi e di eresia nella Venezia del '500* (Milan: 1999) *ad vocem*. On their pharmacy as a site for heterodox activities, see Kostylo J., "Pharmacy as a Centre for Protestant Reform in Renaissance Venice", *Renaissance Studies* 30/2 (2015) 236–253. For pharmacies as centres of unorthodox discussions see, de Vivo F., "Pharmacies as Centres of Communication in Early Modern Venice", *Renaissance Studies* 21/4 (2007) 504–552.

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to run the pharmacy, which was interchangeably called a home, spice shop, *apotheca* and dye factory (*casa, spiciaria, apotheca, bottega, tintoria*) to denote its multiple functions and spheres of activities.

Daily life in this pharmacy involved the constant transgression of boundaries between commercial, social, familial and religious spheres, in and around this shop. Gian Battista Gemma was known in his neighbourhood as a zealous 'Lutheran', haranguing his clients about religion. The conversations easily spilled out into a contested terrain of doorways and porticos. His intimate childhood friend Andrea Dandolo recalled that they 'would meet almost every day in that pharmacy, or in the streets'.[8] Moving through a dense network of passages, canals and bridges, they were seen proselytising at the Rialto bridge, the German fondaco and the *orti* of the Giudecca, a place of retreat where the whole group would 'take walks'. And vice-versa, the heterodox unrest that Gemma brought into the pharmacy was then cultivated within a domestic setting.

This family certainly had an interesting household structure, which reveals transgressive intimacies across different confessions and faiths, and raises important questions about early modern identity, gender, cultural hybridity and religious eclecticism. While the parents Silvestro and Elena were strongly associated with Lutheranism, their sons showed leanings towards Calvinism, while one of them, Marcantonio, brought a Catholic wife Marietta (de Bernardini) into the family. Similarly, their youngest daughter Lucietta, despite the influence of her family, had grown up to be a Catholic, at least after leaving the parental home and marrying Bernardino Forno. She would become the mother of Franceschina and Vicenzo Forno, who were both involved in the trial for heresy in 1625 against their aunt Aurora Gemma, the wife of Gian Battista. As the daughter of the Friulian physician Leonardo Clario, who ran from the Inquisition to the court of the Archduke Charles at Graz, and the sister of Giovan Battista Clario (ca. 1570–1617), a natural philosopher, fellow-student at Padua and cellmate of Tommaso Campanella, Aurora herself was 'a very shrewd woman, in her own right' as various witnesses recalled.[9] Influenced by the radical tendencies of the Spiritualists, Anabaptists and Antitrinitarians, she shared with her husband Gian Battista a set of sectarian views on the mortality and transmigration of the souls, the human nature of Christ, and denied

8 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 23, Testimony of Andrea Dandolo, 1 September 1568: 'costoro pratticavano quasi ogni giorno nella detta spiciaria […], et per le strade'.

9 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 80, Testimony of Girolama de Scudi, 17 April 1625: 'lei è una donna molto accorta che sa bene il fatto suo'. On Giovan Battista Clario see Firpo M., *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* (hereafter *DBI*), vol. 25 (Rome: 1982), sub. voc.

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the doctrine of Trinity. It might have been, in fact, Aurora who 'converted' her husband Gian Battista to her radical views. Her niece Franceschina recalled her mother Lucietta telling her that Gian Battista and Aurora 'believed in nothing'.[10]

In contrast to Franceschina, who turned into a devout Catholic and unforgiving witness against her maternal uncle and aunt, her brother Vicenzo followed in their footsteps. Banned from Venice, he joined Gian Battista and Aurora in exile in Poland where the couple found refuge from the Inquisition.[11] After Gian Battista's death in 1608, Aurora returned to Venice with her nephew Vicenzo and her new husband Marco de Domo who became known as 'il Turco' because of his sympathies and upbringing as an adoptive child of a rich Ottoman family in Constantinople. When they settled in the village of Sovernigo near Treviso, Aurora was denounced by the villagers as a Lutheran because she wore a red hat in church in the Polish fashion ('all'usanza Polacca').[12] While she read the Polish Bible and radical Socinian texts at home, Marco de Domo made no secret of his attraction to Islam and, according to one witness, 'to keep that man happy, one had to talk about nothing else but the Turks, amongst whom he spent such a happy childhood that they were always on his lips, recalling them with sweetness and tears in his eyes'.[13]

Finally, the location of the Gemmas' pharmacy in a marginal 'transition zone' of the *sestiere* of Cannaregio, adjacent to the Ghetto, encouraged further transgressions.[14] In 1621, the son of Marcantonio, Giovanni Francesco Gemma, was implicated in the trial against a Portuguese physician and a baptized *marrano* Jew suspected of relapsing back to Judaism, Giorgio Francesco Diaz, whose children Gemma baptised. According to the testimony of the merchant

10 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 80, Testimony of Franceschina, 11 April 1625. On the Anabaptists and Antitrinitarians of the Veneto see, Stella A., *Dall'anabattismo al socinianesimo nel Cinquecento Veneto. Ricerche storiche* (Padua: 1967); Stella A., *Anabattismo e antitrinitarismo in Italia nel XVI secolo. Nuove ricerche storiche* (Padua: 1969); and recently Addante L., *Eretici e libertini nel Cinquecento italiano* (Rome – Bari: 2010). For a useful synthesis see, Firpo M., "La 'porta' della Riforma: Venezia", in *Riforma protestante ed eresie nell'Italia del Cinquecento. Un profilo storico* (Rome: 1993) 11–28. For religious skepticism and unbelief see, Barbierato F., *Politici e ateisti. Percorsi della miscredenza a Venezia fra Sei e Settecento* (Milan: 2006).

11 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 80, Dossier 'De Domo Marco e Gemma Aurora di origine polacca'. Testimony of Andrea de Bernardis, 19 April 1625.

12 Ibid., Testimony of Padre Sebastiano Dono, Rector of the parish of Sovernigo, 29 April 1625.

13 Ibid., Testimony of Girolama de Scudi, 17 April 1625: 'sentiva tanto gusto nel discorrer de Turchi che da dolcezza li venivano le lagrime dalli occhi'.

14 Braunstein P., "Cannaregio, zona di transito?", in Calabi D. (ed.), *La città italiana e i luoghi degli stranieri, XIV–XVIII secolo* (Rome: 1998) 52–62.

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Francesco Romano, the Gemmas hosted Diaz in their pharmacy and frequented his house where Jewish and Christian merchants and doctors met.[15]

2 Instructing 'Brainless Girls'

Marietta wholeheartedly disliked her brother-in-law Gian Battista, who was the 'worst of the whole family' and 'had been the ruin of that house'.[16] She was not shy to describe her tangled relationship with her brother-in-law to her cousin Elisabetta, who compromised him before the Holy Office at the first opportunity. Marietta recalled that 'in the evening Gian Battista would recite verses from Lutheran books, and he had plenty of them', though we do not know which specific titles because they were all dumped in a canal when the Gemmas had learned that the Inquisitors were coming to investigate their house.[17] We know, however, that Gian Battista read works by Melanchthon, Pietro Martire Vermigli, Calvin's *Institutes* and translation of the Bible, and popular devotional texts such as 'La speranza del Christiano', which were sold in great numbers at the Rialto Bridge as his patient Semprini told him.[18]

Communal reading of the Bible and other literature was welded onto existing domestic rituals such as family meals. 'Always at the table Gian Battista, the doctor, had a book in his hands, and they spoke against religion, as Elisabetta reported to the Inquisition, having attended family meals on the invitation of Marietta.[19] The family talked about confession, intercession, the cult of saints, the meaning of the Eucharist, purgatory and other similar things, and Gian Battista, in particular, appeared to 'believe in nothing, certainly not in the Holy Church'.[20] A graduate in medicine, and the author of a treatise on bubonic plague, the *Methodus rationalis novissima, atque dilucidissima curandi bubonis* (1584), Gian Battista would have been directly influenced by the heterodox

15 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 77, Dossier 'Giorgio Francesco Diaz'.

16 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 37, Testimony of Elisabetta, 15 June 1575: 'Zuan Battista el dottor è stato lui la ruina de quella casa.'

17 Ibid.

18 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 23, Dossier 'Sylvestrum Semprini, Angelam, Stephanum et Cypriani Semprini', Testimony of Cipriano Semprini, 3 January 1568. On the Semprini see Martin, *Venice's Hidden Enemies* 140–141; Ambrosini, *Storie di patrizi ad vocem.*

19 Ibid., b. 37, 'Denuncia di Elisabetta, cugina di Marietta, moglie di un spiciaro alle Columbine,' 15 June 1575: 'sempre quando si manzava quell Zuan Battista el Dottor haveva un libro in mano, et parlavano contra la religione'.

20 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 37, Testimony of Elisabetta, 17 September 1574: 'Lui ha detto che non crede in niente, ne nella Santa Chiesa'.

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trends emanating from the neo-Aristotelian circles of Padua.[21] As the only member of the family with a university degree, he felt entitled to assume the role of a tutor and a spiritual guide to his siblings, instructing them in the principles of faith with an air of intellectual superiority. His brother Marcantonio admitted that 'even though I liked to engage in debate with my brother, he continued to reproach me that I am too ignorant and should not speak about these matters'.[22] His catechising did not leave out his two young sisters, 'the brainless girls' ('le pute che non hanno cervello'), as Elisabetta put it. While Lucietta was perhaps too young to follow, the other girl succumbed to the teaching of Gian Battista, who 'had twisted her brain'.[23]

The idea that parents, especially the male heads of the household, should act as tutors and spiritual guides to their offspring pervaded Reformation teaching on marriage and the family, and acquired a particular significance for the Italian dissidents who could not rely on parish schools and churches to pass down faith to the younger generations. The Italian humanist and suspected Antitrinitarian Celio Secondo Curione highlighted this fact. He wrote, 'you know how important it is to be born into and educated in a religion, and on many occasions it is more important to be educated than born'.[24] The author of the *Della Christiana creanza de' figliuoli* (1545), Curione's educational ideas championed a series of religiously inspired vernacular tracts on domestic economy, including a conduct book for female students *La institutione di una fanciulla nata nobilmente* (1555) by Gian Michele Bruto. An apostate Augustinian friar, Bruto developed a following in Venice as a humanist educator and leader of a heretical *schola* at San Isoldo, where 'many priests, friars,

21 Gemma Joannes Baptista, *Methodus rationalis novissima, atque dilucidissima curandi bubonis carbunculique pestilentis* [...] (Graecij Styriae, Ioannes Faber: 1584). The work was composed during his exile in Gratz, where he joined his father-in-law in his duties as a court physician of Archduke Charles to whom the treatise was dedicated. There is a growing number of studies on the heterodox medical circles of Venice and Padua. For recent interpretations see especially Ferretto S., "In margine ad un fascicolo processuale (1558–1561): Ippolito Craya, Pomponio Algieri e la cultura padovana nel XVI secolo", in Olivieri A. (ed.), *Le trasformazioni dell'umanesimo fra Quattrocento e Settecento. Evoluzione di un paradigma* (Milan: 2008) 155–167; Quaranta A., "Umanesimo medico e culture confessionali nell'europa del Cinquecento. Carteggi inediti (1560–1587) di Girolamo Donzellini, 'Physicus et Philosophus'", *Giornale di storia* 15 (2014) 1–34.

22 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 20, Testimony of Marc'Antonio, 2 June 1565.

23 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 37, Testimony of Elisabetta, 15 June 1575: 'a sua sorella haverla voltato 'l cervello'.

24 Cf. Landi A., "Il pensiero pedagogico degli eretici italiani del Cinquecento", *Bollettino della società di studi Valdesi* 144 (1978) 45–52 (46). For a recent biography of Curione see, Biasiori L., *L'eresia di un umanista. Celio Secondo Curione nell'Europa del Cinquecento* (Rome: 2015).

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and others gather to debate against the Catholic faith', among them none other than Gian Battista Gemma.[25]

It has been argued that the Protestant emphasis on the conjugal couple as the basis of the 'holy household' emancipated women from roles as relatively 'unsophisticated' and passive worshippers to become conscious and piously engaged readers of the Bible.[26] However, while the Reformation call for *sola Scriptura* shifted the emphasis from devotional image to written word, the Protestant message of female empowerment should not be overemphasised.[27] Indeed, Bruto's conduct book was a compilation of fairly conventional theories about female education that reasserted the traditional patriarchal order within the family. It recommended literacy for the acquisition of female virtues of chastity, piety and humility, and was later translated by Thomas Salter as the *Mirrhor of Modestie* (1579). Gemma did not need to read Bruto's book to share his assumptions that male heads of the household should instruct their wives, sisters and daughters. Grounded in contemporary medical and scholastic (Aristotelian) conceptions of the physiology of reproduction and sexual difference that imparted an image of women as experiencing the world corporeally through their instincts and senses rather than intellect,[28] Gemma took time to educate his sisters and turn them away from 'brainless' adoration of images that for him they stood for specifically 'feminine' visual and material idolatry cult of the Holy Virgin.[29]

25 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 18, 20 June 1562; b. 20, 19 May 1565. On the fundamental role of schoolmasters in the spread of heresy see, Seidel Menchi's chapter "Scuola di grammatica, scuola di eresia" in *Erasmo in Italia* 122–142.

26 Roper L., "The Holy Household: Women and Morals", in *Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: 1989); and Seidel-Menchi, *Erasmo in Italia* 176–191 on re-evaluation of marriage and domestic piety in Italy.

27 Frigo D., *Il padre di famiglia. Governo della casa e governo civile nella tradizione della 'economica' tra Cinque e Seicento* (Rome: 1985); Cameron E., "'Civilized Religion': From Renaissance to Reformation and Counter-Reformation", in Martin J.J. (ed.), *The Renaissance: Italy and Abroad* (London and New York: 2003) 297–316.

28 Maclean I., *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (New York: 1980).

29 Fortini Brown P., *Private Lives in Renaissance Venice: Art, Architecture, and the Family* (New Haven and London: 2004). On the specific demands of female spirituality, and their ability to experience the divine in the context of the emerging notion of self, see Mazzonis Q., *Spirituality, Gender, and the Self in Renaissance Italy* (Washington D.C.: 2007), esp. ch. 5: 178–213 with further bibliography.

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3 Too Much Talk about the Madonna

Displaying and illuminating images of the Holy Virgin, reciting rosaries, kneeling, touching or kissing holy images and objects all played a critical role in the transmission of didactic piety in the Catholic home in sixteenth-century Venice. Nothing of this could be found however in the Anabaptist household of the apothecary Ambrogio 'in the contrada of San Geremia in Cannaregio by the ponte de legno' (Ponte delle Giulie), who stripped the walls of his home bare of pious images and other paraphernalia of devotion. This was the case until he married a 'Christian' wife and succumbed to her wishes, 'having bought her one painting meant for the devotion of the mother of our Saviour Christ, though he never allowed her to light a *cesendello* in its honour and glory', as his next-door neighbour Isabetta, the wife of a Venetian trader, Giacomo, reported.[30]

During their hearing before the Inquisition Giacomo was less concerned about his neighbour's domestic interiors than his wife Isabetta, who felt particularly offended in her sensitivities, denouncing Ambrogio for 'living like a beast rather than a Christian', without fear of God and in disrespect of sacred laws, and never making the sign of the cross.[31] Above all, Ambrogio 'has always insisted that there should be no painting in his home, whether of our Madonna, or of the saints, holding in contempt all venerations and public feasts dedicated to them by the Holy Mother Church'.[32] Ambrogio disrespected the feasts of the Holy Sacrament and ridiculed those who celebrated jubilees and participated in plenary indulgencies on feast days.[33]

The ritualistic pageantry that developed around public feasts and Corpus Christi processions was an important aspect of communal piety, with Venetian

30 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 22, Dossier 'contra Ambrosium Aromatarium, 18 December 1567: 'ch'avendosi maridato et tolto una cristiana la ne ha portato uno [quadro] avendo in devotion la madre del nostro Salvatore Christo ma però non volendo mai che se imipizi [accende] un cesendelo a honore et gloria sua farlo'. In Venice, *cesendelli*, were used both as votive lamps hanging above the altar and for illuminating the altarpiece and as private illumination of holy pictures in the home, particularly those with the image of the Virgin. They had distinctive elongated form, typical of an Eastern style, and were also fashionable in Istanbul, not surprising given Venice's long standing ties with the Middle East. Palumbo Fossati I., "La casa veneziana", in Toscano F. – Valcanover F. (eds.), *Da Bellini a Veronese. Temi di arte veneta* (Venice: 2004) 443–492 (473).

31 Ibid., 'vivendo come una bestia fuor della sacra religione Christiana'.

32 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 22, Denuncation of Antonio de Zuan Padovano, 18 December 1567: 'mai non ha voluto che in casa sua stiano quadri niuno, così de nostra [Ma]dona sì come de santi desprezando quello ch' la santé madre giesa ne fanno grande commemorationi et feste'.

33 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 22, Testimony of Donna Isabetta, mogier del sopradetto Giacomo compravendi veneziano, 20 December 1567.

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people following *en masse* through the city's townscape, singing litanies to the Virgin Mary and honouring the real presence of Christ in the consecrated host in a sealed monstrance which was paraded through the *campi* and streets. It was an occasion to show devotion in a very public way and to meet one's neighbours and join in celebrations, although women were often restricted to watching the razzle-dazzle of these events from the safe distance of their balconies and windows. But the lack of external gestures of reverence from one's neighbour could be observed from anywhere. Overlooking the street from her balcony during the Corpus Christi procession, Isabetta noticed that the apothecary Ambrogio did not even remove his hat when the monstrance with the Holy Sacrament was passing.[34]

A few steps away at San Marcuola, the apothecary Silvestro Gemma was also singled out for his lack of reverence during public processions. When everybody closed down their shops and joined in to sing litanies, Silvestro would throw a thousand curses on popes, bishops, patriarchs and their excesses and complain that he could not bear listening to those litanies, which were all pageantries.[35] Nor did the rich imagery associated with the cult of Virgin Mary have any place in the Reformed household of the Gemmas, who, like Ambrogio, cleansed their home of idols and superstitious objects. According to Marietta, at the table Gian Battista was, 'always holding the book of the Gospels in his hand, instructed them about images, saying that in the Gospels the Lord God cursed the idols, that St Daniel was the enemy of all idol-worshippers and that the images of Madonna and the saints were idols'.[36]

In the Protestant home of the Gemmas the demarcation of religious identities was set by the male members of the family and leaned towards an internalised form of religiosity. Marietta struggled to produce her own (Catholic) values and meanings within the shifting multiple religious allegiances of this heterodox family, to which she had been appended by marriage. The experience of the Catholic wife of Ambrogio, who was never allowed to light a votive lamp in honour of the Virgin Mary, must have been similar. When Ambrogio

34 Ibid., On women's role in public processions see, Muir E., *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: 1981) 303.

35 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 37, Denunciation of Elisabetta, 15 June 1575: 'diceva, che le erano tutte manierie, et non poteva sentir quelle letanie che si dicevano'.

36 Ibid., 'parlava delle imagini et che sempre haveva el libro delo Evanzelij in man, et diceva che nelli evanzelij el S.r Dio malediceva l'idoli, et parlava de S. Daniel, che non volesse adorar l'idoli, et che le imagini della Maria et di Santi sono idoli'. Daniel, the hero of the Book of Daniel [2:34–35] was best known as the prophet who received apocalyptic visions and interpreted the dream of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar of a giant iron statue smashed by a stone from heaven. His interpretation of the dream was used against idols and idol-worshipers.

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threw a painting depicting 'la passion di Christo' into a canal and cut another one into pieces in front of his wife, mother and a domestic servant, his neighbours wondered why the women 'said nothing'.[37] Religious identities could seal marriages and friendships as well as disintegrate them. The fabric dyer Zuan Zapelin of Milan explained that he had always regarded Marcantonio Gemma as his good friend and would have continued to do so had he not been forced by his confessor to make a denunciation to the Holy Office. Their friendship ended in a row with Marcantonio threatening Zuan Zapelin and shouting 'I hope you realise that you have ruined my life', as the latter reported.[38]

Similarly, Marietta's marriage and relationship with Marcantonio's family was anything but serene. She revealed to her cousin Elisabetta that every time she wanted to go to church for confession and communion, she would tell them that she was visiting her sisters, because 'in the house of those at the *Collombine* they would yell at her, shouting blasphemies against confessions and communion'.[39] At home, she used to recite Paternosters and Ave Marias to a rosary, but 'no matter how many rosaries they found in her hand, they would throw all of them away'.[40]

The chasm that developed between Protestant and Catholic members of this family was also due to the underlying tensions between specifically gendered forms of devotion, with their respective aesthetics and sensitivities. One evening, after hearing a sermon by a Servite friar, Gian Battista criticised the friar 'because he talked too much about the Madonna'. Pointing out that Mary 'had been a woman as any other', he implored that 'one should not give sermons about the Madonna, which are for women, but preach instead about Christ'.[41] For Gian Battista, the friar appeared to repeat mindlessly the same things 'like a beast saying over and over again Madonna, Madonna […] as if the bastard had no Christ to preach about'.[42]

37 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 22, Testimony of Giacomo compravendi veneziano, 20 December 1567.

38 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 20, Testimony of Zuan de Giacomo Zapelin Milanese, 24 May 1565: 'et mi ha minacciato, et detto advertissi [sic] che mi hai rovinato el mondo'.

39 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 37, Denunciation of Elisabetta, 15 June 1575: 'ogni volta che si voleva confessar, et co[mun]icar [diceva di] venire a casa di queste sue sorelle et diceva di far questo per causa, che in casa de questi dalle Colombine si facevano beste[mmie] di confessione, et co[mun]ione, et le cridavano'.

40 Ibid., 'che quante corone ghe trovavano in mano a costei tutte ghe le battavano [sic] via'.

41 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 20, Testimony of Donna Franceschina, 27 June 1574: 'non bisogna predicar tanto della Madonna, che queste sono prediche de femene: bisogna predicar di Christo'.

42 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 20, Testimony of Ambrosio Mediolanesi, sanitarius Venetiano, 12 May 1565.

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The repetitious and mindless nature of Catholic devotions was often a target of Protestant attacks, with Erasmus's *Encomium Moriae* and *Enchiridion* providing a plethora of polemical weapons. Reciting combinations of Paternosters and Ave Marias was intended to provide a simple structure around which to create one's prayer, while the mnemonic pattern of repetition was intended to assist particularly women, children and the illiterate in committing to memory the fundamental prayers and Catholic doctrines. In the preface to a popular early sixteenth-century rosary manual, Alberto da Castello explained that 'in order to memorise and remember, and to contemplate these mysteries,' he illustrated them with 'depicted histories' so that they would serve 'not just the literate, but equally the illiterate, unlearned, and idiots …').[43] In order 'to carry these holy mysteries always in their heart and recite them continually', he recommended copying particular passages from the book or, in the case of those who could not read, tearing out the illustrations and fixing them to the doors.[44] These prescriptions reveal that rosaries could be used as a pedagogical device for a relatively 'unsophisticated' range of consumers. But not everybody saw a didactic value in these mnemonic strategies of repetition. Friar Daniele of Brescia was accused of 'turning [the ordered life] of pious women upside-down by saying that they should not recite the rosary because it was presumptuous to calculate the number of prayers to God'.[45]

These attacks were also linked to changing Reformation tastes and aesthetics. The growing naturalism of Renaissance religious imagery created resistance to the artistic modes of capturing divinity through anthropomorphism. Gian Battista declared that in the Old and New Testaments there is no evidence that God has ever been seen, and ridiculed those 'who depict God as an

43 Alberto da Castello, *Rosario della Gloriosa Vergine Maria* (Venice, Marchio Sessa & Piero di Rauani compagni: 1522) fol. 8r: 'Imperochè […] di rammemorare et ricordarvi, et contemplare questi misterij i quali non solamente con la lettera et approbatione per le divine scritture, ma etiando con le historie figurate possiate vedere quel che havete a contemplare. Et questo non solamente a i letterati, ma etiam alli illeterati, ignoranti, et idioti […]'.

44 Ibid., 'Fate che habbiate questi misterii sempre ne' vostri cuori per continua recordatione de quelli e narrereti quelli a gli vostri filgioli insegnandoli a dire questo Santo Rosario, […] che sempre haverete in mano, i quali sempre moverete dinanzi a gli occhi vostri, dicendo i Pater nostri, et Ave Marie, et gli scriverete sopra le porte, e nelle porte delle case vostre, mettendo le figure di questo Santo Rosario sopra di esse, e per le case vostre in continua memoria'.

45 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 159, Dossier 'Contra fra Danielem de Brixia', fol. 14r, 8 October 1554: 'per aver mettuto tutte le donne sottosopra, dicendo che elle non debbano […] dir corone, perché l'è prosontion numerar le oration a Dio'. Cf. Seidel Menchi, *Erasmo in Italia* 386n.

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old man, as if he could no longer move or was just about to die'.[46] Similarly, commenting on paintings which focused on the maternal figure of Madonna with Christ as a helpless infant, he said that venerating such images was nothing more than venerating a piece of wood ('come si adora quell legno si adora madre di Christo'), and implored worshippers to adore only 'Christo, Christo, Christo et Christo'.[47]

This relentlessly Christocentric piety which focused on Christ's sufficiency for salvation was at the centre of Reformed sensitivities and identities. Although we do not have an account of the domestic interiors of Gian Battista's pharmacy in Venice, a detailed description of his wife Aurora's home, which she set up with her second husband Marco, yields more information. During the trial of 1625, they were accused of 'living like irrational animals'.[48] According to Girolama de Scudi, the mother-in-law of Aurora's nephew Vicenzo, she witnessed 'no act or sign' of Christian devotion during their extended family visit. She had never seen Aurora with a rosary in her hand, nor praying or saying the offices in honour of the Madonna. In the *camera* on the ground floor, the principal room where sleeping, eating, domestic chores and leisure activities would take place, and where the aged Aurora spent most of her time, Girolama found no holy images or objects that would indicate that her home was a place of Christian worship.[49] Instead, the couple was heard mocking the thaumaturgic powers attributed to the statue of the Madonna in a village chapel ('una Madonna di un Capitello [...] che faceua miracoli'). When a domestic servant Cattarina asked their permission to take her crippled son to the chapel and pray for the miraculous healing of his knees which were 'disfigured and twisted outward', they began to laugh and mocked miserable Cattarina: 'Don't you know how to further mess up your son? But if you insist go ahead and accompany him cripple to return him even more twisted [by such superstitions]'.[50]

A daughter, sister and a wife of physicians with strong Spiritualist Anabaptist traditions, Aurora's assault on the healing employment of sacred images – an

46 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 20, Testimony of Ambrosio, sanitarius Venetiano, 12 May 1565: 'costoro lo depenzaono vecchio, che 'l par che 'l non se possa movere, et che 'l voglia morir l'hora in hora'.

47 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 20, Testimony of Francesco Penci, barbiere, 27 June 1574.

48 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 80, Dossier 'Per Domo Marco, Gemma Aurora', 15 April 1625: 'vivono proprio come animali irrationali'.

49 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 80, testimony of Girolama de Scudi, 17 April 1625: 'Quanto alla donna vi non l'hò mai veduta ne con corona in mano, ne à dirla, ne à dir l'off[ici]o, ne à far oratione. et nelle stantie da basso dove habitava non teneva alcuna imagine di devotione, ne lei faceva atto ò segno alcuno da Xristiana'.

50 Ibid., 'Non sapete come far stupiar più questo vostro figlio? Et se volete andar, voi lo menate zotto, lo ritornate storppiato' [storpio].

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issue upon which the members of this medically informed family might have been particularly sensitive – does not surprise us. Indeed, the only sacred object that Girolama noticed in Aurora's house was kept in the room upstairs: 'a Christ with Death underneath, but to which neither worship nor reverence was paid, just as if it had not been in that house'.[51] Images representing the crucified Christ with a skull at the base of the crucifix were fashionable throughout Reformation Europe. The sobriety of such images was befitting contemplation of one's death and Christ's sufficiency for salvation in accordance with more ascetic Reformed patterns of piety and aesthetics. Given the monotheistic and iconoclastic aspect of Aurora and her Turcophile husband's beliefs, however, it was charged with yet another set of connotations. In striking contrast to the morbid anxiety about death and salvation that pervaded contemporary wills and culture, Aurora was heard saying that Paradise and Hell did not exist and 'that it was great folly to believe in the holiness of Our Lord because he was a man'.[52] The couple spoke instead of reincarnation and 'that there are only seventy-one heavens and when the soul dies, it goes to one of those heavens'.[53] The idea of seventy-one heavens was an Islamic conception of paradise – an eternal Garden (*al-Jannah*). According to Islamic eschatology, Jews, Christians and Muslims would split into 71, 72 and 73 sects respectively, but only one sect of Christians, one sect of Jews and one of Muslims would enter *al-Jannah*.[54]

Leaving aside the fascinating Antitrinitarian, Socinian, Turkish and Polish origins of their eclectic mix of beliefs, the rejection of aspects of religion that appeared to be ritualistic and visual, and the denial of the divinity of Christ, would undoubtedly bring allegations of adhering to a monotheistic and iconoclastic faith such as Islam. Such accusations were not unusual in early modern Venice, a transition point between East and West exposed to constant traversal of thresholds between Catholic, Protestant and Ottoman cultures.

The 'Turk' became a trope through which both Catholic and Protestant apologists accused one another of idolatry to further their own religion against both their Christian opponents and Muslims. Luther saw the figures of the Turk and the Pope as interchangeable under the common denominator of Antichrist. In his 1535 lectures on Genesis, he declared that the 'Antichrist is at

51 Ibid., 'ma nel soler di sopra heueua in casa in una camera un Christo con una Morte sotto, che però non era adorato ne riuerito tanto quanto non fosse stato in casa'.

52 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 80, Testimony of Vicenzo Forno, 22 April 1625: 'che era pazzia grande il prestar fede alla santità di N.S.re perchè era huomo'.

53 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 80, Testimony of Antonio Valvason, 11 April 1625.

54 Abul Quasem M., *Salvation of the Soul and Islamic Devotions* (London: 1983) 19–20.

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the same time the Pope and the Turk'.[55] Catholics, in their turn, claimed that Luther was no better than Mahomet because they both spoke against idols, a point that was made during a discussion when Gian Battista Gemma sought to explain 'the origins of Martin Luther' to a hygienist (*sanitarius*) Ambrogio of Milan. In defence of Luther against 'all these malicious opinions', Gian Battista instructed his young neophyte that 'Martin has not acted in the same way as Mahomet, but preached out of pure zeal, and for the cause of indulgences and against falsehoods'.[56]

4 Reformation Soundscape

If the flamboyant drama of Catholic pageantry offended the Protestant ears and eyes of the Venetian apothecaries, by contrast in sixteenth-century Venice everyone sang psalms and songs in churches and at home, and so did the Gemmas.[57] Gian Battista's friend Andrea Dandolo admitted that he was a frequent guest in their house because of his passion for music: 'I cannot play the music but I like to listen […] so I often came to listen to Gemma who can sing and play'.[58] When interrogated about the nature of these performances, another witness, Alvise Mocenigo, revealed that they involved singing psalms to the improvised accompaniment of Gian Battista who played the lute, with the physician Teofilo Panarelli reciting passages from scriptures and interpreting their meaning.[59] Dandolo confessed that he liked these recitations because they were 'simple translations in vernacular verse'.[60] These were vernacular psalms: 'espositione sopra li salmi' in the condemned version of Antonio Brucioli, which Gemma's patient Francesco Semprini kept hidden in the wall

55 *Dr Martin Luther's Werke: Kritische Gesammtausgabe* (Weimar: 1883–) vol. 3, 121. Barnes R.B., *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation* (Stanford: 1988) 42.

56 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 20, Testimony of Ambrosio Mediolanesi, 12 May 1565: 'che Martino non haveva fatto come Machometto, ma haveva predicato per puro zelo, et causa le indulgenzie, come contra cose false'.

57 On singing hymns, psalms and litanies in Venetian churches and confraternities see Fenlon I., *Music and Culture in Late Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: 2002).

58 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 23, 1 September 1568.

59 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 23, Testimony of Alvise Mocenigo, 12 July 1568. For the leading role of Panarelli in the elite conventicles of Venice see, Grendler P.F., *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540–1605* (Princeton: 1977) 104–105, 134–140; and Ambrosini F., "Tendenze filoprotestanti nel patriziato veneziano", in Gullino G. (ed.), *La Chiesa di Venezia tra Riforma protestante e Riforma cattolica* (Venice: 1990) 155–181.

60 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 23, Dossier D. Andream Dandulo, 1 September 1568.

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of his house.[61] Like Clément Marot's French paraphrases of psalms printed in Lyon ca. 1530, Antonio Brucioli's vernacular Bible, published in Venice in 1532, promoted the knowledge of the Old Testament and the Psalms among Italian reformists, including Gemma's circle who met to sing Protestant songs at the German *fondaco* and the Giudecca gardens.[62] It would be fascinating to know whether they were sung to the existing psalm-melodies or set to new tunes.

Like recitation of the rosary, singing was a powerful mnemonic exercise to help the faithful to memorise key devotional texts, which were more easily absorbed through musical phrases and song metrics, and both Catholic and Protestant communities exploited the melodic capital of vernacular songs for devotional and didactic purposes.[63] Communal singing provided a moment of shared ritual experience that played an important role in affirming confessional identities among Gemma's family and friends as a group, who otherwise lived the marginalised and fragmented lives of religious dissenters.

These ephemeral audio events are difficult to capture; but we do have a detailed account of one intimate performance in the home of Gian Battista's friend Giacomo Negron, a flute player ('sonador di pifaro'). One day, as Gian Battista's friend and musically-minded fellow physician Lodovico Abbioso recalled, he was invited by Negron to his house to meet a group of foreign musicians:

> So, after supper, we gathered in a big room where all of them were holding violas in their hands. I did not know anybody except Giacomo, who handed me a viola and we began to play and sing. At this moment when we played, Paulo Moscardo and Teofilo Panarelli joined us and sat to

61 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 23, 3 January 1568. On the importance of Brucioli's Bible: *La Biblia quale contiene i sacri libri del Vecchio Testamento, tradotti nuovamente da la hebraica verità in lingua toscana da Antonio Brucioli* […] (Impresso in Vinegia, ne le case di Lucantonio Giunti fiorentino: 1532), see Del Col A., "Il secondo processo veneziano di Antonio Brucioli", *Bollettino della società di studi valdesi* 49, 146 (1979) 85–100; Del Col A., "Il controllo della stampa a Venezia e i processi di Antonio Brucioli (1548–1559)", *Critica storica* 17 (1980) 457–510.

62 Seidel Menchi S., "Protestantesimo a Venezia", in *La Chiesa di Venezia* 131–154. For Marot, see Wursten D., *Clément Marot and Religion: A Re-Assessment in the Light of his Psalm Paraphrases* (Leiden – Boston: 2010).

63 Pollmann J., "'Hey Ho, Let the Cup Go Round!' Singing for Reformation in the Sixteenth Century", in Schilling H. – Tóth I.G. (eds.), *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: 2006) vol. 1, 294–316 (301). For the Reformation as a 'multimedia' phenomenon see Scribner R.W., *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge: 1981). See also the essays by Remi Chiu, 27–44, and Iain Fenlon in this volume, 89–114.

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> listen to music. After the musicians left, we remained alone, four of us, and Teofilo took the New Testament out and a writing that he kept up his sleeve, which was his commentary on the passage 'In principio erat Verbum' from John's Gospel. He asked us to listen while he recited. And then we left.[64]

Since Lorenzo Valla, Marsilio Ficino and Erasmus had taken issue with Jerome's Vulgate Bible, the exegesis of the Prologue to John's Gospel 'In principio erat Verbum' had become a central issue in theological debates on the two natures of Christ, as the eternal Logos-Son consubstantial with the Father, or as a man (who did not exist before he was born of Mary). With their respective Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysical presuppositions, these speculations became pertinent to Eucharistic and Antitrinitarian controversies of the Reformation.[65] While we do not know the content of Panarelli's commentary, the mixing of theology and home entertainment that took place at Negron's house certainly helped to disseminate heterodoxy in the homes of Venetian artisans. Gian Battista and his friends waged the battle for the Reformation in their homes, but also in taverns, streets and city squares, where the role of music and song as a propaganda tool mattered greatly. No wonder, then, that they made friends with Giacomo Negron and his band called 'the Favretti', who developed a following not only as street musicians but also as street theologians, unsettling the urban public with their unorthodox behaviour. In 1548, two members of

64 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 32, Dossier 'Panarelli Teofilo ed Abbioso Lodovico', Testimony of Lodovico Abbioso, 24 May 1568: 'et così il dopo disnar andai da lui, et andassemo in una sua camera grande ove erano alquanti con le viole in mano, il quali io non conosceva salvo messer Giacomo, et ne tolse anca mi una viola in mano, et si mettessemo a sonar et a cantar. In questo mentre venne Paulo Moscardo et Theofilo Panarelli, et stette ascoltar la musica, et partiti detti musici restassemo noi quattro soli, et messer Theofilo cavò fuori il Testamento nuovo et una scrittura che l'haveva in manica, et disse che l'haveva fatto sopra l'Evangelio di S. Zuane sopra l'In principio erat Verbum, il quale ne pregò che dovessemo ascoltar, et così lo lesse; [et] dapoi se partisemo'. See also Ambrosini, *Storie di patrizi* 231–232.

65 Fragnito G., *La Bibbia al rogo. La censura ecclesiastica e i volgarizzamenti della Scrittura (1471–1605)* (Bologna: 1997). For Valla see, Camporeale S.I., *Lorenzo Valla. Umanesimo e teologia* (Florence: 1972); for Ficino, Trinkaus Ch., *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought* (Notre Dame: 1995) vol. 2: 740–741. For Erasmus, see O'Rourke Boyle M., *Erasmus on Language and Method in Theology* (Toronto: 1977) 19–21; and Rummel E., *Erasmus' Annotations on the New Testament: From Philologist to Theologian* (Toronto: 1986). For Eucharistic controversies see below.

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this band were arrested when they recited texts denying the doctrine of free will in front of the Church of San Giobbe.[66]

While the printing press was often far too incriminating a medium, a song was a safer and highly effective alternative vehicle for stimulating lay piety and teaching believers about faith. Similarly, the New Testament booklet that Panarelli kept up his sleeve and carried around the city to take it out when he wished to recite or refresh his memory of a particular scriptural verse suggests a different set of attitudes and interactions with texts than books and Bibles held and displayed at home. It was always at hand and it could be quickly tucked away when some zealot from the Holy Office approached.

Finally, perhaps the most powerful potential of such street performances was their ability to project themselves into the domestic sphere and reach the ears of those who were otherwise inaccessible, a potential exploited in the contemporary practice of singing *mattinata* at night in front of people's houses, and not just for romantic purposes, while a crowd of passers-by assembled.[67] In March 1607, for example, during the jurisdictional controversy of the Interdict between Venice and Rome, when signs of anti-Roman sentiments were visible everywhere, posted on the city's walls and circulated in offensive libels: 'in the middle of the night, serenades were heard outside the window of Cardinal Gioiosa, played with many musical instruments and with so many insulting songs' that the Cardinal threatened to leave Venice immediately and abandon peace negotiations.[68]

66 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 7, Dossier 'Favretti'; b. 22, Dossier 'Giacomo-Negroni.' Seidel Menchi, "Protestantesimo a Venezia" 231–232.

67 Dennis F., "Sound and Domestic Space in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Italy", *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 16/1 (Fall-Winter 2008–2009) 7–19. On popular devotional texts composed, published and recited by street performers see Salzberg R., "The Word on the Street: Street Performers and Devotional Texts In Italian Renaissance Cities", *The Italianist* 34 (2014) 336–348.

68 Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, ms. Urb. Lat., 1075, *Avvisi di Roma*, fols. 136r–137v, 10 March 1607: 'Intanto altri anco avisano, che al Card. Gioiosa haveano fatto di notte una serenata con molti instromenti musicali si ma però piene de canzoni di cose et parole cattive toccanti anco il Card.le che però se n'era mostrato tanto alterato, che haveva minacciato di partirsi, et altri anco dicono ma falsamente che era partito, et la Rep.ca messo taglia di 2 m. scudi à chi rivelava l'auttore di questo misfatto, co' prometter anco l'immunità se fosse uno de complici quell che rivela'. Cardinal Gioiosa managed to secure the peace deal between Venice and Rome on 9 April 1607. See, the letter of the French Cardinal Jacques Du Perron to the French king: *Lettera scritta dal car. Di Perona al Re Xmo intorno al Trattato d'Accordo maneggiato dal card. Di Gioiosa tra Papa Paolo Quinto, e la Serenissima Rep.ca Venetia, Roma 9 Aprile 1607*. Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana Classe VII. Cod. CXLIII.8951.

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5 'A Piece of Bread Always Remains a Piece of Bread'

Gathering around the table for food and conversation was an essential part of domestic ritual around which much of the Gemma' devotional life revolved. It provided an occasion for communal reading of the Bible and shared learning, as we have seen, but also for creating their own family rituals of celebrating the Lord's Supper at home. Such rituals included praying and singing psalms, reading from the Scriptures and sharing pieces of leavened bread, the 'real' one made with yeast in place of the unleavened consecrated Eucharistic bread.[69] They could take place at the table or at people's sickbeds and even in classroom at school. At the deathbed of their co-religionist and patient the wool carder Fancesco Semprini, when they could do nothing else to save him, Silvestro and Gian Battista called in a former Franciscan friar Fidele Vico to celebrate communion with pieces of leavened bread. A master of a heretical 'schola', Vico frequented the Gemmas' pharmacy and performed similar ceremonies for his students at school.[70]

The Gemmas' ritual of performing the Last Supper at home subverted the whole range of devotional practices associated with the Eucharist, a crucial sacramental experience for Catholics, whether it was administered to the sick and dying at home, taken during the annual confession and communion at Easter, or worshiped as a relic quite literally of Christ's body present in the Eucharistic host. Its magical talismanic qualities were further accentuated by the paraliturgical Corpus Christi processions, during which a consecrated host was displayed and paraded through Venetian neighbourhoods. While often reduced to spectators rather than participants in the divine mysteries of the Eucharist,[71] in the domestic sphere, the laity appropriated its sacramental power by acquiring consecrated wax figures of the Agnus Dei that brought the presence of

69 For celebrating the Lord's Supper in houses of Venetian patricians see Ambrosini, *Storie di patrizi* 90n. For similar rituals performed at home 'with any normal bread' and other organised forms of sociability among the community of 'fratelli' in Modena, see Al-Kalak M., *L'eresia dei Fratelli. Una comunità eterodossa nella Modena del Cinquecento* (Rome: 2011).

70 ASV, Sant'Uffizio, b. 23, Dossier *Sylvestrum Semprini, Angelam, Stephanum et Cypriani Semprini*, testimony of Angela Semprini; and Dossier 'Fedele Vico'. On the Semprinis see Martin, *Venice's Hidden Enemies* 140–141. For Vico see Ambrosini, *Storie di patrizi ad vocem*; Ambrosini, "Tendenze filoprotestanti" 155–181.

71 Particularly after the Gregorian reforms of the eleventh century, which had established the clerical monopoly over the performance of the mass in Latin and restricted taking communion by the laity to prevent perversion. Vauchez, *The Laity in the Middle Ages* 10.

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Christ into their daily activities and were kept at homes as talismans protecting against the tricks of the Devil, diseases and other misfortunes.[72]

For the Gemmas, who dismissed the pageantry of Corpus Christi and the 'idolatry' of Agnus Dei, and undermined the ritualistic dogmatism and theology of the Eucharist by celebrating communion at home, it was not just the physical site and the material substance of the bread but the transformative nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice that acquired new dimension. Indeed, as they gathered together and recited the scriptural account of the Last Supper, when Jesus said 'this is my body' while breaking the bread, we may wonder what it meant for each member of this interconfessional family.

The literal or allegorical interpretation of Jesus' words and the identification of Christ's body and blood with bread and wine had been a subject of theological debates for centuries, before arriving at the concept of transubstantiation based on the corporeal interpretation of Saint Ambrose (ca. 339–397), and consolidated *ex Aristotle* by Thomas Aquinas (ca. 1225–1274). The explicit formulation of the sacramental ingestion of Jesus's flesh, 'broken by the hands of the priests and ground by the teeth of the faithful', as the French theologian Berengar of Tours was forced to declare during the Synod of Rome in 1059, revived the ancient associations of the Eucharistic sacrifice with the ritual theopagy of the pagans and came to nourish the Protestant criticism of the Catholic rituals and doctrine of transubstantiation in the wake of the Reformation.[73] While Luther elaborated his own concept of Christ's presence in the Eucharistic bread and at the same time consubstantial with the person of God, Zwingli could reconcile himself to neither Catholic nor Lutheran theology. For Zwingli, the Eucharist was a symbolic act of commemoration of Christ's salvific gift of redemption, acquired through the faith of the participants, rather than the magical transformation and consumption of Christ' body.[74]

As for the Gemmas, a family where Catholic, Lutheran and radical Spiritualist cultures intermingled, did they believe that something miraculous happened every time the priest performed the ceremony of the mass or when

72 Scribner R.W., "Ritual and Popular Religion in Catholic Germany at the Time of the Reformation", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984) 47–77. See also Irene Galandra Cooper's essay in this volume, 220–243.

73 On theopagy (consumption of a deity's flesh) in the Dionysiac cult among the Greeks and its association with early Christianity, see Heinrichs A., "Pagan Ritual and the Alleged Crimes of the Early Christians", in Granfield P. – Jungmann J.A. (eds.), *Kyriakon* (Münster: 1970) 18–35. For Berengar see McCue J.F., "The Doctrine of Transubstantiation from Berengar through Trent: The Point at Issue", *Harvard Theological Review* 61 (1968) 385–430 (387).

74 On Eucharistic controversies of the Reformation, see Palmer W.L. (ed.), *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation* (Leiden – Boston: 2014).

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they shared pieces of bread at home? Marcantonio provided an answer when he was summoned by the Inquisition to explain 'whether he believed that the consecrated host is the true body and blood of Jesus, whose presence is real and corporeal'.[75] According to Marcantonio, his father Silvestro (a Lutheran) did believe in the real presence of Christ in the bread, whereas he himself followed his schoolmaster, the Franciscan friar Paulo of Brescia, who taught him that the Lord's Supper was not a corporeal but merely a spiritual matter. On the other hand, Marcantonio continued, he occasionally attended the Mass and nurtured some doubts 'because I was told [perhaps by his Catholic wife Marietta] that outside the mass the Gospel does not count'.[76] But his radical (Spiritualist and Antitrinitarian) brother Gian Battista openly derided and mocked the sacraments saying blasphemies against the Eucharist.[77] And, although Marcantonio lacked the intellectual background of his university-trained brother, he was confident enough to challenge the corporeal presence of Christ in the Eucharist, quoting the view of Saint Augustine on this (who shunned Ambrosian literal meaning in favour of figurative 'spiritualist' interpretations of the Lord's Supper).[78] When Marcantonio presented these views to his confessor, he threw an ink-set at him and refused to absolve him. But Marcantonio went home and returned 'with a book of Saint Augustine to show him that I was telling the truth, and so I was absolved'.[79]

For the radical spiritualising circles of the Venetian Anabaptists, 'a piece of bread always remains a piece of bread', as the physician Nicolò Buccella put it

75 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 20. Dossier Gio Battista e Marcantonio speziali, Testimony of Marcantonio, 2 June 1565: 'se l'ha creduto che nell'hostia consecrata dal sacerdote sia veramente il corpo et sangue del Jesu realmente et corporealmente'.

76 Ibid.: 'perchè mi era stato detto che dall'evangelio in fuor a la messa non valesse'.

77 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 20, Denunciation of Francesco Camillo (spicier da vin) di San Giovann e Polo against Gian Battista Gemma, 5 May 1565: 'deride e burla li perdoni, la confessione e il S. Sacr[amen]to […] bestemmiando la messa'.

78 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 20, Testimony of Zuan de Giacomo Zapelin, 24 May 1565: 'ponteziava Santo Augustino perchè non sia el vero Corpo et Sangue di Christo'. Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate Dei* (10.5; 10.20, c. 426); *Sermo De verbis apostoli* (172. 2). Philip Schaff's reading of Augustine on the Eucharist still remains one of the best discussions of the subject: "The Patristic Doctrine of the Eucharist", *The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 38, 1 (1866) 47–73. For an overview of the recent scholarship on the Augustinian roots of the Reformation see Ellingsen M., "Augustinian Origins of the Reformation Reconsidered", *Scottish Journal of Theology* 64 (2011) 13–28; and Visser A.S.Q., *Reading Augustine in the Reformation: The Flexibility of Intellectual Authority in Europe, 1500–1620* (New York: 2011).

79 Ibid., 'el non mi voleva assolvere, ma io gli hò portato un libro di Santo Augustino, et li hò mostrato, che dico la verità, et cosi lui mi ha assolto'.

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bluntly.[80] The Anabaptist wool carder Simone de Simoni of Vicenza was much more eloquent and declared that 'it was a great folly to believe that Christ would come inside the host and let himself be locked up in a hole in the wall or in a piece of glass or wood, and then allow himself to be eaten'.[81] Quite apart from the physical impossibility that the person of Christ could be in more than one place at once, like Zwingli, he was concerned about the theological and philosophical speculations that made God the victim of a cannibalistic sacrifice.

6 Those Who Eat Tripe and Those Who Devour God Whom They Worship

While the Protestant radicals jested about Christians devouring their God, what one ate was of no small significance to the Catholic Church, which developed a complex symbolic system of food manipulation and did not hesitate to make pronouncements on diet, the healing powers of holy water, salt and herbs used in the sacramental rituals, or to advocate fasting as befitting the preparation of the body for the consumption of Christ in the Eucharist. Caroline Walker Bynum has shown how in the later Middle Ages female mystics expressed their devotion to the Eucharistic host through fasting as a way of 'purging' their souls and preparing the body for the physical union when 'eating God'.[82]

Attention to diet was also at the heart of standard medical advice. The Hippocratic food regimen recommended certain foods as good or bad for restoring the body's healthy complexion of humours. The nutritional quality and digestibility of certain foods was of particular importance. Hence, meat, eggs and butter were considered most nutritious, digestible and 'warming' while grains, fruits and vegetables were dismissed as 'humid' and 'cold', less digestible or even poisonous.[83]

Thus when the post-Tridentine Church reaffirmed its dietary prescriptions for Lent and continued to tighten up its expectations of the faithful that they eat penitential fish and vegetables instead of meat and dairy products, serious

80 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 19, Dossier 'Contra Anabatistas: Nicolò Buccella', Ambrogio di Rizzetto, Francesco Della Sega', 9 October 1561: 'quel sia pane, et resti sempre pane'.

81 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 29, Dossier 'Simone de Simoni, filatore di seta of Vicenza,' 22 April 1570: 'è una gran pazzia credere che Christo venghi in quella hostia, et lasciassi chiudere in un buco di muro, di vetro, overo di legno, et poi lasciassi mangiare'.

82 Walker Bynum C., *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: 1987).

83 Cavallo S. – Storey T., *Healthy Living in Late Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: 2013) 213–218 (215).

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concerns were raised about the healthiness of such vegetarian regimes. This was the case not just among physicians and Protestant controversialists but anyone who was concerned to protect their 'weak stomachs' or consciences from such unreasonably rigid dietary prescriptions.[84] Eating and dining as he pleased, Doctor Gemma did not hesitate to offer his own medical advice to the Inquisitor who questioned his carnivorous appetite at Lent. Recommending the Hippocratic regimen of moderation and maintenance of the body's normal habits as key to healthy living, he suggested that self-restraint was only advisable to avoid food poisoning, since 'one ought to eat freely all types of food everyday though with moderation, and to abstain from meat only when one sees that it has gone off but not because it is this time or that time'.[85] As his less sophisticated friends, the Semprini family, put it, 'it was not a sin to eat and evacuate' to quote their statement recorded by the Inquisition.[86]

It was in kitchens and stomachs that confessional identities were digested and contested, and the records of the Holy Office glaringly demonstrate that people were often judged on the basis of their dietary habits. Thus those who were caught eating meat on Fridays or eggs on Saturdays, or like the apothecary Ambrogio, 'eating meat and fatty foods prohibited by the Holy Mother Church all the time in disregard of Christian laws', were inevitably denounced as 'Lutherans', 'Jews' or 'Turks'. Detailed inquiries into the domestic economy of food preparation and consumption, Judaic rites of meat slaughter or food sharing with the Ottoman-Turkish Muslims reveal the importance of food in the forming and performing of confessional identities. One Sunday in Lent, when Isabetta entered Ambrogio's house accompanying his sister Angela, she saw the apothecary in the company of a certain Giacometto and his *garzon* Filippo all eating tripe ('magnavano delle trippe'). She became even more disconcerted when Angela showed real or feigned ignorance of the Lenten prohibitions and explained as a matter of fact that her brother enjoyed 'eating tripe without a pie' ('l'haveva senza pizza').[87]

When a court registrar Nicolò Guidozzo of Castelfranco entertained a guest for dinner, serving a plate of lasagne cooked in a chicken broth ('un piatto di lassagne cotte nel brodo di carne') in disregard of the Lenten prohibitions, in

84 Ibid., especially the section "Vegetables, Lent, and Health" 213–218. For a shift towards vegetarian regime in the Counter-Reformation period, see also Gentilcore D., "The *Levitico*, or How to Feed a Hundred Jesuits" *Food and History* 8, 1 (2010) 87–120.

85 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 20, Testimony of Gianbattista Gemma, 17 May 1565.

86 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 23, Testimony of Padre dell'Ordine di San Francesco: Fra Paolo da Venetia, 24 November 1567: 'non essere peccato quello che entro nella bocca, ne quello che esce'.

87 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 22, Testimony of Donna Isabetta, 20 December 1567.

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response to his guest's pious concerns he proposed that 'these we will baptise as plain fritters' ('queste le batizermo per fritole'). When serving a whole roast chicken he continued 'we shall re-baptise it as grey mullet' ('questa ribattizaremo per bolpina').[88] Like his cuisine, Nicolò's mock ritual betrayed his religious identity, which the Holy Office would have found particularly indigestible – one that centred on the Anabaptist practice of re-baptism and rejection of infant baptism, a sacramental rite of initiation into the Christian church and society. Like the Anabaptist withdrawal from the civic state, it was seen as an act of political rebellion and anarchy, particularly after its violent expression in the short-lived apocalyptic Kingdom of Münster in 1533–1535.[89] Coupled with the biblical literalism and pauperism of the Church of the Apostles, it would not take long before the Venetian Anabaptists would link their nonconformist religious views to a radical social critique of the prevailing economic and social conditions of society.

The unleavened Eucharistic bread was called the 'bread of affliction' because it was made and eaten in haste before the Exodus (there being no time to let it rise). Thus when Piero, the apothecary at the sign of the Moon, was defending his poor co-religionists who celebrated the Lord's Supper with leavened bread, he compared the ecclesiastical efforts to eradicate these domestic rituals to the efforts of nobles to impose a coarse diet – the 'bread of affliction' – on their peasants. He observed that 'friars and priests are of the same breed as nobles, for they deceive the peasants by telling [them] that whoever eats leavened bread will end up in Hell, and so they, too, make what is good [eating more nutritious risen bread] appear bad'.[90] In early modern society food was a crucial differentiator of social and economic status. with 'high-growing' game, birds and fruit suited for the tables of the highborn, and earthly pork, cereals and root vegetables for the stomachs of the lowly. Thus the 'poor' vegetarian diet prescribed by the Church for the Lent not only endangered personal health, but appeared to reinforce class prejudices.

Medical learning and identities certainly played a part in expelling 'unhealthy' Lenten food regimes from one's kitchen, or dismissing the healing powers of holy images, or inviting free love into one's bedroom – another area of contention and incursion of the Church into intimate domestic affairs. In medical thinking, sexual intercourse was conceptualised for men as a form

88 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 40, Dossier Nicolò Guidozzo, testimony of Giorgio Griffoni, 10 January 1576. Cf. Seidel Menchi, *Erasmo in Italia* 111. Seidel Menchi was the first to frame her discussion of the redefinition of the sacred in the context of food culture.

89 La Rocca T. et al. (eds.), *Thomas Müntzer e la rivoluzione dell'uomo comune* (Turin: 1990); Goertz H-J., *The Anabaptists* trans. T. Johnson (London: 1996).

90 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 40, Dossier 'Contra Petrum a Luna aromatarium', 13 March 1576.

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of purging which was necessary to maintain a healthy balance of bodily humours, and often discussed outside the Christian moralistic view of human sexuality. In his dialogue *Examen omnium*, inspired by Erasmus's *Colloquia*, the noted botanist Antonio Musa Brasavola (1500–1555) of Ferrara offered a remarkable defence of sensual love against contemporary opinions that sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis were God's scourge sent to punish humanity for its sexual excesses. Conversing with the old apothecary Senex, the author declared that

> if God is angry only with the lustful, why isn't he also angry with usurers, thieves, blasphemers, and murderers, whose sins are far worse than those of a man who, perhaps unmarried himself, had coitus with an unmarried woman? To practise sensual love is natural for each and every one of us, and, when comparing this to the other [sins], it is an [inherently] human act by counsel and commandment, whereas murdering, looting, stealing, and blaspheming as a whole is against nature. And if God was displeased so much with men enjoying sexual contact, he could simply inhibit their [penile] erection, so that their wishes to make sensual love would have come to nothing.[91]

Mingled with hundreds of pharmaceutical prescriptions and couched in technical medical vocabulary, Brasavola's statement remained 'hidden' from the censors. But it would have been easily accessible to apothecaries such as Gian Battista ssssGemma, who himself resented the Church's interference into his intimate domestic affairs. Standing before the Inquisition, he declared that 'like all other obligations, vows of chastity were impossible to uphold, and it was a folly to make any vows or pay for pilgrimages when one had to look after one's household'.[92]

Beyond an intriguing vignette about early modern perceptions of healthy food, sensual love, marriage, sociability and domesticity, our panoramic view

91 Brasavola Antonio Musa, *Examen omnium loch, id est, linctuum suffuf, id est, puluerum, aquarum, decoctionum, oleorum, quorum apud Ferrariensis pharmacopôlas vsus est: His accessit de morbo Gallico* [...] *tractatus* (Lugduni, apud Sebastianum Bartholomei Honorati: 1554), 'De morbo gallico' 508–509: 'si Deus in luxuriam invectus est, in foeneratores invectus non est, in grassatores, in latrones, in blasphemas, in homicidas, qui seuiora mala perperrant, quam qui coitu utuntur, quam si solutus cum solute iungatur. Nam Venerem exercere unicuinque, naturale est, hanc vero vel illam sibi deligere, est consilio et praecepto factum hominem vero interficere, grassari furabi, blasphemare, sunt a toto genere praeter naturam: Siq; Deo tantum displiceret, ut homines Venere uterentur, posset ilico ab ipsis tentiginem auferre, et nullus inveniretur, qui Venere uti vellet'.

92 ASV, *Sant'Uffizio*, b. 20, Testimony of Gian Battista Gemma, 17 May 1565.

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of devotional life of the Venetian apothecaries should convince us that domestic piety was far from being an uncontroversial activity. In the intersecting worlds of Catholics and Protestants in Venice, where people of all faiths rubbed shoulders, it was sometimes difficult to find a sense of privacy, solitude and introspection, while personal devotion could easily become a disruptive force within one's neighbourhood, street or even home. As the case of the Gemma family reveals, each individual negotiated their relationship with the sacred in accordance with their own notions of inner spiritual or external physical space where one meets with God. And while the Lutheran Silvestro Gemma endures the materialist, theatrical, and ceremonial torture of the Corpus Christi procession, he inflicts a similar mental anguish on his daughter-in-law Marietta and her Catholic sensibility.

Beyond the problems of obvious doctrinal differences, iconoclasm, and gender and generational conflicts, there were also areas of mutual influences and confluences, not always acknowledged in accounts of domestic piety. While 'getting along' more or less peacefully, confessional boundaries were constantly transgressed, while the need for compromise and adaptation became paramount, as Marcantonio Gemma's habit to accompany his wife Marietta to the church but only 'to hear the Gospel in disregard of the rest of the Mass' shows us.[93] In a constant process of sacralising and desacralizing domestic spaces, rituals and objects, various heterogeneous practices developed, like the clandestine production of crucifixes 'painted in a Lutheran fashion' but moulded out of wax – a quintessentially 'interconfessional' devotional material that was easily available at pharmacies for the production of votive figures, Agnus Dei and funeral torches.[94] This in turn teaches us that we should not underestimate the confounding eclecticism and subjectivities of everyday life in forming and performing religious identities, and that the traditional historiographical frameworks and rigid confessional categories of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations do not suffice to account for the extraordinary richness and complexity of religious attitudes in sixteenth-century Italian homes and cities.

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Index Nominum

Abbioso, Lodovico 423, 424 n. 64
Abel 364
Acciaiuoli, Cassandra 377
Adolf of Essen 343
Alanus de Rupe 343
Alberico da Balbiano 169–170
Alberti, Antonio 8 n. 27, 297
Alberti, Bartolomea *see* Bartolomea di Tommaso degli Obizzi
Alberti, Leandro 189, 190 n. 5
Alberti, Leon Battista 134, 318
Alberto da Castello 16, 54–55, 57, 100, 166 n. 8, 172 n. 32, 175, 203 n. 26, 27, 205 n. 32, 347, 350 n. 18, 351 n. 19, 419
Albizeschi, Bernardino (of Siena) *see* Bernardino da Siena, Saint
Albizzi, Paolo degli 377
Alemanno, Pietro and Giovanni 165
Alliata, Francesco 80
Alliata, Margherita 80
Ambrogio Aromatario 416–417, 422, 430
Ambrose, Aurelius 32, 427
Ambrosio Mediolanesi, sanitarius 418 n. 42, 422 n. 56
Amico, Giovanni Biagio 28 n. 3, 74–76, 89 n. 1
Ancarano, Gaspare 369
Angelos, painter 290
Animuccia, Giovanni 105, 106 n. 59
Anthony, Saint 207, 289–291, 389
Antonello da Messina 129
Antoniano, Silvio 125 n. 21, 317, 323
Antonino da Firenze (Antonino Pierozzi), Archbishop/Saint 303, 364, 389
Antonio de Zúñiga y Sotomayor (Marquis of Ayamonte) 28
Aquinas, Thomas 322, 336, 389, 427
Arborsani, Benedetto 122
Arcangelo, Fra 328 n. 56
Aresi, Paolo 354, 357 n. 29, 359
Ariosto, Ludovico/Lodovico 111–112, 365
Aristotle 314, 316, 318 n. 29, 322
Augustine (Aurelius) of Hippo, Saint 176, 207–208, 290 n. 37, 298, 314 n. 10, 364, 428
Avicenna 318
Baglioni, Pantasilea 141
Baglioni, Troilo 212
Ballottini, Arcangelo 346
Barbaro, Andrea 125
Barbaro, Francesco 317
Barbaro, Giacomo 125, 136, 317 n. 26
Barberini, family 403
Barbo, Ludovico 389
Barocci, Federico 141, 147, 156
Baronio, Cesare, cardinal 398, 403
Bartoli, Vincenzo 141
Bartolo da Montelupo 377
Bartolomea di Tommaso degli Obizzi 296
Bassi, Andrea 94
Bellarmino, Roberto (Bellarmin, Robert), Cardinal 385–386, 398, 403
Bembo, Baldassarre 94
Berengar of Tours 427
Berengarius *see* Berengar of Tours
Bernardino da Siena, Saint 317 n. 25
Bernardino di Betto *see* Pinturicchio
Berovardi, Gerolamo 354
Bianchi, Giovanni Paolo 280 n. 16, 356, 359
Bisciola, Paolo 32, 39
Boccaccio, Giovanni 27, 281, 282 n. 21
Bonardo, Vincenzo 226–227, 229–230, 239
Bonaventure, Saint 11 n. 35, 330 n. 58, 346, 389
Bongianni, Iacopo 300 n. 17
Bonsi, Marcho d'Ugholino 339 n. 78
Bordoni, Francesco 386
Borghini, Raffaello 90
Borromeo, Carlo, Cardinal 10, 27, 29–34, 37–40, 106, 108–109, 317, 339 n. 77, 395
Bossio, Francesco, Cardinal 56
Bouchard, Jean-Jacques 403
Bovo, Bartolomeo dal 262, 268
Bracchi, Tommaso 357
Branciforti, Agata 72, 74
Branciforti, Ercole 86
Branciforti, Giuseppe 72
Brandani, Federico 166
Brasavola, Antonio Musa 432

Maya Corry, Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin - 978-90-04-37587-1
Downloaded from Brill.com05/28/2020 03:40:38PM
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Brigitte, Saint 347
Brisighella *see* Guanzelli, Giovanni Maria from Brisighella
Bruto, Gian Michele 414–415
Buccella, Nicolò 428, 429 n. 80
Burchard, Johann 225–226

Calimerus, Saint 33
Calvin, John 7, 413
Campanella, Tommaso 411
Campion, Edmund 223
Campollonio, Pietro 147
Capaccio, Giulio Cesare 151
Carpaccio, Vittore 191
Carrega, Lorenzo 57
Catherine of Siena, Saint 389
Cavalca, Domenico 302, 330 n. 59, 333 n. 60, 389
Cavalli, Serafino 351
Celano, Thomas de 163 n. 1
Celsus, Saint 33
Cennini, Cennino 281
Certaldo, Paolo da 317 n. 25
Cervini, Marcello, Cardinal *see also* Marcellus II 391
Charles III 66
Checchi, Marco di Francesco *see* Marco di Francesco Checchi
Cherubino da Spoleto 15, 299, 300 n. 17, 302, 303 n. 26
Christ 10, 12, 16, 37, 42, 58, 67 n. 13, 82–83, 102, 111, 117, 121, 123, 125–129, 131, 133, 153, 159, 163–164, 166–167, 169–172, 176, 181, 192, 204, 206–207, 214, 222, 226–227, 229, 232, 234, 237–239, 241–242, 254, 257, 258 n. 41, 42, 260, 266, 273, 278, 280, 285 n. 29, 286, 288, 290, 301, 302 n. 22, 310, 324, 327, 330, 333–334, 336–339, 343, 345–346, 350, 352, 354, 363–364, 367–369, 411, 416–418, 420–421, 424, 426–429
Ciccarelli, Antonio 354
Cicero (Marcus Tullius Cicero) 94
Clare, Saint 164, 196, 208, 389
Clario Giovan, Battista 411
Clario, Leonardo 411
Clement VII (Giulio de' Medici) 380
Clement VIII, Pope (Ippolito Aldobrandini) 223, 382, 397–399
Constantine the Great 209
Contelori, Felice 386
Conti, Bernardino dei 327, 328 n. 56, 376 n. 4
Corrado, Ludovico 141
Cortesi, Paolo 89
Croce, Giulio Cesare 361, 366–368
Croce, Lucio (Jesuit) 143, 366 n. 48
Curione, Celio Secondo 391 n. 13, 414

Dall'Oca, Francesco 136
Dall'Oca, Marc'Antonio 136
Dammonis, Innocentius 102
Dandolo, Andrea 411, 422
Daniele de Brixia (Brescia), Friar 419
Dante Alighieri 365, 368
Datini, Francesco di Marco 261 n. 49
Datini, Margherita 261, 264
David 38 n. 34, 51, 245, 364
Davidico, Lorenzo 361
de Scudi Girolama 420–421
de Simoni, Simone 429
Dei Guerrieri, Simone 170 n. 27
Del Ponte, Andrea 56, 170 n. 27
Della Robbia, Andrea 167
Della Robbia, Luca 177
Della Rovere, Francesco Maria II (Duke of Urbino) 143
Della Rovere, Guidobaldo II (Duke of Urbino) 141
Della Rovere, Isabella (Princess of Bisignano) 12, 139–160
Della Rovere, Lavinia (Marquess of Vasto) 142 n. 11
Della Vedova, Francesco 123
Demosthenes 94
Depedai, Pellegrino 378
Di Costanzo, Angelo 147
Di Manzoni, Giovanni di Nicola 171 n. 31, 175
di Missanello, Calisto 80
Dominic, Saint 344
Dominic of Prussia 343, 345
Dominici, Giovanni 15, 296 n. 2, 297–298, 315–316, 318–319, 321–322, 334, 339
Donà, Francesco 120
Donà, Gerolamo 122 n. 13
Donà, Giovanni Simone 120, 122 n. 13
Du Perron, Jacques 425 n. 68

Maya Corry, Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin - 978-90-04-37587-1
Downloaded from Brill.com05/28/2020 03:40:38PM
via free access

Erasmus, Desiderius 94, 318, 408, 419, 424, 432

Fabbri, Sisto 380
Fabri, Felix 283 n. 25
Farnese, Alessandro (Cardinal) 141, 145
Farnese, Clelia 141
Farnese, Ottavio (Duke of Parma) 141
Farnese, Vittoria (Duchess of Urbino) 141, 151
Ferro, Girolamo 93, 220 n. 1
Ficino, Marsilio 317, 334 n. 64, 336, 424
Filangieri, Gaetano 169
Folengo, Teofilo 169
Forno, Bernardino 411
Forno, Franceschina 411–412
Forno, Vicenzo 411
Franceschino da Cesena, Friar 67
Francis, Saint 12, 163–164, 169, 181, 187, 196, 201–203, 210, 216, 237, 389
Fugger, Raimund 94, 96 n. 22

Gabrieli, Andrea 90
Gaetani, Francesco Maria Emanuele 63
Gaffurius, Franchino 94
Geert, Groote 344
Gemma, Aurora 411
Gemma, Elena 410, 414 n. 21
Gemma, Gian Battista 411, 414 n. 21, 415, 422–423, 426, 428 n. 77, 430, 432 n. 92, 433
Gemma, Giovanni Francesco 410 n. 6, 412, 414 n. 21
Gemma, Lucietta 414 n. 21
Gemma, Marcantonio 414 n. 21, 418, 433
Gemma, Marietta de Bernardini 414 n. 21
Gemma, Silvestro 408, 410, 414 n. 21, 417, 433
Gentili, Piero Antonio 119 n. 8, 127 n. 27, 136, 289 n. 36
Geremia da Valacchia, Capuchin monk 12, 140, 152–153, 156–158, 160
Gero, Jan 97
Ghelfucci, Capoleone 361–362
Giampietrino (Giovanni Pietro Rizzoli) 327
Gianetti, Andrea 351–352
Gilbert, Nicolas 346
Giolito, Gabriele 109, 317 n. 26, 381 n. 24
Giordano da Rivalto 281
Giordano, Giulio 142, 281 n. 20
Giovanni di Dio da Venezia 319
Giovanni di Francesco, Tornabuoni 323
Giussano, Giovanni Pietro 28 n. 4, 36 n. 25, 38–40
Giustiniani, Paolo 390
Gombert, Nicolas 97
Gregory I, Pope 29
Gregory XIII, Pope (Ugo Boncompagni) 229
Gritti, Andrea, Doge 31, 34, 122 n. 13, 126 n. 25
Guadagni, Margherita 362
Guanzelli, Giovanni Maria from Brisighella 399 n. 31
Guarino, Antonio 247
Guarino, Battista 318, 322, 336
Guercia, Maria (la Turchina) 58
Guido da Bagni, cardinal 403
Guidozzo, Nicolò 408 n. 2, 430, 431 n. 88
Guizzelmi, Giuliano di Francesco 263

Hesiod 94
Holanda, Francisco de 132
Homer 94

Ignacio of Mendoza 346
Ignatius of Loyola 347
Ingenerio, Andrea 282
Ingrassia, Giovanni Filippo 36–37
Isaac 298, 364

Jacquet of Mantua 97
Jerome, Saint 201, 203, 209 n. 60, 210, 216, 289, 290 n. 37, 298, 318, 424
John the Evangelist, Saint 121, 167, 176, 191 n. 9, 208, 225 n. 18, 227, 230, 239, 273, 278, 324 n. 53, 330, 332, 336, 364, 365 n. 43, 367 n. 50, 376, 377 n. 6, 387, 424
John Chrysostom 273
John of Austria (Admiral in the battle of Lepanto) 142
John of Capestrano 346
John the Apostle, Saint 273
John the Baptist, Saint 16, 53, 57, 119, 121, 207–208, 222, 290, 310, 327, 330, 339 n. 78

Maya Corry, Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin - 978-90-04-37587-1
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Juan Xavier, Juan (Jesuit) 143
Julius II, Pope (Giuliano della Rovere) 212

Kempis, Thomas à *see also* Thomas of Kempis 338 n. 75, 344
Kostistk, Jon *see* Geremia da Valacchia, Capuchin monk

Lancillotti, Iacopo 378
Lanza, Giovanna 86
Lanza, Ignazio 86
Ledesma, Diego de 107, 108 n. 69
Leo Tuscus 274, 276
Leo X, Pope (Giovanni de' Medici) 346
Leonardo da Vinci 310, 312, 324, 327, 330
Lettieri, Felice Antonio 147
Lippomano, Alvise 391
Lo Vecchio, Mariano 354
Loarte, Gaspar 354
Lomazzo, Giovanni Paolo 129, 130 n. 37, 320
Lorenzetti, Ambrogio 167
Lotto, Lorenzo 7, 8 n. 27, 127
Ludolph of Saxony 338 n. 74
Luini, Bernardino 327
Luis de Granada 99, 351, 362
Luke the Evangelist, Saint 30, 129, 170, 280, 283, 363
Luther, Martin 7, 228 n. 32, 390–393, 421–422, 427
Lykomedes 273

Maccabeus, Judas 209
Mahomet 422
Maioli, Andrea 126–127
Malatesta, Ginevra 141
Manolesso, Giacomo 96
Manzi, Giovanni (of Prato) 264
Marcellus II (Cervini, Marcello), Pope 391
Marco de Domo 412
Marco di Francesco Checchi 304
Marco di Giacomo 96
Marco d'Oggiono 324
Mariano da Genazzano 305–306
Martelli, Fiammetta 377
Martha, Saint 41
Martyrius, Saint 33
Marullo, Cesare 84
Mary, Saint 2, 30, 34, 41, 53–54, 57–58, 81, 100, 117, 119, 121, 123, 128–129, 153, 156–157, 169, 176, 192, 197, 213, 228, 237, 244 n. 1, 254, 256 n. 35, 261 n. 49, 263, 269 n. 74, 276, 278, 280–281, 283, 286, 290, 302, 315, 319, 330, 345–347, 363–364, 367, 369, 409, 417–418, 424
Masci (family of Deruta potters) 216
Mascolo, Giovanni Battista 151
Medici, Alessandro de' 375–376, 379–380, 382, 387
Medici, Cosimo I de' (Duke of Florence and Grand-Duke of Tuscany) 380
Medici, Francesco I de' (Grand-Duke of Tuscany) 375
Medici, Lorenzo de' 104
Mei, Francesco 379–380
Melanchthon, Philippe 413
Meletios, Saint (Martyr) 273
Mercurio, Girolamo 316
Michiel, Marcantonio 120 n. 12
Miroclus, Saint 33
Mocenigo, Alvise 422
Moscardo, Paulo 423, 424 n. 64
Moses 364
Mucanzio, Giovanni Paolo 385–386
Muzio, Gerolamo 361

Naudé, Gabriel 403
Nazarius, Saint 33
Negron, Giacomo 423–424
Neri, Filippo, Saint 19, 105–106
Nicolò da Osimo 303
Nicolo de Blagio 54–55

Orii (Ori), Maria 256

Paleotti, Gabriele 129, 130 n. 37, 132, 134, 213–214, 320–321
Palma il Vecchio *see* Vecchio, Jacopo Palma; Negretti, Jacopo d'Antonio 121
Palmieri, Matteo 313, 316
Palombino, Pietro 94
Panarelli, Teofilo 422–425
Pasqualigo, Vincenzo 96
Paul III, Alessandro Farnese, Pope 141, 212
Paul IV, Pope (Gian Pietro Carafa) 226
Paul V, Pope (Camillo Borghese) 34, 85, 346

Maya Corry, Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin - 978-90-04-37587-1
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Penci, Francesco 420 n. 47
Perbartus of Temeswar 346
Perugino, Pietro 192, 196, 205, 206 n. 33, 300 n. 17
Petrarca, Francesco 365, 368
Petrucci, Ottaviano 102
Piccolomini, Aeneas Silvius, Pio II, Pope 316, 318, 322 n. 50
Piccolpasso, Cipriano 189, 191 n. 8
Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni 379 n. 16
Pico, Ippolita 141, 319 n. 36
Pietro Damiani 364
Pinelli, Luca (Jesuit) 99 n. 37, 147, 354
Pinturicchio 192, 196, 212
Pisano, Giunta 280
Pitti, Carlo 378
Pius/Pious V, Pope (Antonio Ghislieri) 98, 109, 225, 228, 351
Plato 316, 334 n. 64
Plotinus 334 n. 64
Plutarch 314, 318 n. 29
Poggi, Faustina 362
Politi, Lancillotto (Ambrogio Catarino) 381, 384
Pontano, Giovanni 214 n. 79
Porzio, Simone 393–394
Pseudo-Dionisius 364
Pucci, Piero 307

Quaratesi, Giuliano 333–334
Querini, Pietro 390
Quintilian 94, 316, 318 n. 29

Razzi, Serafino 104–105, 112 n. 81, 361–368, 384–386
Riario, Raffaele (Cardinal) 89
Ricci, Caterina de' 104
Ridolfi, Carlo 90
Ritzos, Andreas 283, 288 n. 35
Roccatagliata, Giovanni Battista 53
Rocha, Pietro 53
Roda, Antonio 123, 125

Sacchetti, Franco 244–246, 250–252, 257
Salter, Thomas 415
Sandys, Edwin 404
Sanseverino, Francesco Teodoro 142
Sanseverino, Nicolò Bernardino (Prince of Bisignano) 140, 142–143
Sarpi, Paolo 404–405
Sassetti, Bartolomeo 339 n. 78
Savonarola, Girolamo 17–18, 103–106, 166, 196, 210, 215, 319, 362, 375–387, 389, 391 n. 12, 392
Savonarola, Michele 103 n. 48, 318, 322, 383 n. 31, 390 n. 5, 391 n. 12
Scudieri, Francesco 93–94, 382 n. 27
Scultori, Adamo 352
Sebastian, Saint 28, 41–42, 58
Semino, Francesco 53–54
Semprini, Angela 413
Semprini, Fancesco 422, 426
Seneca 314
Severini, Giovanni (Count) 97
Silva, Giulia Orsini 268
Silva, Giuseppe 268
Sisinnius, Saint 33
Sixtus IV, Pope (Francesco della Rovere) 133
Soderini, Margherita 305
Soderini, Piero 172
Solimatis, Girolamo 93
Spadoni Reginaldo 361 n. 36
Spinelli, Guasparre 324, 343 n. 1
Spinelli, Tomaxo 324
Stancaro, Francesco 391 n. 13, 392 n. 15, 393–394
Stephanus of Piopera 343
Strata, Niccolò 354
Strozzi, Cornelia 362

Tasso, Bernardo 141, 147
Tasso, Torquato 141, 356, 359, 361, 365, 368
Tecchini, Francesca dell'Amannato 261
Tecchini, Niccolò dell'Amannato 261
Téllez Girón, Pedro (Duke of Ossuna, Viceroy of Naples) 153
Tempesti, Giovan Battista 280
Terence (Publius Terentius Afer) 94
Teresa of Avila, Saint 369
Terracina, Laura 147
Theodosia of Constantinople, Saint 282
Thomas of Kempis *see also* Kempis, Thomas à 338 n. 75, 344
Tieffenbrucker, Moisé 94
Tinctoris, Johannes 94
Tintoretto, Jacopo (Jacopo Robusti) 90, 91 n. 8

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Titian (Tiziano Vecellio) 119, 126
Tornabuoni, Lorenzo 323–324
Trevisan, Giovanni (Patriarch of Venice) 100
Trevisan, Giuseppe 120
Trevisan, Luchesa 120
Trissino, Giangiorgio 359
Turini Bufalini, Francesca 16, 368

Valla, Lorenzo 424
Vannucci, Pietro *see* Perugino, Pietro
Varano, Cornelia 141
Camilla Battista da Varano 166
Vasari, Giorgio 90, 120, 281
Veneziano, Lorenzo 289
Veneziano, Paolo 289
Verdelot, Philippe 90
Vergerio, Pier/Pietro Paolo 314, 316, 318, 322 n. 50, 336, 359
Vergil/Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro) 316
Vermigli, Pietro Martire 413
Vico, Fidele 426
Villinger, Peter 283
Vito di Gozze, Nicolò 321
Vitruvius 89
Von Ebner, Margaretha 166
Voragine, Jacobus de 247

Willaert, Adrian 97

Zacchino, Giulio 90
Zapelin, Zuan de Giacomo Milanese 418, 428 n. 78
Zarlino, Gioseffo 94
Zenale, Bernardo 312 n. 2
Zoioso, Benedetto 99
Zosimus, Pope 222
Zuccari, Federico 141
Zúñiga, Juan de (Spanish Ambassador to Rome, Viceroy of Naples) 143
Zúñiga y Avellaneda, María de (Countess of Miranda, Vicereine of Naples) 145
Zwingli, Huldrych 427, 429

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